DEAN’S MESSAGE

Welcome to the first edition of the Graduate College Newsletter! In mid-January I completed my first year as Dean of the Graduate College. The time I have spent has been both challenging and exciting. I have had the opportunity to meet talented and intelligent UIC graduate students, and many faculty members dedicated to excellence in graduate education. In addition, while learning the workings of the Graduate College, I have been able to start implementing programs to achieve several of my larger goals. I want to especially thank my wonderful colleagues in the College, and I look forward to future interactions and discussions with faculty and students all across campus.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank my immediate predecessor, Dr. Henri Gillet, who was Interim Dean of the Graduate College for two and one-half years. When I started as Dean, I was immediately immersed in a number of policy, assessment, and student outreach initiatives that were spear-headed by Dr. Gillet, and that I plan to continue and expand upon during my tenure. Several of these will be highlighted below.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Clark Hulse, former Dean of the Graduate College, whose leadership of over ten years formed the Graduate College’s structure and core priorities, which I will endeavor to continue during my tenure. Finally, I thank Provost Lon Kaufman for his tremendous guidance and support during my transition to Dean.

I would like to share with you a summary of some changes and initiatives that the Graduate College has been involved with over the last year and a half:

Graduate College Wins Award

The Graduate College was awarded the 2012 Council of Graduate Schools (CGS)/Educational Testing Service (ETS) Award for Promoting Success in Graduate Education: From Admissions through Completion for our proposed Promoting Success in STEM Graduate Education (PASSAGE) Scholars Program. This is a competitive national award that is given to one graduate school/college each year. The PASSAGE Scholars Program will focus on ensuring the success of under-represented graduate students in the STEM disciplines by funding a transition program in the summer before their first year in graduate school and by providing mentoring and incentive programs to help them complete key academic milestones that are essential to degree progress. Dr. Lunaire Ford will lead this program assisted by Demetria Ward (see feature in this edition).

International Teaching Assistant (ITA) Program Moves to the Graduate College

In August 2012, Provost Kaufman transferred the ITA Program from Faculty Affairs to the Graduate College. This relocation has allowed for a more efficient direction, and further development of the program, as well as for plans to expand training options for all graduate teaching assistants. Vandana Loebel currently serves as the Coordinator of the ITA Program.

Outreach and Career Services

The Graduate College has enhanced its student outreach efforts and its offerings related to career services and graduate student professional and skills development, and we hope to keep expanding these efforts over the next few years. Our new Visiting Assistant Director of Student Outreach and Career Services, Theresa Christenson-Caballero, has developed and organized several workshops designed to help students negotiate graduate school and prepare for post-graduate careers (see feature in this edition). Our intent is to grow our career services offerings for graduate students with help from the UIC Career Services Office, which currently emphasizes services for undergraduates. Additionally, the College has purchased an institutional subscription to The Versatile PhD, a web-based resource for PhD students and post-docs from all disciplines, who seek information on academic and non-academic careers.

Structure and Staffing Changes

In January, a restructuring of functions within the Graduate College Office of Recruitment and Diversity Affairs was accomplished. Dr. Lunaire Ford is now Executive Director for Diversity and Outreach Initiatives, and will be leading our mentoring program for under-represented graduate students and the PASSAGE Scholars Program (see feature in this edition). Allen J. Bryson is now Director of Pre-Graduate Programs. He will continue to lead our Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP), and, in addition, will coordinate this program with our Graduate Pathways to Success Program (GPS) (see feature in this edition). Demetria Ward will assist Lunaire, in addition to continuing her work with Abraham Lincoln and Diversifying Faculty in Illinois fellows. Daisy Little will assist Allen in the administration of his programs.

Also in January, Dona Williams joined the College as Human Resource Associate. Hilda Tapia, who was responsible for both the human resources and the financial/business aspects of the College, will now concentrate on the latter.

In November, Marie Khan was hired as External Fellowship and Financial Aid Coordinator after a year holding a visiting appointment in the same position.

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position. Marie’s main responsibilities are to inform graduate students of external funding opportunities, and to help students with their application packages. Since her first week in the College we have received excellent feedback from students.

In August, **Theresa Christenson-Caballero** was hired as Visiting Assistant Director of Graduate Student Outreach and Career Development. This is a new full-time position in the College, in an area we plan to continue to develop and expand (see feature in this edition).

In June, **Vandana Loebel** was appointed Coordinator and Instructor of the ITA Program, following the retirement of **Barbara Boockmeier**, who faithfully developed and guided the program for over eighteen years. **Sarah Gallant** was appointed 50% Instructor in August and had been working with the program previously.

**Policy Changes**

At its January 2012 meeting, the Graduate College Executive Committee approved a College policy for mandatory **Annual Assessments of Doctoral Students**. Although many doctoral programs already conduct annual assessments, the policy specifies uniform guidelines for all programs. This policy was enacted based on student input and review of other institutions’ best practices (see feature in this edition).

