East Meets West
Collaboration examines how gut microbes affect athletic skills / pg. 6/7

Study abroad is possible for all, says Gilman Scholar

Craniofacial Center camp helps kids boost confidence

UIC pitchers selected in MLB draft

2 - student voice
4 - campus news
9 - deaths
12 - sports
I’m a Gilman Scholar: study abroad is possible

By Julia Awawdah-Garcia — jawwd2@uic.edu

Going to Japan wasn’t an overnight process. It took time, serious decision-making and hair-yanking stress.

Since I was young, I’ve always liked the pop culture, food and the traditional attributes that are still vividly present in modern-day Japan. As I’ve grown older, the desire to learn even more about this country grew, as well. Realistically, my desire alone couldn’t take me there. Many who aspire to go abroad undeniably face the similar issue of, “How am I going to pay for this?” When I saw program costs, I flatly told my study abroad advisor there was no way this was going to happen, and I let go of the idea of going. Let’s be real — I take out loans to pay for school just like many other students. The reality was that I simply could not afford this adventure.

Nonetheless, my advisor encouraged me to pursue another avenue: scholarships. I had never pursued scholarships — I didn’t have straight A’s, but I possess a desire to learn, gain knowledge and share what I know with others.

Thanks to the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship, I went halfway across the world last fall to Nagasaki, Japan, and created life-long relationships with students at my university in Japan. As a Hispanic, low-income student, I was able to go because of support from the Gilman scholarship.

Many students think that study abroad isn’t for low-income students, but if one looks in the right places, it’s possible for anyone.

The Association of International Educators (NAFSA) reports that 5.9 percent of African-American/Black, 8.4 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander, 9.7 percent of Hispanic/Latin American and 3.9% multi-racial U.S. students studied abroad in the 2015-2016 year. This is a considerably low percentage of students of different ethnic backgrounds. Students of all backgrounds should pursue study abroad for their future, understanding of diversity and their own personal growth.

I learned many things in Japan that made me grow immensely as an individual. I joined a conversation partner program, where I had the opportunity to learn Japanese, helped my friends learn English, and made many more wonderful friends who taught me about Japanese culture. I also visited landmarks, shrines and other beautiful places in Nagasaki that are rich in history. Days before I departed back to the United States, I went to Peace Park, a park that’s filled with many statues donated by other countries as a symbol of peace, and the Atomic Bomb Museum. This was a very important trip for me to make, as I believe most of the Western world has labeled Nagasaki as the place that was impacted by a nuclear weapon. I wanted to learn more about this event in history and share with others that although Nagasaki’s history is inevitably enveloped by the A-bomb, this city’s history and culture goes beyond that — from Japan’s first international trade port, which created a strong Dutch presence there, to Sofukuji Temple, a 400-year-old temple that is still taken care of to this day, and so much more.

Study abroad isn’t only the adventure of a lifetime, but the opportunity to learn from others and the diverse world around you. Don’t let the costs impede you before you try.
State budget allocates 2 percent funding increase for university system

By Franciscia Corona — fcoron3@uic.edu

Gov. Bruce Rauner signed a state budget bill into law June 4 that will provide increased funding for the University of Illinois System.

The fiscal year 2019 budget, which begins July 1, will allocate $594.6 million to the University of Illinois System for the day-to-day operations. The funding is up 2 percent, or $11.6 million, from the fiscal 2018 appropriations and includes the system’s first state capital appropriations since fiscal year 2010.

The second consecutive, full-year budget reflects a return to stability after a historic two-year budget stalemate that ended in 2017, system leaders wrote in an official announcement.

“Now, another year of investment by the state will enable us to continue our strong, positive momentum toward the high-aspiration goals of our Strategic Framework and associated plans,” they added. “We are grateful to legislatures, including our U of I Caucus, for the bipartisan cooperation to forge a budget agreement.”

The new spending plan will allow leaders to extend affordability efforts, such as the four-year, in-state tuition freeze; grow enrollment; recruit world-class faculty; and support groundbreaking initiatives with positive social impacts.

Funding will also help expand facilities for academics and research excellence. System-wide, $145.2 million will be used for capital projects, including $116 million in funding for projects delayed by the budget gridlock, such as the Advanced Chemical Technology Building at UIC, the Public Safety Building in Springfield and the Integrated Bioresearch Laboratory in Urbana-Champaign.

