STATE OF UIC
Achievements, challenges and goals / pg. 3

Studying urban architecture in Mexico City

Medicine mentors program celebrates 10 years

Women’s basketball welcomes new head coach

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More than 140 UIC students, alumni, employees and others dedicated 413 hours to giving back to Chicago-area communities April 7 during the ninth annual UIC Day of Service.

During the event, hosted by the UIC Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement, participants volunteered at 20 sites, including 17 nonprofits.

Rebecca Allen, a 2013 graduate of the UIC School of Public Health, organized a group of School of Public Health alumni to volunteer at La Casa Norte, an institution dedicated to serving youth and families who are confronting homelessness.

“You go to classes and you learn about all of these theories, but it’s so much more valuable to see how it translates into the real world,” she said.

“There are over 18,000 CPS (Chicago Public Schools) students who are considered homeless. These statistics are just alarming. There’s only about 350 beds for these youth, who have nowhere to go, and it made our work more meaningful.”

Susan Panek, a sophomore studying biology, was a student site leader at Glenkirk, a day center for individuals who have intellectual disabilities. She spent her day painting and improving Glenkirk’s physical space.

“This day of service highlights the importance of being able to give back to your community,” she said. “But it also allows you to see what’s out there for yourself, and to see the unexpected places where you can help others.”

Suzan Akin, associate director of the Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement, said the sites were appreciative of UIC’s volunteers. She is already looking forward to next year’s day of service.

“The people who participated had a really good experience, so I’m happy we were able to do that.”

Want to contribute a story? E-mail Christy Levy at christyb@uic.edu
Chancellor highlights UIC’s achievements, goals for future

By Francisca Corona — fcoron3@uic.edu

UIC Chancellor Michael Amiridis made remarks about standout achievements, persisting challenges and goals for UIC’s growth in a formal address to the university community and guests April 4 at the UIC Forum.

The talk, titled the “State of UIC,” is held annually. This year, Amiridis began his delivery by praising UIC’s ability to survive the record-setting budget stalemate, which ended in July.

“All of you have played a critical role in moving our university forward during these challenging times, and I’m grateful for your persistence, your drive and your fortitude,” Amiridis said, thanking staff and stakeholders.

He moved on to spotlight UIC’s commitment to remaining an outstanding global research university with goals of improving the student experience and quality of education; growing the university’s national and international reputation for research and scholarship; enhancing community engagement; and building a more sustainable framework.

Among UIC’s remarkable achievements is a third year of record-breaking enrollments, totaling 30,500 students in the fall, a 5 percent increase from last year. The number makes UIC the largest university in Chicago and second largest in Illinois.

Additionally, university leaders continued a four-year tuition freeze, and about $60 million in scholarships were awarded to students apart from federal aid, MAP grants and external awards or scholarships from places like the National Science Foundation.

“This is what commitment to affordability means,” Amiridis said.

UIC is also civically responsible. Last year, UIC was named a Voter Friendly Campus and won the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, a national award for student voter engagement.

Amiridis noted that the university earned other top spots.


On the field, the softball, baseball and men’s soccer teams competed in NCAA tournaments, and 218 Flames had GPAs of 3.0 or higher during the fall. Nearly 50 achieved a 4.0.

UIC had more than $240 million in research expenditures in fiscal year 2017. Researchers have over 300 patents in their portfolios. Faculty in humanities were lauded by the New York Times Book Review, Times Literary Supplement and the Los Angeles Review of Books.

For health care, the focus turned to UIC’s Robotic Surgery Center of Excellence, which is the first of its kind in the nation; kidney and liver transplants; retinal implants; and community outreach initiatives. The Chancellor highlighted the UI Cancer Center’s National Cancer Institute designation, and shared that UI Health will extend its new pilot program called Better Health Through Housing, which moves chronically homeless emergency department patients into stable housing to improve health and reduce hospital costs.

These accomplishments “all point in the same direction. A direction of growth and momentum,” said Amiridis.