At the Annual Meeting of Graduate Faculty in April 2012, the **Graduate College by-laws** were amended to allow for removal of one’s graduate faculty designation. Although this is not expected to be used with any frequency, a number of events over the past few years brought about the need for change, which followed extensive discussion with the College’s Executive Committee.

Although less current, it is important to reiterate that at the December 2011 Executive Committee meeting, a **Graduate College Policy on Conflicts of Interest in the Admissions Process** was approved. This policy was enacted to avoid any potential for admission decisions to be driven by faculty self-interests related to private endeavors.

**Program Assessment**

There have been important developments related to program assessment. Former Interim Dean Gillet initiated a data-driven analysis of all doctoral programs, looking at critical elements such as time-to-degree, attrition, and completion rates, and with further analysis by ethnicity and gender. The results have been shared with a few programs that individually met with College staff. More recently, the Office of Planning and Programs and the Graduate College are in discussion about collaborative efforts to facilitate new and existing program assessment processes. I will hold divisional meetings with Directors of Graduate Studies to discuss the plans as they evolve. The overarching goal of program assessment from the standpoint of the Graduate College is to develop an ongoing dialog with departments to identify the best ways to maintain and improve graduate program quality. My hope is that graduate programs view the Graduate College as a partner in this assessment process, and that together we can mutually learn from and benefit from the reviews. Expect to hear more about this process in the near future.

I look forward to ongoing dialog and discussions on initiatives and collaborations related to graduate education.

Karen J. Colley  
Dean and Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Genetics
In December 2012, the UIC Graduate College won the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS)/Educational Testing Service (ETS) 2012 Award for Innovation in Promoting Success in Graduate Education: From Admission through Completion. The competitive grant award is given to only one graduate institution in the U.S. and Canada each year, and includes a two-year $20,000 grant from CGS/ETS along with a $10,000 campus contribution. The GC’s winning proposal was for our program entitled: Promoting Success in STEM Graduate Education (PASSAGE Scholars Program).

The aims of the PASSAGE Scholars Program are to prepare underrepresented minority (URM) students entering UIC Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) graduate programs and to promote both their retention and timely degree completion. Through a two-phased program, PASSAGE will provide ongoing mentoring, professional and skills development opportunities, and financial incentives. The first phase is the Transition to Graduate School Program and the second phase, the Scholars Mentoring and Career Development Program.

The Transition to Graduate School Program facilitates the transition of URM STEM students to graduate school by bringing them to campus the summer before they begin their studies. Incoming graduate students will complete a summer research rotation in their discipline as well as participate in a series of skills workshops to prepare them for their graduate studies. Student will receive a $4000 stipend during their summer transition program. The goal is to help these students get settled in Chicago and comfortable in their departments so that they are ready to focus on their studies when the Fall 2013 semester begins.

The Scholars Mentoring and Career Development Program integrates PASSAGE Scholars into our newly organized GC Fellows Mentoring Initiative, a mentoring program for URM students who are recipients of the Abraham Lincoln Fellowship and the Illinois Board of Higher Education Diversifying Faculty in Higher Education in Illinois Fellowship. The goal of this larger initiative, as well as the second phase of the PASSAGE Scholars Program, is to increase the retention and success of URM graduate students by providing career and psychosocial mentoring, referral support, and professional and skills development activities from UIC Graduate College faculty and staff. In addition, PASSAGE Scholars will receive a $500 award for timely completion of milestones (i.e., qualifying examinations, doctoral candidacy, and dissertation defense) in their graduate programs. As participants complete their PhDs and move towards the next stage of their career, they will be eligible receive an additional $500 for travel to postgraduate job opportunities.

Our first cohort of PASSAGE Scholars will be selected in April 2013 for the summer program and August 2013 matriculation. Six students will be selected based on (a) a letter from their research mentor (addressing the student’s research experience and potential) and (b) a student statement (addressing research interests, educational, and career goals). The student application and departmental nomination will be evaluated by the PASSAGE Advisory Board composed of faculty representatives from several STEM departments across campus. The funding for the PASSAGE Scholars Program ends in December 2014. We will assess how each component impacts URM first-year retention and initial success in our STEM graduate programs. Progress will be published in annual reports produced by the UIC Graduate College staff and Advisory Committee and shared with the CGS and university community.

Finally, the success, continuation, and expansion of the PASSAGE Scholars Program will also require assistance from the UIC academic community — our academic departments, faculty and staff, advanced doctoral and postdoctoral scholars, and our UIC alumni. Academic departments and programs: nominate your incoming STEM URM graduate students. Also, lend us in-kind support in terms of space, personnel, and help in our search for long-term funding for PASSAGE. Faculty and staff: please offer your expertise to conduct workshops offered through the transition components of the program. Advanced doctoral and postdoctoral scholars: sharing the keys to your success, thus far would momentarily enhance the experience of PASSAGE Scholars. Alumni: we seriously need your help also as career mentors to our doctoral students – in all disciplines and career paths. Please contact us! We look forward to hearing from and working with all of you!