A U of I-led research center called the Illinois Innovation Network (IIN) and its primary hub, the Discovery Partners Institute (DPI), will receive $500 million in support. The money will go toward designing and constructing the DPI, which will be based in Chicago. City and system leaders hope the hub will accelerate innovation, discovery, job creation and economic growth in Illinois.

Other highlights from the budget increase include $401 million for the Monetary Award Program statewide and $25 million to fund a new state scholarship program, which will encourage in-state students to enroll in Illinois colleges and stem an outmigration of talent to other states. The U of I System will be asked to match the state’s contribution.

TransUnion, UIC announce endowed professorship of data science

By Brian Flood — bflood@uic.edu

As Chicago continues its growth in the information and technology sectors, two local powerhouses are joining forces to help address the mounting need for data science expertise.

TransUnion, a leading global information solutions provider headquartered in Chicago, has partnered with UIC’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for the creation of the TransUnion Professor of Data Science. The endowed professorship will combine TransUnion’s expertise and experiences in helping millions of consumers either gain access to more affordable loans or to prevent identity theft and other online fraud.

Aschairtdata science research and applications.

“We are truly grateful to TransUnion for their generous support and partnership,” said Astrida Orle Tantillo, dean of UIC’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

“The TransUnion Professor will bring a wealth of expertise to our mathematics, statistics, and computer science program; and support our goal of graduating well-rounded data science students who have the critical thinking, problem-solving and communications skills necessary to fill important industry gaps and meet future workforce demands.”

TransUnion has developed numerous innovative solutions to not only help business customers, but also abide by their commitment to “Information for Good,” helping millions of consumers either gain access to more affordable loans or to prevent identity theft and other online fraud.

The decision to partner with UIC’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences stemmed from this commitment, as it presented the opportunity to reach an incredibly diverse population and expand new career opportunities in Chicago, which is widely considered an emerging data science talent hub.
The UIC College of Medicine’s department of medicine is participating in a unique study that will test the efficacy of a program designed to help faculty members recognize and reduce biased behavior.

The program, called BRIM for Bias Reduction in Internal Medicine, was developed by researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Its aim is to help make participants aware of biases and cultural stereotypes they may subscribe to, even if they do so unconsciously.

“Nobody thinks that their thoughts or actions are based on internalized stereotypes or biases, but the truth is that these ideas can be so ingrained that even the most sensitive person can be influenced by them in their behavior at work, towards colleagues or towards students,” said Dr. Patricia Finn, the Earl M. Bane Professor of Medicine and head of the department of medicine at UIC. “BRIM has been shown in early trials to be effective at helping faculty recognize and reduce that biased behavior. I knew immediately after I saw those results presented at a conference that I wanted our department of medicine to participate in the further evaluation of the program.”

The UIC department of medicine is the first to sign up to participate in a larger, nationwide study of the BRIM program, which was developed by Dr. Molly Carnes, professor of medicine, psychiatry and industrial and systems engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and colleagues at Madison. Carnes says the ongoing study includes 15 departments of medicine and will last approximately two years at each institution.

Providing a good departmental climate through reducing race, gender and other biases can help increase faculty retention, explained Carnes. “The average cost of losing a faculty member exceeds $400,000, so climate is also important on a cost-basis,” said Carnes. “Women who work in more supportive climates also have lower levels of work/family conflict, even if they work up to 70 hours per week.”

“UI Health — our health enterprise comprised of UIC’s seven health science colleges and the University of Illinois Hospital and Clinics — is dedicated to advancing health equity for all. That commitment is rooted in a faculty and staff who are aware of and can recognize biases and inequities they themselves might hold,” said Dr. Robert Barish, vice chancellor for health affairs at the University of Illinois at Chicago. “Engaging in the BRIM program is one way that we can foster this mission in our interactions with our fellow faculty, staff, patients and students.”

Professional interactions, performance evaluations and hiring decisions can also be inadvertently influenced by opinions people hold about others based on who they are, where they’re from or the language they speak without getting to know the individual, Carnes explained. Race, gender, age, sexual preference and even weight can play into these biases. As a result, some people and groups experience a more positive and supportive work environment than faculty or individuals of other groups.