Moving forward, leaders will finalize an updated campus master plan to improve facilities and grounds over the next 10 years. Construction has begun on two major projects: a public-private partnership for new live-learn facilities on Harris Street and an Engineering Innovation Building.

“These two facilities are just the beginning,” said Amiridis. The final master plan, which will be shared later this year, will do more to “support and enable the achievement of our strategic priorities,” he added.

A five-year fundraising campaign, called IGNITE, aims to raise $750 million to push that vision forward. Funds from alumni and friends will be used to recruit top faculty, fuel research, and more. Gifts of $10 million in 2017 were allocated to a nursing lab expansion and a deanship in pharmacy.

A newly launched Alumni Association is finding other meaningful ways for alumni to engage with and support their alma mater.

“We hope to leverage the strength of our 250,000 alumni — 170,000 of them in Chicago — to help advance our university,” he said.

Overall, the Chancellor says the future looks bright.

“For all of the reasons that I have mentioned today, I have enormous pride in our institution,” he said.

A recording of the address can be viewed on the Chancellor’s website, chancellor.uic.edu
Panelists discuss activism, #MeToo movement

By Jeffron Boynes — jboynes@uic.edu

One thing that the #MeToo movement has shown is how widespread the issue of sexual harassment is as one of the forms of gender violence, says UIC professor Beth Richie. “The #MeToo movement has called attention to the issues of gender-based violence, particularly sexual harassment, where millions of women have disclosed that they have been raped, assaulted, harassed, stalked, teased, humiliated, touched when they didn’t want to be, intimidated, bullied, denied promotions or fired, and forced into relationships in order to keep the position that they have,” said Richie, professor and head of criminology, law and justice and professor of African American Studies.

On April 4, Richie spoke at Student Center East about the pervasiveness of sexual harassment, the future possibilities and some of the limitations of the #MeToo movement.

The event, part of the Campus Conversation series sponsored by the Office of the Provost, included presentations and a panel of scholars and community members.

Among those on the panel, chaired by Richie, were: professor Paul Schewe; Natalie Bennett, director of the UIC Women’s Leadership and Resource Center; and Scherhazerade Tillet, executive director of A Long Walk Home, a Chicago nonprofit organization.

Statistics say that one in three women will be sexually assaulted, Richie said. Some statistics say that as many as 70 percent of all women will be harassed in their workplace or in their academic institution.

“Now the world knows how widespread it is and that it’s still significantly underreported,” she said.

Richie said while #MeToo has called attention to generalized, widespread gender abuse, more awareness is needed to move us from a set of discussions that look at increased visibility to increased social justice.

“That will change what the movement actually is,” she said.

Schewe, associate professor of criminology, law and justice and a sexual assault prevention researcher, said he thinks the #MeToo movement is “the most exciting thing” that has happened in the world of sexual assault prevention. He added that he’s been doing this research since 1992.

“Forever forward, we’re going to talk about ‘before and after’ the #MeToo movement,” he said. “It’s a game-changer.”

Schewe stressed the importance of getting men to stop committing sexual assault.

“The problem of sexual assault is not a women’s issue,” he said. “It’s a men’s issue. The only real solution is stopping it in the first place.”

Schewe noted his sincere hope is that, post-#MeToo, men across the country will examine their own behavior.

“The #MeToo movement has shown a generation of men that you’re going to get called out for your bad behavior,” he said.

In response to a question from the audience about what are the potential risks of “over-criminalizing” behavior and the potential for backlash, Schewe pointed out that it’s really important to distinguish between criminal behavior and “inappropriate” behavior.

Deena Lewis, doctoral candidate and assistant director of gender and women’s studies, attended the discussion.

She said an event like this opens up a space for survivors on a college campus and lets them know the resources available to support them.

“To have this forum at this time, especially since April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, is important to uncover what’s going on around sexual assault — to talk about it out loud and de-stigmatize it,” Lewis said.