The application deadline for the PASSAGE Scholars Program is April 29, 2013. The program begins June 17, 2013. For more information contact Dr. Lunaire Ford at: (312) 255-0327 or lford@uic.edu.

“The UIC proposal stood out among a very strong field by creating a financial incentive for minority STEM students to achieve the key academic milestones that are essential to degree progress.”

--Debra Stewart, CGS President
Each year, the Graduate College hosts events to honor and celebrate student achievement and research, as well as faculty graduate student mentoring activities.

Annual Fellowship Reception
The Graduate College Annual Fellowship Reception was held on January 30 in the Student Services Building. Attending were recipients of Graduate College Fellowships (University Fellows, Abraham Lincoln Fellows, Dean’s Scholars, and Chancellor’s Graduate Research Fellows), as well as awardees of many prestigious external fellowships (Diversifying Faculty in Illinois, NSF Graduate Research Fellowship, NSF Doctoral Dissertation Grant, Mellon Dissertation Fellowship in the Humanities in Original Sources, individual NIH grants, Lincoln Park Zoo fellowship, international Fulbright students and American Heart Association Grants, among others). Close to one hundred students, advisors, Directors of Graduate Studies, and support staff from the Graduate College and graduate programs were in attendance.

Dean Karen J. Colley welcomed the attendees and provided opening comments. Chancellor Paula Allen-Meares was the keynote speaker, and expressed her excitement and appreciation for the achievements and the potential of UIC graduate students. Chancellor Allen-Meares also talked of the impact that the students will make after they graduate and leave UIC. Following the Chancellor, Associate Dean Laura Junker detailed the various award recipients in attendance, and spoke to their achievements.

Image of Research
On April 19, 2012, the Graduate College, in collaboration with the University Library, held the 5th annual Image of Research (IOR) award presentation. Included at the award presentation were the recipients of both the Annual Graduate College Outstanding Thesis Awards and the Graduate Mentoring Awards. This event also opened the IOR exhibit at the UIC Libraries.

The Image of Research is an exhibit competition to showcase the breadth and diversity of research at UIC. Created and administered by Kristina Dziedzic Wright since 2008, these “snapshots” of the new forms of knowledge being created by UIC graduate students are meant to encourage visitors to contemplate the nature of research itself. What experiences does one bring to an inquiry, and how do those experiences affect what one learns? What combination of discovery and creation constitute research? How do different disciplines approach research question?

Each year, students enrolled in a graduate or professional degree program within the Graduate College at UIC are invited to submit an image they created along with a brief précis of how the image relates to the student’s overall research. Close to a hundred images are submitted by students, and a multidiscipline jury of faculty and Graduate College staff selects the finalists, and ultimately, the first, second and third place awardees.

The 2012 First Place prize was for the entry titled “Artificially Created Cortical Functional Blood Unit” by the interdisciplinary team of Thomas Marrinan, a PhD student in Computer Science, and Ian Gould, a PhD student in Bioengineering. Second Place was awarded to Meg Corcoran, a master's student in Earth and Environmental Sciences, and Third Place was awarded to Paul Bick, a PhD student in Anthropology.

See finalists and winners from all five years of the competition at http://grad.uic.edu/image.

This year’s Image of Research event will be held April 18, 2013.

Annual Outstanding Thesis Award
The recipients of the Annual Graduate College Outstanding Thesis Award were honored and presented with their prizes at the Image of Research ceremony. The Annual Graduate College Outstanding Thesis Award is a competitive award given to the most outstanding doctoral dissertation or master’s thesis in each of the four Graduate Program divisions (Behavioral and Social Science, Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences, Fine Arts and Humanities, and Life Sciences). Each of the four awards includes a monetary award.

The 2012 awardees were:
• Georgiann Davis, Sociology, Gender Players and Gender Prisoners: When Intersex Activism, Medical Authority, and Terminology Collide
• James Freitag, Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science, Model Theory and Differential Algebraic Geometry
• Cynthia Barounis, English, Revolting Men: Queerness, Disability, and the Remaking of American Manhood
• Ying He, Biopharmaceutical Sciences, Epigenetic and post-translational mechanisms in pain: microRNA and phosphorylation

A list of past recipients may be viewed at http://grad.uic.edu/cms/?pid=100087.