At the heart of the BRIM program is a three-hour workshop titled, “Breaking the Bias Habit: Bias Reduction in Internal Medicine.” Carnes and colleagues designed the program to help participants recognize their own biased behaviors, and provide strategies for reducing those behaviors.

Some of the strategies include perspective taking — or putting oneself in another’s shoes, and stereotype replacement, where a stereotypical perception is questioned and replaced with real information based on an individual.

In the ongoing BRIM study, half of the UIC department of medicine’s faculty and staff will receive the BRIM program delivered by its developers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The other half will receive BRIM training from their UIC colleagues, known as “BRIM implementers,” who have been identified and trained by the Madison researchers. Participants will complete a survey before BRIM starts, the climate of the department and the respondent’s feelings about the value of the BRIM program and expectations.

Three months after the workshop is delivered, participants in both groups will complete a follow-up survey asking again about the climate of the department, their feelings about BRIM and if they have noticed changes in their own behavior that resulted from BRIM.

“Our program looks at biases as habits, and these habits, like any others, can be changed by increasing awareness and supporting self-efficacy in the practice of evidence-based strategies like those presented through BRIM,” Finn said. “While this program focuses on faculty, we look forward to using these skills and tools in training the next generation of physicians.”
Craniofacial Center hosts ‘boot camp’ to build confidence, teamwork in kids

By Jackie Carey — jmcarey@uic.edu

Nearly 30 kids, age 10 to 14, are participating in a UI Health Craniofacial Center camp meant to help adolescents and preadolescents at risk for low self-esteem and high levels of insecurity build confidence and embrace teamwork.

“We want kids who think, ‘I can’t do that,’ to realize how much strength and potential they have,” said Dr. Janine Rosenberg, a pediatric psychologist in the center.

“Research has shown that kids who look different are likely to have higher levels of anxiety and fear of rejection that can significantly impact their confidence when it comes to working with others.”

Of the kids participating in the camp, which is called Project BUILD, for building understanding and individual leadership development, about half are patients of the center who have craniofacial differences, such as cleft lip and palate or a genetic disorder.

“Research has shown that kids who look different are likely to have higher levels of anxiety and fear of rejection that can significantly impact their confidence when it comes to working with others,” said Rosenberg, UIC assistant professor of clinical psychology. “We wanted to provide a safe and, equally important, fun space where kids can build skills like teamwork, trust and confidence.”

The other participants are kids without craniofacial conditions from Chicago’s Walt Disney Magnet School. Rosenberg says having a mix of patients and non-patients is helpful for creating a sense of equality in the group.

To host the camp, which is sponsored by the Face the Future Foundation, the center is collaborating with Hot Ground Gym, an activity program founded in 2013 by two military veterans with a mission of shaping today’s kids into strong and confident individuals through fun and physical activity.

One activity, for example, is a trust walk — one partner wears a blindfold while the other has to guide him or her across a series of obstacles, saying “duck here” or “step here.” Another activity has the group lifting one of their peers, who is sitting in a canoe and moving him or her across the room. Following the activities, kids will participate in a group session led by Rosenberg.

Kids and parents will fill out a survey when the camp is complete. The goal is to see an improvement in self-assessed resilience, as measured by statements like, “I am able to adapt when changes occur,” and “I believe I can achieve my goals, even if there are obstacles.”

Participants meet once a month, through June, on the UIC campus. The camp’s theme is “no failure,” a message Rosenberg says she hopes will remind participants they are not limited by their differences.
App developed at UIC to track mood, predict bipolar disorder episodes

By Sharon Parmet — sparmet@uic.edu

An app that one day may help predict and monitor manic and depressive episodes in people with bipolar disorder is now available in the App Store.

The app, called BiAffect, was designed by researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago, along with collaborators at the University of Michigan, Arbormoon Software and Sage Bionetworks. The app unobtrusively monitors keyboard dynamics metadata, such as typing speed and rhythm, mistakes in texts, and the use of backspace and auto-correct. The metadata, but not the content of the text, is analyzed using an artificial intelligence-based machine learning approach to identify digital biomarkers of manic and depressive episodes in people with bipolar disorder. The UIC team was led by Dr. Alex Leow, associate professor of psychiatry and bioengineering in the College of Medicine, and Peter Nelson, professor of computer science and dean of the UIC College of Engineering.