UIC women’s center hosts sexual assault awareness month activities

By Carlos Sadovi — csadovi@uic.edu

UIC’s Women’s Leadership & Resource Center, along with the Campus Advocacy Network, are collaborating to focus attention on sexual violence as part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The programs will focus on educating and engaging the campus community about the pervasive nature of sexual violence, the problem of rape culture, how sexual violence informs other systems and practices of oppression, and the ways that individuals, communities and institutions respond to the problem.

Events include:

  - Exhibition features feminist and queer organized responses to gender and sexual violence, highlighting creative and powerful grassroots and non-institutional justice and healing practices. The exhibition features material from the early 1970s to the present and invites the audience to consider the ways that people have responded to sexual violence.

- Through May 26: “After Rosa, Before #MeToo: Panel on Black Women’s Anti-Rape Organizing” 6:30 p.m. April 11
  - Panel discussion begins with historical analysis of the Stonewall riots and the #MeToo movement. Panelists include Aram Sifuentes andou Najjar-Rub.

- April 12: Quilt-making session and collaboration between The Monument Quilt project and Chicago-based groups.
- April 18: “The Rape of Recy Taylor,” 3-5 p.m.
- April 24: Textile workshop with Aram Sifuentes and Lou Najjar-Rub.

The exhibition gallery is open from noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday through May 15. Anyone interested in scheduling class visits or group tours may email can.wlrc@gmail.com, visit https://bit.ly/2JiUR22 or call 312-413-1025.
Undergrads travel to Mexico City to learn about urban architecture

By Francisca Corona – fcoron3@uic.edu

Many architecture majors have studied Mexico City in their college curriculum, but nine UIC undergraduates can now say they have actually seen the giant metropolis up close — and for free.

The students, who are all seniors, embarked on a one-week trip in February to the country’s capital for a studio design class called Learning from Mexico City. The class examines the relationships and modality between architecture and the city, known as architectural urbanism.

“Mexico City provides a really good case study of urban architecture really unlike any other capital of the world,” said Alexander Eisenschmidt, associate professor of architecture.

The city was originally built on an island in Lake Texcoco by the Aztecs, but it was destroyed and redesigned by the Spanish after conquests with little planning.

“Half of the architecture that is built there is built without regulation, without permit, yet filled with spacial, problematic and material ingenuity,” said Eisenschmidt.

Rapid economic, urban, demographic, technology-based, political and other changes have shaped the city. Now, more than 21.2 million people occupy its metropolitan area, making it the most populous in the Western Hemisphere.

In a seminar that inspired the course, Eisenschmidt and students looked at architectural and urban typologies within the city. For the design class, students chose a topic for field research in Mexico.

The group visited places of architectural significance, too, including a house designed by Pritzker Prize-winner Louis Barragán. During their stay, they met with famous architecture offices, gave presentations at the City Laboratory of Mexico City and collaborated with Mexico’s National Autonomous University (UNAM).

The UIC Office of Vice Chancellor for Research (OVCR) funded the trip.

“It was an incredible experience,” said Andrew Lang. His research focused on the power that plazas have to control what the city looks like. With the group, he went to the area’s main squares: Zócalo, Plaza de Santo Domingo and Plaza de Santa Veracruz. There, he took an interest in the plazas’ columns and building facades.

“Researching in the city, actually going there and experiencing it for ourselves, was completely different from Google Earth and reading papers written about our subjects,” Lang said.

The experience continues to help the students. They’re using their newfound knowledge for design projects, which they’ll present at the end of the semester.

Katrina Reyes, whose project focused on the use of fountains, learned more about the architectural repercussions of the megalopolis and larger urban trends. Things like pollution, climate change and natural disasters, such as earthquakes, have made the amount of drinkable water in Mexico City scarce.

“I’m designing an aqueduct that will serve as a monumental object, to remind people in the city of what the water used to be,” Reyes said. Her aqueduct is meant to deliver water from a lake to Xochimilco and Tlalpan, where the only source of safe drinking water for some is truck deliveries.

“(The trip) was really eye-opening,” said Reyes.

Eisenschmidt thanked OVCR for making the travel possible and added that the class will impact students for years to come.

“I cannot stress enough how important it was and how much it contributes to the students’ understanding of the world of architecture and diversity of cultures,” he said.