Graduate Mentoring Awards
Also at the Image of Research ceremony, the Graduate Mentoring Awards were presented. The Graduate Mentoring Award is designed to encourage and award excellence and innovation in all aspects of graduate mentoring. Each year the Graduate College will provide up to four awards of $2,000 each. The recipients for 2012 were:
• Tanya Berger-Wolf, Associate Professor, Computer Science
• Bette Bottoms, Professor, Psychology
• Christina Pugh, Associate Professor, English
• Laurie Quinn, Clinical Associate Professor, Biobehavioral Science (Nursing)

A list of past recipients may be viewed at http://grad.uic.edu/cms/?pid=1000192.
Nestled in the backwoods of BSB 237, and recently welcomed into the Graduate College, UIC’s International Teaching Assistants Program (ITAP) upholds UIC’s commitment to international education and diversity by meeting the needs of UIC’s international teaching assistants. In accordance with State of Illinois Bill 1516, we provide oral English proficiency evaluation and certification for students. As of fall 2012, the ITA Program has established a new policy for the Oral English Certification Process. Please refer to our website at http://grad.uic.edu/cms/?pid=1001166.

Each year we serve over 200 incoming international students, half of which require one to two semesters of English support courses to meet the Oral English Certification Requirement. ESL 401 focuses on the English production skills of ITAs to ensure that they are able to meet the obligations required of any TA at UIC.

Our services are not limited to classroom instruction; however. Every fall the ITA Program conducts an ITA orientation as well as a campus-wide orientation for all incoming TAs at UIC. Orientations serve to foster cultural awareness and understanding of the linguistic demands that ITAs will face at UIC. Orientation workshops have included topics such as how to teach American undergraduate students, how to deal with difficult students, cheating and plagiarism, and time management skills. None of this would be possible without the tremendous efforts of the new coordinator Vandana Loomba Loebel and the committed ITA team, Sarah Gallant, Jennifer Taylor, and Rachel Coldewey.

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) launched its Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) in 1986, targeting historically underrepresented minority students (Latino, Native American, and African American) undergraduates. In its twenty-seven-year history of hosting this program, UIC has had over 1,500 participants. This year SROP runs from May 30 through August 2. Between forty and forty-three SROP students will be involved in various scholarly activities designed to develop their proficiency in the research process. Students will receive a monetary award for their work on various research projects, and will be advised throughout the research process by UIC faculty mentors in disciplines that span the campus. The faculty mentors for SROP come from departments throughout the UIC campus.

Major components of the SROP 2013 calendar include:

**SROP Weekend Leadership Retreat**
SROP attends an off site resort for the leadership weekend. Here students participate in various mentally and physically challenging courses that focus on team building, social interaction, trust, problem solving, appreciating diversity, individuality within a collective group and group goal setting. This event offers all involved an opportunity to bond and collectively learn a lot about the aforementioned themes as it pertains to goals in SROP. Additional seminars will be offered to address financing graduate education and the development of curriculum vitae and Graduate Student Panels.

**Discipline Specific Workshops**
SROP students take part in five discipline specific workshops taught by four SROP Research Team Leaders. The Research Team Leaders are experienced master’s and doctoral students. They organize five workshops that cover a myriad of topics such as research writing, research presentation skills, literature reviews, team building, research ethics and university resource usage.

**Free GRE Preparation**
Eight evening sessions of instruction will be offered by Kaplan Test Prep, a leader in preparing students for standardized examinations.

**Illinois Summer Research Symposium**
Off campus conference will provide SROP participants with a chance to present their research and network with other scholars.

**UIC SROP Research Symposium**
The summer program will culminate with an on-campus research presentation and networking conference.

**The Graduate Pathways to Success (GPS) Program**
provides academic enrichment to underrepresented minority students (Latino, Native American, and African American) at UIC. The program offers opportunities such as faculty-supervised research experiences, graduate school counseling, seminars, and participation in conferences and symposia. All participants are required to apply to at least five graduate degree programs in their senior year.

For August 2013, former and recently selected UIC SROP students will be recruited for participation as well as other talented UIC undergraduates. With the new direction and connection to SROP, the cohort will be small but may increase as the partnership between the two programs develops.

Students will be required to not only conduct an impressive research project with a faculty mentor, but also to present that research at one of the various research symposia throughout the school year. In addition to researching and presenting at a conference or symposium, each GPS student will produce a 15-20 page faculty-approved research paper and a Graduate Admissions Portfolio. These Graduate Admissions Portfolios will consist primarily of all materials that the GPS scholars will submit as part of their graduate school applications. Connecting GPS and SROP is part of a new effort by the UIC Graduate College to encourage more UIC undergraduate students to consider UIC as an option for graduate school.
At the graduate level, most recruitment is done by the academic program. For research degrees, a fit between a potential student's research interests with that of the UIC faculty is essential, as each program is structured around the research activity of its faculty. For the professional master's and doctorate degrees, specific departments have the best knowledge on how to position themselves for recruitment. However, staffing within programs does not allow for participation in many important recruitment activities that occur during the course of the year, even with the efforts of dedicated faculty and staff.

As the Graduate College Recruitment Coordinator, Francisco Piña is responsible for the development and implementation of campus-wide graduate recruitment initiatives that target academically talented underrepresented minority students for application to UIC's graduate programs, including those categorized as being part of the Urban Health Programs.