To download BiAffect, users must first opt into a study led by its developers at UIC that centers on the app. Users agree that their de-identified metadata will be used by the researchers to help them continue to search for digital biomarkers of bipolar disorder and to further refine and improve the app. People who don’t opt into a study led by its developers at UIC that centers on the app.

BiAffect will be able to view their own metadata, including their cell phone usage over time, number of keystrokes, use of spellcheck and more.

“We are excited that our app is now available for anyone to download for free,” said Nelson. “We think that this crowdsourced app-based study will soon lead to digital technologies that act as an ‘early alert system’ for people with bipolar disorder to help them see manic and depressive episodes coming, and take action to mitigate the effects of those episodes. Just being aware of them is a step forward for the millions who live with this mood disorder.”

“The app isn’t just for people with bipolar disorder,” said Leow. “We want people without mood disorders to use the app as well so that we can better understand keystroke dynamics in healthy adults versus those with bipolar disorder. This will allow us to further hone in on the virtual biomarkers of bipolar disorder or even mood in general.”

In May 2017, the app won the Mood Challenge for ResearchKit, a contest that called on researchers to come up with new ways to study mood disorders using Apple’s ResearchKit, an open-source platform for creating iOS apps. The researchers used the $200,000 grand prize to continue to refine and launch their app in the App Store. The Mood Challenge is a New Venture Fund program administered by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Bipolar disorder, which causes extreme mood swings between the emotional highs of manic episodes and low periods of depression, affects approximately 5.7 million, or 2.6 percent, of adult Americans, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Diagnosis relies on careful history-taking and examination.

In previous research, Leow and Nelson, in collaboration with Kelly Ryan, clinical assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of Michigan, completed a pilot study of 30 participants that showed altered keystroke dynamics correlated with depressive and manic episodes in people with bipolar disorder.

“During a manic episode, people with bipolar disorder often exhibit common behaviors such as talking really, really fast and acting in an impulsive manner,” Leow said. “So it is natural that they also exhibit similar abnormalities in non-verbal communications that are typed on their phones.”

Spell-check requires the smartphone user to pause and determine whether to edit or accept suggestions made by auto-correct rather than simply keep typing.

“People in the midst of a manic episode frequently have diminished self-control, so it is not surprising that our pilot data suggested that some of them tend to blow through the spell-check alerts,” Leow said.

During depressive episodes, typing a long message may become laborious, and messages tend to be shorter, she explained.

“Unobtrusively monitoring health from an iPhone combines low-cost scalability with far-reaching impact to potentially improve the lives of millions of people,” said Nelson.
There’s something living in the gut, and for athletes, it could be one reason why they’re better at what they do.

Microbes, or tiny bacteria, exist in everyone’s intestines in what are called microbial communities. These small communities, which are acquired at birth and influenced by things like lifestyle traits, medical history and dietary habits, can largely impact behavior and overall health. UIC researchers are focusing on another area: exercise.

“We know bacteria can actively contribute to energy metabolism for the host,” said Jarrad Hampton-Marcell, a Ph.D. student in biological sciences. As a scientist at Argonne National Laboratory, he’s looked at germs in all types of environments, including waterways, gymnasiums and hospitals.

For microbial communities in humans, he’s studying how changes in exercise influence microbes and how microbes impact athletic performance, starting with UIC swimmers.

Hampton-Marcell has tracked student athletes during their training seasons in two pilot studies, focusing on intensity, yardage, body composition and changes happening in their gut through fecal samples. Their findings aren’t what you would expect.

After observing UIC swimmers during their competitive peaks, for example, Hampton-Marcell and his mentors from the east and west sides of campus guessed that athletes who didn’t change their diet while tapering off their training would gain anywhere from 3 to 9 pounds. That wasn’t the case.

“We still have to work up some of the data to better understand that,” said project collaborator Craig Horswill, clinical associate professor of kinesiology and nutrition in the College of Applied Health Sciences.

Athletes could be naturally cutting back on calories, said Horswill. Exercise and the microbiome could also be keeping weight gain at bay while stalling fatigue and improving performance.

“There seems to be an inverse relationship between some of the organisms, where one is growing and the other is actually decreasing simultaneously,” added Hampton-Marcell.