HALF OF THE ARCHITECTURE THAT IS BUILT THERE IS BUILT WITHOUT REGULATION, WITHOUT PERMIT, YET FILLED WITH SPACIAL, PROBLEMATIC AND MATERIAL INGENUITY.
Nikita Pillai joined the UIC College of Medicine Mentors Program to get to know physicians and see what their daily lives are like. She shadowed a neurology resident, and had the chance to see her neuroanatomy coursework come to life in the clinic.

“Working alongside my mentor has given me a chance to see how the things I’m learning now will be put into use just a few short years from now, and that’s pretty exciting,” Pillai said.

For the past 10 years, UIC medical students have had the chance to gain early hands-on training, thanks to the mentors program, which was founded and led for six years by Jennifer Kwan, a resident in internal medicine at UI Health and a graduate of UIC’s Medical Scientist Training Program.

Kwan recalls one of the main drivers for developing the program.

“Team-based learning and one-on-one interaction with early clinical exposure helps students shift away from lecture-based learning to experience-based learning, and helps students apply their coursework to clinical medicine, reinforcing their knowledge,” she said.

Chris Ochoa, a mentee in the inaugural class of the program who went on to be a program leader, fondly remembers the program’s influence on him during training.

“The mentors program allowed me to be in the hospital witnessing the practice of medicine firsthand within months of starting medical school,” said Ochoa, now a pulmonary critical care attending physician in the Chicago area.

“It helped to inform my thinking through my non-clinical years, knowing what I was learning would someday impact the lives of patients. It also allowed me to flavor many different specialties and determine the right fit for my future career. Years later as a leader in the program, it was incredibly rewarding to pass what I had learned to the younger generation of trainees.”

More than 100 residents, fellows and students celebrated the 10-year anniversary during a symposium March 16. Over the past decade, more than 1,500 students, fellows, residents and attending physicians have participated in the program.

Initially starting with 10 specialties, the mentors program has grown and now offers more than 20 specialty options for students, including neurosurgery, cardiology, dermatology, pulmonary critical care, orthopedic surgery, general surgery, radiology, anesthesiology and more. The program spans the entire spectrum of training, including first- and second-year medical student mentees, who receive feedback on write-ups and presentations of clinical cases they saw from fourth-year medical student tutors. Fellows, residents and attending physicians serve as clinical mentors to help tie in what mentees are learning in their medical school curriculum to what is seen in real-world clinical settings.

“Knowledge in the medical specialties continues to grow at a rapid rate, and it has been insightful to see how new scientific insights have been incorporated into clinical practice over the past 10 years,” Kwan said. “Trainees are at the forefront of incorporating new evidence-based knowledge to improve patient outcomes.

“The mentors in the program have the
opportunity to show their mentees how these new developments can be applied to patients, from use of GLP agonists in diabetes and novel devices for atrial fibrillation (a condition that significantly increases risk of stroke) in cardiology to new chemotherapeutic agents in cancer therapy and novel pain control implants in neurosurgery."

The program has offered opportunities to network with specialists and some participants have even gotten involved and successfully contributed to research projects.

Darian Esfahani, a sixth-year neurosurgery resident at UI Health, has helped inspire the next generation of neurosurgeons.

"The UIC mentors program is the perfect opportunity to introduce students at the start of their career to the art of medicine, and train them to approach residency and practice with courage, passion and humility," Esfahani said.

"For surgeons, the mentors program brings back the apprenticeship model of medicine, often lost in modern education, allowing students to build lasting relationships with residents... and provides students with the opportunity to get involved in early clinical research that is invaluable for residency applications."

Esfahani has mentored about 15 students through the program, and has co-authored publications with at least 10 of them.

"We've had a definite upswing in the number of medical students who have applied to neurosurgery over the last several years, thanks to the mentors program, many of whom have matched at excellent, prestigious programs around the country," Esfahani said.

Fred Zar, internal medicine program director at UI Health and vice chair for education in the department of medicine, has mentored students since the program began in 2008.

