Commencement 2007
Feick Named UCIS Director

By Amanda Leff

Pitt professor Lawrence Feick has been named senior director of International Programs and director of Pitt's University Center for International Studies (UCIS), effective Aug. 1. Feick is a professor of business administration in the Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business, where he teaches marketing management and international marketing.

At the Katz School, Feick served as director of the International Business Center for six years, where he oversaw a variety of international programs, including Pitt's Plus3, a joint business and engineering program that won the 2005 Andrew Heiskell Award for innovation in international education. A member of the Pitt business school faculty since 1982, Feick has served as the interim dean of the Katz School and College of Business Administration and as an associate dean.

“I have great confidence that Dr. Feick will provide thoughtful academic leadership to UCIS and insight on the University’s concerted efforts on international programs,” said Pitt Provost James V. Maher. “He possesses the necessary experience and integrity to build on the center’s strengths and priorities and is keenly aware of the importance of global awareness and experience for our students.”

Feick has served as a consultant to a number of nonprofit and for-profit firms and has done extensive work in executive education. He is co-author of Country Manager, an international marketing simulation game, and has written articles in a number of professional journals, including the Journal of Consumer Research, Journal of Marketing Research, International Journal of Research in Marketing, Psychological Bulletin, and Public Opinion Quarterly. Feick has served as president of the Association for International Business Education and Research and the Shef Foundation.

Feick received the Ph.D. degree in agricultural economics from Pennsylvania State University and the M.S. degree in agricultural economics and B.A. degree in psychology, magna cum laude, from the University of Delaware.

Pitt to Hold 2007 Commencement Today in the Petersen Events Center

Tom Ridge, former Pennsylvania governor and the nation’s first Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, will give commencement address.

University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg will welcome graduating members of the Class of 2007, faculty, trustees, alumni, staff, and invited guests, family, and friends attending Pitt’s 2007 Commencement at 1 p.m. today in the Petersen Events Center.

Tom Ridge, the nation’s first Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security and the Governor of Pennsylvania from 1995 to 2001, will deliver the University’s 2007 commencement address and receive the honorary Doctor of Public and International Affairs degree from Nordenberg and Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor James V. Maher.

Chief University Marshal John J. Baker will open the ceremony, leading a procession of faculty, staff, the Council of Deans, trustees, administrative officers, and graduating class members in full academic regalia; Baker is a professor of oral biology in the School of Dental Medicine and president of the University Senate. Music will be provided by the University Symphonic Band, under the direction of Pitt Director of Bands Jack R. Anderson.

After Ridge receives his honorary degree, Pitt alumnus Ralph J. Cappy (CAS ’65, LAW ’68), chief justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and chair of Pitt’s Board of Trustees, will present the University Citation honoring him. Ridge will then deliver the commencement address.

After the awarding of diplomas by Nor- denberg, Maher, and the deans of the schools Pitt’s Board of Trustees, will present the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and chair of the University of Pittsburgh Alumni Association, Generalovich, (CAS ’66, DEN ’68), president of the University of Pittsburgh Alumni Association, who will welcome the graduates as Pitt’s newest alumni.

Pitt is conferring approximately 6,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees this year to students on the Pittsburgh campus and approximately 1,000 undergraduate degrees to students on the Bradford, Greensburg, Johnstown, and Titusville campuses, which hold their own commencement ceremonies.

President George W. Bush named Ridge Assistant to the President at the new Office of Homeland Security in 2001, weeks following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. His charge was to develop and coordinate a national strategy to strengthen the United States against terrorist threats or attacks. When the U.S. Department of Homeland Security was formally created in 2003, Ridge became its first secretary. He worked with more than 180,000 employees from a combined 22 agencies to create a department that facilitated the flow of people and goods; instituted layered security at air, land, and seaports; developed a unified national response and recovery plan; protected critical infrastructure; and integrated new technology and improved information-sharing worldwide.

Before 9/11, Ridge was twice elected governor of Pennsylvania. His aggressive technology strategy helped fuel the state’s advances in economic development, education, health, and the environment. Ridge also implemented a program that continues to provide a predictable flow of state support for capital projects at Pitt and Pennsylvania’s other state-related universities, and he committed the funds that made possible the construction of Pitt’s Petersen Events Center.

Pitt to Cosponsor Family Support Conference

What does the state of a child’s family, school system, and overall community have to do with that child’s success in school? This and other child-related issues will be explored during the 14th Annual Family Support Conference May 16 and 17 in the Westin Convention Center Hotel, 1000 Penn Ave., downtown.

Attendees will hear presentations on national trends and challenges behind the family support movement, which encourages families to build on their own strengths, using community resources. Speakers will include Evelyn Harris, director of New York’s Department of Social Services’ Division of Community Services (speaking at 12:15 p.m. May 16 and 1 p.m. May 17); Paal Gasser, a marriage and family therapist and instructor at the University of Wisconsin at Platteville (9:30 a.m. May 17); and Lynn Amwake, program specialist at the SERVE Center, University of North Carolina at Greensboro (10:30 a.m. May 17). Afternoon discussions are scheduled May 16 on parent leadership, advocacy, and other topics. On May 17, attendees can choose among 28 workshops on topics ranging from the effect of violence on children to helping children develop social and emotional skills.