One of the functions of the recruitment office is to plan and maintain an active, year-round recruitment agenda that incorporates, but is not limited to, participating at national research conferences and regional events such as McNair conferences. Internally, Francisco creates and administers events designed to host prospective applicants to UIC that include representation of UIC faculty and relevant staff.

The UIC Graduate College maintains an active national recruitment schedule designed to increase our visibility across the country and in particular at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges, and Hispanic serving institutions. In addition, the following events are organized by the Graduate College with its partners, and are held on campus.

Chicago Metropolitan Exchange Program (CMEP) McNair Week
The Chicago Metropolitan Exchange Program (CMEP) Week is an opportunity for prospective graduate students to meet and network with faculty, staff members, and students at the three institutions participating in the program—Northwestern University, the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois at Chicago. Additionally, the weekend will give prospective students the chance to explore Chicago. The event will occur May 23, 2013, at the UIC Student Center East.

This year we anticipate hosting over 100 rising senior McNair Scholars from across the country. During their visits to the three CMEP members, scholars will have an opportunity to learn about relevant graduate program options and funding and meet graduate students and faculty.

IALHEA Diversity Dialogue and Research Forum
The research forum is designed to provide African American, Latino, and other underrepresented students a venue to present their research in an academic setting. The Forum has also provided the opportunity to increase faculty student research collaborations and to improve mentor relationships between faculty and students of color. As in typical years, we are anticipating hosting over 80 undergraduates, graduate and professional student presenters.

GRADUATE COLLEGE RECRUITMENT UPDATE

GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL

The UIC Graduate Student Council (GSC) is the governing graduate student body consisting of representatives from all degree-granting programs in the Graduate College.

GSC has four primary goals:
- Supporting graduate students by hosting academic seminars and workshops
- Encouraging students to apply for conferences by supplying travel awards
- Bringing students together with various social events and project awards
- Representing students in many different committees and meetings throughout the year

GSC representatives are graduate students that serve as liaisons to their departments and fellow students, providing timely information about services and resources available at UIC, such as project and travel awards, community service projects, and campus programs. GSC reps also share information about social events and campus wide projects, such as the GSC Bowling Social Event and ongoing projects with the Chancellor Committees. GSC reps also receive the added benefit of being able to fellowship with students across a variety of academic disciplines, adding to the richness of their graduate school experience.

Participation in GSC is a vital way for graduate students to gain valuable information and experiences to enhance their graduate career. If you’re interested in becoming a GSC rep for the 2013-14 academic year, talk with your department’s Director of Graduate Studies before Friday, April 12.

This year, the GSC has made concerted efforts to collaborate with the UIC Office of the Dean of Students, UIC Graduate College, and other student organizations to provide opportunities for personal and professional growth and to advocate on behalf of all graduate students at UIC. Last semester, GSC organized several workshops (Resume Writing, Social Media in Finding Jobs, Stress Management) and various social events last semester. Over 400 students attended the GSC Bowling Social on November 30, 2012 (a collaborative event with the UIC Graduate College), and over 200 students participated in the GSC Rock’n Roll and Twist Night on January 24, 2013. Additionally, over 300 students attended one of three GSC Salsa Nights last semester.

Want to know what GSC has planned for Spring 2013? Learn more by following us on Facebook or check out the GSC blog at http://uicgsc.wordpress.com/.
GRADUATE STUDENT CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The Graduate College is committed to helping students obtain information and skills related to their professional development. Over the last few years, the College's activity in these areas has greatly expanded. In August 2012, a new full-time position was created and Theresa Christenson-Caballero was hired as Visiting Assistant Director of Graduate Student Outreach and Career Development. Continued expansion of these activities is planned over the next several years.

Graduate students at UIC have had the opportunity to participate in a variety of programs and events over the course of the past year. The number and consistency of workshops for students has greatly increased, with a focus in three major areas: career development, academic and personal development, and graduate student outreach. The events have been well attended, and student demands have required repetition of popular seminars. Collaborations with organizations both internal to UIC and outside of the University have allowed us to partner with other units interested in graduate student success, and have laid foundations for future workshops. Program evaluations filled out by students at each event have been extremely beneficial in highlighting new ways to meet student needs. The following is a brief overview of the past year's activities, and an introduction to some new programs that we will be hosting this term. We are eager to expand on the success of the past year, and look forward to reaching even more students on their journey through graduate education.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Over the last year the Graduate College has offered a number of Career Development programs/initiatives for UIC graduate students. This past spring and fall an extensive professional development workshop to help graduate students create a plan for reaching their professional goals was offered. The “Personal Career/Professional Development Workshop” led by Dr. Rebecca Bryant, Assistant Dean of the Graduate College and Director of Career Services at University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign is designed to help students think strategically about how to make the most of their graduate experience as they transition from graduate school to the next stage in their careers. The workshop focused on students identifying their own comprehensive, well-rounded set of skills to enhance their career potential and give them the tools to prioritize and achieve their goals. The program was very well received and attended by students and its popularity led to a second offering.