"One of the reasons we started this program was for the mentorship part — it does help you guide your career pretty well," Zar said.

Shaleen Vasavada, co-chair of the program, was a former participant who worked with a surgery mentor in the program.

"By learning very early on what surgeons really do helps them decide what kind of doctor they want to be," Vasavada said.

"Almost a majority of students change their minds, not just once, but multiple times. Originally as an M1, I was a mentee and it was my first clinical program. It helped me pick my specialty."

Teresa Liu, a former mentee and program chair and now second-year internal medicine resident at Stanford, said the early years of medical school are "lecture-intense years."

"The early exposure to faculty and resident helps our students navigate the path toward choosing a specialty and also provides an educational component, which, regardless of what specialties the students ultimately decide on, gives them a broad view of the field of medicine, an essential aspect during these formative training years," she said.

Jarna Shah is a third-year anesthesiology resident at UI Health and a former chair of the program.

"One of the most wonderful aspects of the mentors program is observing how the organization has grown and evolved in the last decade," she said. "Every group is defined by its people. And the individuals leading the mentors program each year have dedicated themselves to improving the program for its future generations."

For more information or to participate, email mentorsprogram@gmail.com or view the group’s Facebook page, bit.ly/2GrP9J9

"Team-based learning and one-on-one interaction with early clinical exposure helps students shift away from lecture-based learning to experience-based learning," says Jennifer Kwan, founder of the program. (Photo: Ashley Chin)
**APRIL 6–14 EXHIBIT**

**AS WE RECOMPOSE**
Gallery 400 exhibit features work from MFA students Daniel Haddad Troconis, Sarah O’Neil, Jennifer Webster, and Emme Williamson.  
*Exhibit Hours: Tues.–Fri.: 10 a.m.–6 p.m.; Sat.: Noon–6 p.m.; and by appointment*  
gallery400.uic.edu

**APRIL 12 SPECIAL EVENT**

**Life Lessons from a Chicago Progressive**

**BOOK TALK WITH DICK SIMPSON**

Simpson, author of *The Good Fight*, is a former Chicago alderman and UIC political science professor, director of undergraduate studies.  
3-4:30 p.m.  
Room 1-470 Daley Library

**APRIL 13-21 UIC THEATRE PRODUCTION**

**FLORISSANT & CANFIELD**

UIC Theatre production of Kristiana Rae Colón’s work, directed by Derrick Sanders. At the intersection of tear gas and teddy bear memorials, a loose alliance of neighbors in Ferguson, Missouri, find themselves hurled into the national spotlight. Documenting the wild, messy birth of a civil rights renaissance in a digital age and the vanguard of the Black Lives Matter movement, Colon’s drama is timely, powerful and real.  
7:30 p.m. April 13–14, 19–21  
2 p.m. April 15, 21  
10 a.m. April 18  
themefm.uic.edu

**APRIL 16 SPECIAL EVENT**

**‘DANGER IN SPRINGFIELD: CONSTITUTIONAL PENSION PROTECTION UNDER ATTACK’**

Featuring Illinois lobbyist Richard Lockhart, keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the UIC chapter of the State Universities Annuitants Association.  
11 a.m.–noon  
Thompson Rooms, Student Center West

**APRIL 18 SPECIAL EVENT**

**FIT4LIFE**

Annual health and fitness expo held at the UIC Rec Center featuring a wheelchair basketball tournament, fitness assessments, adaptive rock-climbing and vendors from across Chicago.  
3-6 p.m.  
Student Recreation Facility

**APRIL 25 SPECIAL EVENT**

**ASIAN AMERICAN AWARENESS MONTH KEYNOTE EVENT FEATURING KINJAZ**

Event includes master class with Kinjaz, known for their intricate choreography style and creative storytelling through dance and new media.  
6:30–10 p.m.  
UIC Forum  
Tickets required, bit.ly/2jdFszM

Send information about campus events at today.uic.edu/submit-an-event
New Mile Square clinic in South Shore opens

By Jackie Carey — jmcarey@uic.edu

The University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences System celebrated March 26 the relocation of its community health center in Chicago’s South Shore neighborhood to larger, more centrally located clinic space during a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The new UI Health Mile Square Health Center clinic in South Shore, which is located at 7037 S. Stony Island Ave., offers neighborhood patients expanded hours and a host of additional services, including immediate care, behavioral health counseling and dental care.