“One bacteria commonly associated with carbohydrate breakdown seemed to be differentially abundant as training tapered,” added co-collaborator Rachel Poretsky, assistant professor of biological sciences in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Poretsky noted that this is the first time researchers have followed a shift in athlete training that is reflected in the microbiome. “It gives us an indication of the organisms that might be important,” she said.

Hampton-Marcell’s next question: how does this diverse, energy-fueling microbiome get there, and do these results reflect a larger trend?

The team is pulling data about athletes from universities and organizations around the world to find some answers. Collaborators or sources include the University of California San Diego, U.S. and Canadian databases, and publicly available data in Ireland and China.

“Dietary habits are going to be different,” Hampton-Marcell said. “The population pool is going to be different, but [athletes] are going to be engaged in some of the routines that we have, such as physical activity, stress load, things of that nature.”

Their results could support observed links between exercise, performance and overall health — in the competitive sphere and for everyday people.

“IT HAS APPLICATIONS IN THINGS LIKE developing probiotics, providing biomarkers for exercise, manipulating an athlete’s gut community, providing variable conditions to help regulate an athlete’s energy expenditure, or determining whether exercise manipulates the gut community in ways that can be replicated in people who are not athletes to help with problems like inflammation, diabetes and obesity,” Poretsky said.

Eventually, the team hopes to do a treatment study, using placebo and a specific fiber or probiotics to determine if and how well the “good” bacteria, which is associated with less inflammation, less stress in the body, and better athletic performance, can be maintained in athletes.

“We want to see if these things hold true,” Poretsky said.
A three-year, $750,000 grant from the National Institute of Mental Health will help researchers determine whether the stabilization of ovarian hormones estradiol and progesterone can help lower symptoms associated with suicidality among females at risk for suicide.

While estradiol and progesterone rise and fall over the course of the menstrual cycle, the hormones plummet to their lowest levels just before and during menses.

“In most women, estradiol and progesterone are associated with feelings of well-being and calm,” said Tori Eisenlohr-Moul, assistant professor of psychiatry in the UIC College of Medicine, and principal investigator on the grant. “In our previous research in females with chronic suicidality, stabilizing both estradiol and progesterone protected women against increased depression and thoughts of suicide around menses. In this study, we want to determine whether stabilizing estradiol or progesterone alone (instead of together) will have the same protective effect on hopelessness, desire for suicide and suicidal planning among suicidal females.”

Suicide is the second leading cause of death worldwide among females of reproductive age, and several studies have suggested that the changing hormone levels associated with the menstrual cycle may be correlated to when suicide attempts are more likely to occur for those who are suicidal.

“For someone who is suicidal, these changes in hormones, especially if that person is extra sensitive to these changes, could be a contributing factor in pushing them over the edge and to a suicide attempt,” Eisenlohr-Moul said. “If hormone stabilization can prevent that push, we may be able to save lives.”

Eisenlohr-Moul and her colleagues will recruit 30 females who had suicidal symptoms in the previous 30 days but who are not on birth control. They will compare symptoms of suicidality among the participants across three experimental conditions: one menstrual cycle where placebos are given during the perimenstrual period; one cycle where estradiol is stabilized during the perimenstrual period; and one cycle where progesterone is stabilized during the perimenstrual period. Hormones will be administered by a transdermal patch. In between each condition, participants will be allowed to freely cycle for one menstrual cycle with no hormone patches or placebos.

Participants will record levels of depression, hopelessness, and suicidality daily on their smartphones. Blood will be drawn each week during experimental conditions to evaluate levels of estradiol and progesterone as well as inflammatory markers that have been linked to depression and suicide.

“Right now we don’t know if stabilizing one of these two hormones is driving the protective effect on suicidality or if both have the same effect, so that’s the main thing we want to investigate,” said Eisenlohr-Moul. “We are also looking at how the immune system is affected during the two experimental conditions, and if hormone stabilization might help to keep suicide-promoting inflammation at bay during the risky part of the menstrual cycle.”

Susan Girdler of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is a co-investigator on the grant.
Steve Fanning
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Steve Fanning, 71, associate professor emeritus of history, died May 15 in Oak Park, after battling several health issues.