Dr. Paula Chambers, founder of the Versatile PhD, was invited to UIC to speak with students about her online resource for PhD students and post-docs. The Versatile PhD is intended to provide information and options for both academic and non-academic careers. Dr. Chambers spent a full day at UIC that included a morning keynote, lunch with faculty and staff, and afternoon small group sessions with graduate students and post-docs. In her keynote address Dr. Chambers discussed the possibilities for employment for graduate students. Despite the fact that PhD training is very specialized, she contends that graduate students accumulate a variety of skills over the course of their training that make them versatile in both traditional academic and non-traditional career paths. The Graduate College purchased an institutional subscription to the Versatile PhD, and UIC is now an affiliated member of the online resource. Graduate students can join the community by visiting http://grad.uic.edu/cms/?pid=1001025 to confidentially access premium content on the site.

In addition to these larger scale programs that involved external career development specialists visiting our campus, we have been fortunate to collaborate with experts here at UIC as well. We have cultivated a strong relationship with the UIC Office of Career Services, which partnered with us on both Dr. Bryant’s and Dr. Chambers’ events. Additionally, that office led multiple Curriculum Vitae workshops, co-sponsored by the Graduate College.

Career development has been a major focus of Graduate College programming over the last year; additionally we have organized an assortment of successful academic and personal development workshops.

ACADEMIC & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

When we think of improvisational comedy we might think of Comedy Sportz or Saturday Night Live, but what if improv could be used as a way to improve graduate student communication skills at conferences, job talks and other events? Inspired by Stony Brook Universities Program at the Center of Communicating Science, the UIC Graduate College developed a three-hour-long workshop titled “Improv-e Your Way to a Better Research Presentation.” This workshop used improv exercises to help graduate students with their communication skills in explaining their research. Students participated in an assortment of activities that were strategically coordinated by the facilitation team to push students out of their comfort zone but also to make their explanations more understandable and meaningful. When students emerged from the workshop, they were able to explain their academic work to 5-year-olds as successfully as an expert in their field; they had a better idea of what it means to clearly state what their research is and why it is important to them.

While students should be able to give good presentations, they should also have strong writing skills. As part of a larger writing workshop series, the Graduate College hosted two “Mechanics of Abstract Writing” sessions in the fall. These workshops examined the rhetorical expectations surrounding abstracts, and analyzed the specific structure and organization of successful examples from various disciplines. Students were guided in developing a framework that they could use in improving their own abstract writing. The abstract writing workshops were a huge success and they will be held again this term. Part of the process of writing longer projects like a thesis/dissertation involves organizing large amounts of bibliographic information. Dr. Brian Kay, Head of the UIC Department of Biological Sciences at UIC and Annie Armstrong, Reference Librarian, Associate Professor, and Coordinator of Instruction at the University Library, co-led a Graduate College sponsored workshop on Accessing E-Journals and Managing Bibliographies. This workshop provided tips and tricks to students for improving their online research and organizing bibliographic data.

On a more personal side, last spring the Graduate College began collaborating with the University of Illinois Student Money Management Center to talk about ways to promote financial wellness. This exchange led to the development of two workshops that were part of a “Getting in Shape Financially Series.” The first was an interactive budgeting workshop that fo-
cused on financial health, budgeting skills, as well as borrowing and credit issues. The second workshop was a very individualized clinic where students were able to meet one-on-one for 20-30 minutes with certified financial planners. Students found these personal meetings to be extremely productive and helpful.

In addition to addressing financial stability, we sponsored a program on physical wellness and stress management. Carol Peterson, Associate Director of the Wellness Center at UIC facilitated an excellent stress reduction workshop for graduate students. Additional wellness-related workshops are in the works for this year, including stress management, time management, and yoga meditation.

GRADUATE STUDENT OUTREACH

As we all know graduate students at UIC come from a variety of academic disciplines, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and regions of the world. We have students who were born and raised in Chicago and others who are thousands of miles from home. Even on our own campus, students are spatially separated by the East and West sides and they often remain in the same buildings day in, and day out. As an attempt to bridge some of these gaps and create a larger sense of community among students, the Graduate College has begun hosting a number of student outreach events to allow graduate students to get to know one another in a relaxed social setting. In October we began hosting monthly morning coffee hours where students were able to have breakfast while mixing and mingling with one another before heading off to their daily activities. These coffee hours have been hugely successful, drawing upwards of 70 students per event. Numerous trips to local museums and other complimentary Chicagoland activities have been very popular social events amongst the students. We have organized and accompanied excursions to The Art Institute of Chicago, The Field Museum, and the Lincoln Park Zoo for the Zoo Holiday Lights exhibit. The Graduate College has also collaborated with the Graduate Student Council to co-host free bowling nights as well as dance events at a local lounge near campus. These evening functions draw a plethora of students and provide a fun atmosphere with low cost/free social activities, while involving students in the Chicago community.