“We are proud to bring additional health care services to our South Shore practice, and we believe this new location will help us to better meet the needs of the men, women and families living in the neighborhood,” said Henry Taylor, chief executive officer of Mile Square Health Center, a network of 13 federally qualified health centers throughout Chicago.

The new clinic is about 1,220 square feet larger than its prior location, which was at 7131 S. Jeffrey Blvd. The new clinic first opened to patients early this year.

“Mile Square has a long legacy of providing comprehensive, affordable care to vulnerable communities in Chicago,” said Taylor, “and we believe that this investment in the South Shore clinic will help us advance that mission, reduce health disparities and improve the health outcomes of this community."

Historically, the South Shore clinic has served nearly 3,000 patients for more than 6,500 patient visits each year. Taylor anticipates that number to increase, thanks to the new services being offered at the clinic.

Robert Winn, who oversees UI Health’s community-based clinics, says bringing expanded services to the South Shore neighborhood is one more positive step forward in the institution’s efforts to eliminate health disparities.

“Community health centers need to be about more than walk-in appointments and occasional treatments for illnesses or infections,” Winn said, “and that’s the model in which we are investing.”

“Adding behavioral health and dental care is the tip of the iceberg,” said Winn, associate vice chancellor for community-based practice at the University of Illinois at Chicago and director of the University of Illinois Cancer Center. In 2014, Mile Square Health Center became the first federally qualified health center in Chicago to offer urgent care and specialty care at its main clinic on 1220 S. Wood St.

Wood St.

The South Shore clinic is the first Mile Square location to offer on-site dental services, including exams, x-rays, cleanings, fillings, extractions, dentures and crowns. Students from the College of Dentistry, one of seven UIC health sciences colleges, rotate through the clinic thereby learning community-based dentistry.

“UI Health has an unparalleled wealth of educational, research and clinical expertise within its colleges, hospital and clinics,” said Dr. Robert Barish, vice chancellor for health affairs at UIC. “Mile Square Health Center in South Shore is an example of how UI Health can reach across disciplines — in this case, dentistry and medical care — to the benefit of Chicago communities.”

Join us for a book talk with *The Good Fight* author

**Dick Simpson**

UIC Political Science Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies and former Chicago Alderman

**Thursday, April 12, 2018**

3-4:30 p.m.

**Richard J. Daley Library**

Room 1-470

Autographed copies of *The Good Fight* will be available for purchase at the event for 20% off.

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Google award to aid positive empathy project

By Brian Flood — bflood@uic.edu

With a grant from Google, a UIC psychologist will lead a project to identify the features of personal stories that trigger empathy and determine if empathy causes stories to go viral.

Sylvia Morelli, assistant professor of psychology, earned the prestigious award through the annual Google Faculty Research Awards program, which supports world-class research in computer science and related topics, such as machine learning, machine perception, natural language processing and quantum computing.

Google received more than 1,000 proposals from 46 countries and over 360 universities. After expert reviews and committee discussions, 152 projects were chosen for funding in the recently announced 2017 round cohort.

The $50,000 award will fund a graduate student for one year and provides both faculty and students the opportunity to work directly with Google researchers and engineers.

Morelli’s project, “Predicting empathy for others’ stories with machine learning,” builds on current work in her lab, where researchers have already collected more than 700 stories in which people describe the best and worst events of their lives.

“As a next step, we will ask 1,000 online participants to read these personal stories and rate how much empathy they feel for the storyteller,” said Morelli, who directs the Empathy and Social Connection Lab at UIC.

Morelli’s team will then see if the characteristics of the reader — such as age, gender, race, and personality — predict how much empathy the reader feels.