Fanning, who was at UIC for more than 30 years, studied and taught courses on medieval and Byzantine history, religion in the Middle Ages, the Crusades, and the history of mysticism.

He was hired as a visiting assistant professor in 1980, was an assistant professor from 1981 to 1987 and an associate professor from 1987 to his retirement in August 2012. He served as assistant dean in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences from 1996 to 2000.


The latter work details Fanning’s own spiritual journey and near-death experience in 1988, when he slipped into a two-week coma following a severe asthma attack while in London.

“I saw that life is a precious gift from God and we should try to enjoy it. But life is also purposeful; it has meaning. The purpose of life is to learn and thus all that happens to us advances this purpose, even the worst things that happen to us,” Fanning wrote.

Neal Grossman, associate professor emeritus of philosophy, had a common interest in mysticism and teamed with Fanning to develop and co-teach a course in the Honors College called “History and Philosophy of Mysticism.”

“We both attended one another’s lectures, and I loved and learned from sitting in on his lectures,” Grossman said. “The near-death experience removes any fear of dying, and I know Steve was looking forward to it, and was happy to let go of a body that was riddled with pain. I feel blessed to have known him, and to have worked together with him.”


In retirement, he remained active at Grace Episcopal Church in Oak Park, and lectured on near-death experiences, healing prayer and mysticism.

“His gentle voice, quick smile, and brilliant mind inspired generations of students, and his colleagues will remember how far we can push this chemistry further...his work has definitely provided us with a phenomenal inspiration and insights,” Spokoyny wrote to Wink upon learning of Morrison’s passing.

Morrison was an inorganic chemist whose work focused on three types of compounds: the chemistry of the electron deficient polyboron halides, the preparation of trifluoromethyl containing main group and transition metal derivatives, and an examination of the reactivity of alkylated high valent main group species.

This research included fundamental work in synthesis, theoretical studies of bonding, and the use of a variety of physical methods to characterize the structure and interactions within and between these molecules.

“Like a professor of chemistry, he was someone who was skilled in all areas of chemistry,” said Donald Wink, professor of chemistry. “All of this focused on answering questions about the basic properties of chemistry, creating new forms of matter and new ways to understand matter.”

Morrison, who published more than 50 papers and was awarded over $750,000 in funding from the National Science Foundation, continues to influence research today.

One of his first papers at UIC, published by Inorganic Chemistry in 1978, was recently cited within a February 2018 paper on polyfunctional boron complexes from a research group led by UCLA professor Alexander Spokoyny, a leader in looking for application of such complexes.

“John’s contributions are unique to that area and very much ahead of the time when he did the work. So we’ll see how far we can push this chemistry further...his work has definitely provided us with a phenomenal inspiration and insights,” Spokoyny wrote to Wink upon learning of Morrison’s passing.

Morrison was a post-doctoral fellow at MIT for four years before being hired at UIC as assistant professor in 1976. During a critical period of growth for the department, he was promoted to associate professor in 1982 and full professor in 1992. He served as associate head and director of undergraduate studies in chemistry from 2001 until his retirement in August 2006.

He was considered a dedicated mentor to students in and out of the classroom, with an exceptional ability to give strong, informed and quiet support to colleagues, recalled Wink.

“He was a person I could turn to when I needed to discuss things, in confidence, about the host of issues that come to the department in the course of a semester,” said Wink, a former chemistry department head. “Even when he had opinions, he was always ready to empathically consider what was best for the department, the other persons involved, and finally, myself.”

Morrison earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville and the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Fanning received a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in 1977. He received bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Texas Tech University, which later honored him with a Distinguished Alumnus Award in 1998.
Allareddy named head of orthodontics

By William S. Bike

Dr. Veerasathpurish (Sath) Allareddy will become head of UIC College of Dentistry’s orthodontics department July 1.

Allareddy was chosen following a national search by a committee led by Dr. Lyndon Cooper, associate dean for research and head of oral biology. “This is a proud moment in the college’s history,” said Dean Clark Stanford. “Dr. Allareddy has an incredibly strong history of scholarship and orthodontic teaching, especially concerning craniofacial anomalies.”

Dean Stanford noted that Allareddy “brings a combination of academic rigor, clinical expertise, leadership, management, and business expertise that will be invaluable as a member of the senior leadership of the college. His research addresses multiple areas of public health, and he is a strategic hire to build on the campus’s programs in population health, implementation science, and informatics.”