WHAT IS NEXT?

The Spring 2013 semester is slated with a full schedule of events. Students will have the opportunity to attend the “ABC’s of the Literature Review” presentation, where they will learn the nuts and bolts of literature review composition. An “Introduction to Grant Writing Workshop” will expose them to the grant-writing process and how to attain the skills necessary to write an effective grant proposal. Career development programs will include a curriculum vitae writing session, as well as a social media networking and personal branding workshop. The social media event will show students how to develop successful profiles on professional networking websites that make them more marketable job candidates. We will co-sponsor an afternoon speed-reading seminar with the Graduate Student Council in addition to a graduate student social event at a UIC Men’s Basketball game.

We are very pleased to announce that March 15, 2013 the Graduate College is bringing Kerry Ann Rockquemore, PhD, President and CEO of the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity to UIC. Dr. Rockquemore’s work at the NCFDD focuses on improving conditions for pre-tenure faculty by creating supportive environments for writing productivity and work/life balance. She will be giving a keynote address to UIC Graduate Students on March 15 from 12:00 – 1:00 PM in the Student Center East Illinois A/B Room titled “Thriving in the Academy” (faculty and staff are also invited to attend). In the afternoon Dr. Rockquemore will facilitate a training session for a small group of graduate students called “Mentoring 101: How to Get What You Need to Thrive in the Academy.” This training will provide a new framework to help students re-imagine how mentoring works and will require them to create a plan to expand their existing mentoring network.

If you have any questions about the Graduate College programs, or if you would like to make a suggestion for future workshops or presentations, please feel free to contact Theresa Christenson-Caballero at tchris1@uic.edu.

UIC graduate students at the Lincoln Park Zoo for holiday festivities.
ADMISSIONS PROCESS CHANGES

There have been a number of developments related to the graduate admissions process at UIC. For some time, Directors of Graduate Studies have been requesting a mechanism for electronic submission of letters of recommendation. In fact, some external faculty members have refused to submit hard copies of their recommendations, stating they would only submit electronically. Michael Kamowski, from the Office of Student Systems Services, had planned to address this issue, and, in fact, expand the parameters to include all required admissions documents.

Over two years ago, the Office of Student Systems Services (OSSS), the Graduate Admissions Office, Administrative Information Technology Services (AITS), and the Graduate College began discussions. In September 2011, a working group composed of representatives from those offices, plus Directors of Graduate Studies and graduate support staff, began to discuss options. Included in the group were representatives from two programs that had developed their own admission document upload process.

After over a year of discussion on parameters and issues, the new process was activated, effective for applicants for the Summer 2013 term and forward. Extensive information sessions and training sessions were provided to programs during the rollout.

Some features and general information:
- All graduate programs now use this admission process, except for a handful that could not be incorporated at this time.
- Once an applicant submits an online application, they receive an email with a list of required documents, including both campus (transcripts, application fee, English proficiency for international applicants), and program-specific requirements (writing samples GRE or other test scores, etc.). The list is individualized for the specific program to which the applicant is applying.
- Along with the above list, the applicant receives information and a link to upload the documents.
- Applicants need only to submit unofficial transcripts at the time of application. For those who are admitted and wish to attend UIC, official transcripts must be submitted to the Admissions Office no later than the end of their first term of residence.
- Applicants input email addresses of their recommenders, who are sent via email a secure link to upload their letters of recommendation.
- As the electronic documents are received, the applicant may view an auto-populated checklist of items outstanding as well as those received, including the names of the recommenders in either category. This allows the applicant to directly follow up with recommenders who have not submitted, or choose a different one.
- Automated missing credential letters are sent to applicant periodically.
- Program staff view the documents in Banner, under the individual student’s record, with access only for the program to which the person applied.
- Program staff are able to automatically bundle and download files, so that the files can be reviewed by the admission committees or appropriate faculty on a secure platform of their choice.

As expected, there have been some processing issues as the Fall 2013 admission cycle unfolded. A number of the issues have already been addressed, and there are plans to address other issues in Phase II.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF DOCTORAL STUDENTS

Effective the academic year of 2013-2014, all doctoral programs within the Graduate College must conduct annual academic progress reviews for all enrolled doctoral students at least once every academic year, beginning in the students’ first year. Students who are registered under a doctoral program code are considered doctoral students for the purpose of this policy.

The policy, approved by the Graduate College Executive Committee in January 2012, states that all annual assessments should include the following:

1. A student self-assessment of academic progress and an opportunity for the student to provide evidence of his/her progress.