In addition, the research team will test if the vividness of the story, intensity of the storyteller’s emotions, or details of the storyteller’s circumstances predict readers’ empathy.

In the project’s second phase, the researchers will find first-person narratives from websites like Humans of New York, Story Corps and Upworthy, and investigate whether readers’ empathy makes stories go viral. Using a machine learning algorithm, they will determine which psychological and linguistic features of the story predict readers’ empathy and how frequently a story is shared and liked on websites.

“We hope the results of our studies can be used to help people communicate more effectively and create content that others care about,” Morelli said.

Students win Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship awards

By Carlos Sadovi — csadovi@uic.edu

All seven students from Illinois who are recipients of the 2017-18 Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship awards are students at UIC.

The program is the nation’s largest nonprofit organization devoted to providing college scholarships for Asian and Pacific Islander Americans. This year, there were 220 students selected for the scholarships, which range from one-time payments of $2,500, to multi-year $5,000 awards to help pay for their college education.

UIC’s winners include Carlo Ahumada from Berwyn; Nang Man from Wheaton; Nancy Bu from Mundelein; Ju Kim from Lincolnwood; and Tho Nguyen, Komal Sharma and Lahney Vilayhong from Chicago.

UIC is an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution and has received support from the U.S. Department of Education’s Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution program, also known as AANAPISI. The AANAPISI program is one of eight federally designated Minority Serving Institution programs and was established by Congress in 2007 as part of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

The AANAPISI initiative is designed to offer programs to support the recruitment, retention and graduation of Asian American, Pacific Islander and English-language learners but is also open to other students.

The program provides scholarships, expands the number of Asian and Pacific Islander American students in universities and mobilizes local resources to help foster economic development. The scholarships are available annually to students attending partner campuses including UIC.

To be selected, students must demonstrate commitment to community service, strong leadership, solid academic achievement and financial need to pursue a college education.

Neil Horikoshi, president and executive director of the scholarship fund said the fund is proud to support students, “who would not otherwise be able to afford a college education” and to “become role models and future leaders in their communities.”

The Coca-Cola Foundation, the General Mills Foundation, Hilton Worldwide, USA Funds, the Walmart Foundation, the Walt Disney Company, and the Wells Fargo Foundation support the scholarship program.
Women’s basketball coach has strong background, Chicago roots

By Dan Yopchick — yopchick@uic.edu

Tasha Pointer, the new head women’s basketball coach, brings a wealth of experience at major programs, as well as Chicago roots, to the Flames program.

“I am very excited about the future of UIC women’s basketball under Coach Pointer,” said Garrett Klassy, director of athletics. “Her background of growing up in Chicago, to playing at Rutgers at the highest level, to coaching at many very successful locations, makes her the right fit for UIC. Her ability to coach, recruit and relate to her players really stood out during the interview process. I’m confident that Tasha will be the coach that will move this program forward and lead us to unprecedented heights.”

Pointer spent the 2017-18 season as an assistant coach at Northwestern, following a two-year stint at St. John’s. She helped lead the Red Storm to the Big East tournament championship and an NCAA tournament berth in 2016. Prior to her time in Queens, Pointer was on the legendary C. Vivian Stringer’s staff at Rutgers for eight years. In that time, she was part of six NCAA tournament teams, including an Elite Eight squad and a Sweet Sixteen group.

“I AM ENTHUSED TO STEP INTO THE POSITION OF HEAD COACH OF THE UIC WOMEN’S BASKETBALL TEAM.”

“It is an honor and humbling experience to lead the University of Illinois at Chicago’s women’s basketball program,” Pointer said. “I grew up locally on Chicago’s West Side, refining my basketball skills against some of the greatest individuals to play the game. I also developed as a student with the Chicago Public Schools system, primarily due to a supportive network of teachers and administrators who challenged me daily to be purposeful with life. Their collective work grants me the opportunity to return to this great city and impact more than I ever imagined.

“I am enthused to step into the position of head coach of the UIC women’s basketball team.”