“Part of my work at the Field Museum was tackling the difficult questions,” Allareddy said. “As a first step, we are working with Dean Stanford to recruit an outstanding ‘big data analytics’ scientist. The goal is to drive innovation through translational research using big data analytics techniques. We want to position the UIC Department of Orthodontics at the forefront of research, teaching, clinical care, and service.”

Most recently, he was professor and director of clinical research at the University of Iowa College of Dentistry. Allareddy formerly taught at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine in Boston, Massachusetts, where he was director of pre-doctoral orthodontics.

Allareddy noted that, “The core strength of the UIC orthodontics program stems from its outstanding faculty members and residents. They are a truly outstanding group and will keep up the long tradition of excellence which is synonymous with the UIC orthodontics program.”

He has more than 20 honors and awards, including two 2018 Research Achievement Awards from the Society of Critical Care Medicine. A reviewer or editorial board member with 30 journals, Allareddy also has been active in organized dentistry with both national and local societies, having served as president of the Iowa branch of the American Association of Orthodontists.

Cabrera is affiliated with the UIC department of anthropology, the Latin American and Latino studies, or LALS, program, and the department of art history’s museum and exhibition studies, or MUSE, program. She is also a Keller Science Action Center Associate at the Field Museum.

Her research interests include the role of museums in civic participation and community identity formation; Latino identity and citizenship; the intersections of environmental sustainability, cultural diversity, and social justice; and the role of the arts to increase public dialogue on pressing social and environmental issues.
Three UIC researchers awarded funding by the Chicago Biomedical Consortium

By Sharon Parmet — sparmet@uic.edu

Three researchers from the College of Medicine will receive funding from the Chicago Biomedical Consortium through the group’s Accelerator Awards competition.

The Chicago Biomedical Consortium is made up of researchers at UIC, Northwestern University and the University of Chicago who work together to make discoveries that will transform biomedical research and improve health.

The consortium launched a new Accelerator Award program in 2018 to support translational research and provide university researchers with early commercial guidance. The awards will provide up to $100,000 for one year and will be used to support the initial — and therefore highest risk — stage of commercially directed research focused on the development of a therapeutic or an associated biomarker or diagnostic.

The program received 32 letters of intent, and nine researchers who submitted letters were asked to present to the Chicago Biomedical Consortium Accelerator Network in early February. Four researchers from the University of Illinois at Chicago presented, and were asked to submit full proposals. Ultimately, three were selected to receive funding. The Consortium selected five projects overall to fund.

UIC’s Accelerator Awards winners are:

Brian Layden, professor and chief of endocrinology, diabetes and metabolism

Layden’s group is developing a new treatment for Type 2 diabetes based on their discovery that New approaches to treat Type 2 diabetes (T2D) are needed. Our group has shown that a protein called FFA3 mediates insulin secretion and plays a role in the development of insulin resistance — a major characteristic of Type 2 diabetes. Layden’s group has shown that blocking this protein could have beneficial effects. They will screen for small drug molecules that can block FFA3. Future work will develop these molecules into compounds that are suitable for testing in vivo and eventually in pre-clinical and clinical studies.

Arnon Lavie, professor of biochemistry and molecular genetics

Lavie’s group will work on improving a drug called L-asparaginase that is currently limited to the treatment of a certain type of leukemia. L-asparaginases break down the amino acid asparagine. Some cancer cells, such as those behind acute lymphoblastic leukemia, are dependent on asparagine. Therapeutic L-asparaginase preparations are toxic because of the bacterial origin of current L-asparaginases, and because they also break down another amino acid called glutamine.

Lavie is working on overcoming these factors using L-asparaginase from guinea pigs. Guinea pig L-asparaginase is very similar to its human form and is less likely to cause an immune response. The guinea pig version also doesn’t break down glutamine. They will develop the guinea pig enzyme so that it remains in the blood, where it can deliver its anti-cancer effects over an extended period of time. They hope to further refine their drug to replace current bacteria-derived drugs in the treatment of acute lymphoblastic leukemia and test it against other cancers.