2. An assessment of the student’s academic progress from his/her doctorate adviser (if he/she has one).

3. A written review prepared by an individual or group different from the adviser (e.g., the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), Department Head/Chair, or group of faculty) that will focus on the student’s degree progress, including completion of milestones and student strengths and weaknesses. A copy of the review, that includes items (1) and (2), must be provided to the student.

4. A timely opportunity for the student to discuss this review in person with the DGS (and adviser, when appropriate), if requested by the student. In the event that the student’s adviser is the DGS a suitable third party (e.g. the department chair/head or other senior professor) should lead the discussion.

5. An opportunity for written student feedback to the formal review.

6. All of the above are to be retained in the student’s academic file in the program/department.

The requirements listed above represent minimum actions, and programs may further develop reviews to incorporate additional items.

- The student’s self-assessment may consist of an updated list of publication, presentations, academic honors and fellowships, etc. The student may include academic goals for the upcoming year, and in the first year or two the self-assessment may mainly consist of plans and goals.
- In early years, typically before research has begun, the assessment meeting should focus on advising, bringing into the discussion the student’s preliminary research topics, so that specific background courses or prerequisites can be tailored to the individual student early enough so as not to delay research in later years (e.g. specific statistics courses that may be needed for the intended area of research, above what may be required; etc.).
- Although assessment in the early years has an advising focus, deficiencies or weaknesses that have been uncovered should be addressed so that the student can take corrective action.
- Students who have been assessed and are still not meeting required standards should be mentored out of the program within the first few years, unless the program is attempting to work on deficiencies and provide the student with specific requirements, with stated deadlines, for the student to correct weaknesses.

Background
The Graduate College at Urbana-Champaign surveyed their graduate students and graduate programs separately on whether their program had an annual assessment. Some interesting issues recurred in the results of the survey, namely students in some programs that stated they had annual assessments answered that
they were not annually assessed. Other students answered that they had been assessed but were not given the results, while others responded that the results were too generalized to be of use.

Upon learning of the UIUC survey, the UIC Graduate College received permission to use the survey for doctoral students and programs at UIC. With some minor modifications, the surveys were conducted during the Spring Semester 2011. The Graduate College surveyed doctoral students and Directors of Graduate Studies (DGS) about current annual assessment practices in their programs. Very similar results to the UIUC survey occurred with the UIC survey. In a focus group the Graduate College held on assessment after the survey was completed, and in various recent discussions, students clearly and explicitly indicated a lack of clarity in regards to expectations within their programs, and a desire for early and annual assessments.

The following are results from the UIC survey and resultant focus group that informed a recommendation to institute the annual assessment policy:

- All 2,593 UIC doctoral students (based on Spring 2011 registration) were sent the link to the student survey, 41% at least partially completed the survey, and 33% completed the survey in its entirety. In response to the last question of the student survey, over 400 doctoral students volunteered to participate in a focus group (which is over 50% of those who completed the survey).
- Due to scheduling, timing and other constraints, the Graduate College was able to conduct a focus group session on one date only. On April 20th, almost 50 students from a wide variety of programs participated in a focus group session, despite being near the end of the semester.
- While 67% of DGSs indicated that their programs conducted annual assessments of their doctoral students, only 41% of students were certain that their program conducted such reviews.
- In some programs where the DGS indicated that there was a review process, the aggregate response of students indicated that there was not one.
- Many doctoral programs at UIC did not have, or the students were not aware of, annual assessments.
- Generally, in many programs, students responded that they do not know their status in the program in terms of satisfactory progress (it was assumed that no news meant good news, etc.).
- For most programs with annual reviews, there was significant disagreement among students and DGSs about whether results were communicated to students. The only two programs where there was 100% agreement are also the two programs known to the Graduate College to have highly effective assessment procedures.
- Students who agreed that they were being reviewed were more likely to agree that they had a good understanding of program expectations.
- Students overwhelmingly want to know about expectations and want feedback on performance to allow for growth and to correct deficiencies. For the students in programs that do not currently have an annual assessment (i.e., students responded their program does not have an annual assessment), 74% of the students answered that an annual assessment would be beneficial.

The last bullet point is very important. Namely, doctoral student want an accurate assessment of their progress in the program, and want it early enough so that they can make adjustments.

It has long been an accepted best practice that graduate students receive frequent assessments of their progress. Many graduate schools have policies on mandatory assessments, and in fact, many doctoral programs at UIC already have assessments in place containing some or all of the above requirements.

The new National Research Council assessment of research doctorate programs will feature a student survey of admitted-to-candidacy students in five disciplines (Chemical Engineering, Economics, English, Microbiology, and Physics). The first question under “Program Environment” asks “Does your program provide an annual or more frequent assessment of your progress?” and the second, “Do you receive timely feedback on your research?”

Effective annual assessments of students allow the clarity the students need to complete their program more efficiently, and this, ultimately, reflects on program quality.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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