Pointer has mentored four conference Players of the Year, two Rookies of the Year, 18 all-conference selections, and over a dozen WNBA draft picks. She was instrumental in recruiting some of the nation’s top high school players, resulting in three recruiting classes that ranked third in the country and an additional top-10 group.

A Parade First Team All-American and the Chicago Sun-Times Player of the Year out of Whitney Young High School in Chicago, Pointer starred at Rutgers. She led the Scarlet Knights to their first Final Four appearance in 2000 and remains the program’s all-time leader in assists, and second on the steals list. During her senior season, she led the NCAA in assists on her way to becoming an honorable mention All-American and a finalist for both the Naismith Player of the Year and Nancy Lieberman Awards. Pointer scored 1,456 points in her decorated career and accumulated four triple-doubles. She was named to the Big East 25th Anniversary Hall of Fame Team, and is a member of the Rutgers Hall of Fame.

Before returning to her alma mater, Pointer coached for two seasons at Columbia and one at Xavier, where the Musketeers won the Atlantic 10 championship. During Pointer’s lone season at Northwestern, the coaching staff helped lead the squad to a second round appearance in the Big Ten tournament after an opening round win over Wisconsin.

At St. John’s, Pointer’s commitment to defense was evident. The Red Storm ranked in the top three in the Big East in scoring defense, field goal percentage defense and rebounding defense. Two different players were named Big East Defensive Player of the Year in Pointer’s two seasons, and three Red Storm players earned First Team All-Conference status. St. John’s cruised to the 2015 Big East tournament championship, allowing just 51.7 points per game in their three victories.

Pointer and the Rutgers staff experienced tremendous success in the first part of her tenure there, then after a season of adversity, showed resilience as they rebuilt the program back into an NCAA force.

The Scarlet Knights played in the second weekend of the NCAA tournament in each of Pointer’s first two seasons on the bench. They advanced to the Elite Eight in 2008 and the following year, Rutgers made the Sweet Sixteen.

NCAA appearances continued to reward the Scarlet Knights over the next three seasons, which saw Rutgers win 30 Big East games overall.

Pointer helped engineer a return to the NCAA tournament in 2015. In Pointer’s one season at Xavier, she worked with freshman forward Amber Harris, who became the Atlantic 10 Rookie of the Year in addition to being named to the First Team, All-Rookie Team, and All-Defensive Team. The Musketeers won 26 games, were the A-10 tournament champions, and appeared in the NCAA tournament.

Pointer’s reputation as a tenacious recruiter is well earned. She brought the nation’s top prep point guard to Rutgers in 2013, among other top talent over the course of her career.

A four-year starter at Rutgers, Pointer became one of the top point guards in program history. She was the 1998 Big East Rookie of the Year and a two-time First Team selection. Pointer led her class to 10 wins in the NCAA tournament, earning two NCAA All-Tournament Team selections. She led the Big East in assists twice. The WBCA and the Associate Press both placed her on their honorable mention All-America teams twice. She was voted the team’s MVP or co-MVP all four years in Piscataway.

Pointer left Rutgers as the school’s all-time leader – men’s and women’s – in assists and steals. She still holds the NCAA tournament record for assists in a game, with 18 against Stephen F. Austin in 2001. She led the Scarlet Knights to unprecedented success in the NCAA tournament, where they won multiple games in three seasons. She graduated as the eighth all-time leading scorer and still has the top two single season assist totals in program history.

Pointer became a high school legend during her playing days at Whitney Young on the Near West Side. She averaged 25.4 points per game her senior year and led the Dolphins to the Public League championship in 1995. She was rated the No. 10 player in the country as a senior by Blue Star Report and was a first team Nike/WBCA All-American, in addition to earning Parade All-American status. She was named to the Chicago Tribune’s RedEye All-Chicago Women’s Legends Team alongside such luminaries as Candace Parker and Tamika Catchings.

Pointer received her bachelor’s degree in journalism and mass media in 2001 and a master’s degree in education administration and supervision in 2003 from Rutgers.

She is married to Kwabena Yamoah and they have two daughters, Nariah and Anaijah.