Yulia Komarova, associate professor of pharmacology

Komarova and colleagues have shown that a protein called FFA3 mediates insulin secretion and plays a role in the development of insulin resistance — a major characteristic of Type 2 diabetes. Layden’s group has shown that blocking this protein could have beneficial effects. They will screen for small drug molecules that can block FFA3. Future work will develop these molecules into compounds that are suitable for testing in vivo and eventually in pre-clinical and clinical studies.

Sarah Miller

Sarah Miller, a recent master’s graduate in Germanic studies, is among more than 140 college graduates from the U.S. selected for the Foreign Language Teaching Assistantship Program, which is coordinated by the Fulbright Commission for the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education.

Miller, who also served as a teaching assistant at UIC, will work as an English teaching assistant at two secondary schools in Graz, Austria, for eight months beginning in October.

In addition to teaching in her native language, the opportunity in Austria will allow her to enrich her German language skills and determine a course for her future studies and career. A native of Dayton, Ohio, Miller is considering either applied linguistics or second language acquisition related to German language teaching.

“Since I’d like to continue into a linguistics Ph.D. program eventually, having the opportunity to teach English and to see how I like it compared to teaching German and stay up on those language skills will be helpful down the line,” she said. “I plan to take these few years and use it as a way to do some research on my own and look into what exact path I want to pursue in the future.”

Prior to attending UIC, she earned bachelor’s degrees in political science and German from the Ohio State University.

“I PLAN TO TAKE THESE FEW YEARS AND USE IT AS A WAY TO DO SOME RESEARCH ON MY OWN AND LOOK INTO WHAT EXACT PATH I WANT TO PURSUE IN THE FUTURE.”
For the second time in as many seasons, a pair of UIC Flames were selected in the top 10 rounds of the Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft June 5. Senior Ryan Campbell was chosen by the Cincinnati Reds in the fifth round and junior Charlie Cerny was selected in round seven by the Oakland Athletics. It is the first time in program history that two UIC players have been selected in the first seven rounds. Campbell is the highest draft pick (5-139) from the Flames since Curtis Granderson was taken by the Detroit Tigers in the third round (3-80) in 2002. Cerny is the fourth-highest selection (7-203) among all draftees in program history. Tom Szymborski, who pitched at UIC from 1994-96, was picked in the sixth round, 170th overall, by the San Diego Padres in 1996.

Campbell made a team-high 13 starts in 2018 after making 14 of his 16 appearances out of the bullpen as a junior in 2017. He led the squad with a 1.53 ERA, which ranks fourth in the NCAA through the regional round of the NCAA Tournament. It is also the seventh-best single-season mark in program history. The right-hander threw five complete games this year. Three of Campbell’s five complete games were shutouts, including two against Milwaukee.

Campbell recently concluded a sensational season on the mound for UIC. He made 21 appearances with five starts while posting a 1.63 earned-run average, a mark that ranks seventh in the NCAA as of Draft Day. Cerny also ranks in the top five nationally in both walks plus hits per inning pitched and hits allowed per nine innings. Opponents batted only .166 with four extra-base hits against Cerny, an All-Horizon League First Team member. He did not allow a home run and struck out 64 with only 12 walks in 55.1 innings pitched. He was the only player in the conference to win a weekly award three times in 2018.

Cerny joins former Flame Mickey McDonald in the Athletics organization. The former third baseman and outfielder was selected in the 18th round (pick 531) in 2017. McDonald is currently playing with the Beloit Snappers, the team’s Class A affiliate.

UIC softball’s Taylor Cairns has earned Google Cloud Academic All-America Third Team distinction by the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA).

The senior adds to a long list of laurels both on and off the field. This season, Cairns was given the Horizon League Post Graduate Scholarship Award, and was awarded a spot on the Horizon League Academic All-League Team for the second consecutive year.

On the field, the second baseman was one of just three players to start in all 54 games this season, earning Horizon League All-League First Team recognition, as well as Horizon League All-Tournament Team honors.

Throughout her career, the Torrance, Calif., native was a two-time Horizon League Honor Roll member, a three-time National Fastpitch Coaches Association Scholar Athlete, and was named the Horizon League’s Female Scholar Athlete of the Season in spring 2017.

Cairns recently completed her undergraduate degree in biological sciences with a 3.95 GPA. She will begin post-graduate studies in the College of Pharmacy this fall.