Admission for each day is $75. To register, call 412-624-5353. Among the conference’s cosponsors are Pitt’s Office of Child Development, School of Education, and School of Social Work.
Permyashkin's parents, ethnic Russians and Pentecostal Christians who left the Soviet Union to escape religious persecution, did not allow a television in their house. So, family members learned English by conversing with their new American neighbors, classmates, and coworkers, and by reading.

"As a girl, I read a lot—a lot," recalls Permyashkin, who today speaks unaccented English but carries herself and dresses with an elegance more characteristic of Slavic women than their U.S. counterparts. "I read the entire 'Baby-Sitters Club' series of children's books by Ann M. Martin. "I just read a lot of 'girly' things, you know? A lot of series. I really enjoyed series of books." Permyashkin believes her current love of studying languages was inspired by her intense childhood effort to master English. In addition to being fluent in English and Russian (still spoken in the Permyashkins' home), Permyashkin speaks and read a lot of 'girly' things, you know? A lot of series. I really enjoyed series of books." Permyashkin believes her current love of studying languages was inspired by her intense childhood effort to master English. In addition to being fluent in English and Russian (still spoken in the Permyashkins' home), Permyashkin speaks and

"When I first visited Pitt, it was no experience of city life, and it was a little intimidating. But soon, I fell in love with this University. Here, I didn't feel exotic or awkward. There are so many other foreign-born students at Pitt. I've made friends with students from all over the world here—from Korea, Brazil, France, Norway, Denmark, India... "

—Varia Permyashkin

Permyashkin studied Sanskrit through an independent-study arrangement with a professor in Pitt’s Department of Classics. "I've made a lot of Indian friends since coming to Pittsburgh. I was interested in their culture, and some Indian languages still use Sanskrit script. So, I figured if I studied Sanskrit, I might be able to, in the future study other Indian languages that also use that script," she explains. Working 20 hours per week as an immigration document manager in Pitt's Office of International Services, Permyashkin helps foreign-born students with visa applications and other paperwork—complex and potentially confusing stuff in post-9/11 America. "Working in that office has been educational as well as personally rewarding for me," she says. "By talking with students from countries like Indonesia and various African countries, I'm learning about their cultures. It's also helping me to develop my ear for accents. For example, if I hear someone speaking with an Eastern European accent, I can adjust my English to sound more like theirs so they don't find it so difficult understanding me."

When she's not studying or working in the International Services office, Permyashkin volunteers to tutor fourth- and fifth-graders at Breachmenders Ministries, a nonsectarian community-development organization that serves low-income families in West Oakland and the Hill District. "It's very rewarding work," she says. "I've enjoyed tutoring, and I may pursue a career in teaching English to immigrants."

"Actually, I haven't decided on a career yet. I'm waiting to hear back from several companies I've contacted about job possibilities. I'm hoping to find work on the West Coast because it's more ethnically diverse than the Eastern United States, and I think there are more language-oriented job opportunities out there. Also, I've lived almost my whole life in the Eastern part of the country, and I'd like to make a dramatic relocation while I'm still unattached."

Permyashkin today will become the last, she says. Aleksandr, the oldest of her siblings, she almost certainly won't be the first choice among universities to attend, it was the only school Permyashkin applied to. "I like to make my life complicated sometimes," she says with a laugh, preferring not to think what she would have done if Pitt had rejected her. "I wanted to go to a big, urban school, and I was looking for somewhere that offered Spanish, Russian, and a lot of less commonly offered languages. And Pitt offers a crazy number of languages, including more than a dozen—Arabic, Hindi, Irish Gaelic, and Modern Greek among them—that are taught through the linguistics department's Less Commonly Taught Languages Center. I

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Permyashkin today will become the first member of her family to graduate from college. But, with 11 brothers and sisters, she almost certainly won’t be the last, she says. Aleksandr, the oldest of her siblings, is completing his sophomore year in Pitt’s School of Arts and Sciences.

“Pitt, for me, has been an inspirational place,” Permyashkin says. “I’m really glad I came here.”
Student Profile

Solomon Quaynor

This biostatistics graduate student refused to allow physical disabilities and cultural prejudice to interfere with his pursuit of a health sciences career.

Quaynor, 34, has a condition similar to cerebral palsy that limits his movement and coordination. He gets around with the aid of crutches and a mobility scooter. In Ghana, he says, many people with physical disabilities find their options limited to learning such trades as basket weaving, or they end up as beggars. Instead, Quaynor will receive his Master of Science degree in biostatistics from the University of Pittsburgh today. He plans to pursue his Ph.D. degree at Pitt in human genetics.

By Morgan Kelly

In keeping with the culture of his native Ghana, Solomon Quaynor modestly prefers not to talk about himself. The reason he agrees to be interviewed, he says, is so he can thank the people who have helped him.

Quaynor says he has earned his academic degrees—which also include a Bachelor of Science degree in zoology at Kent State and a Master of Arts degree in English at Oklahoma State—in order to survive. That's all. The accolades, he says, should go to his family, who supported and encouraged him, and to the instructors who have looked past his physical limitations.

"There are many people who have gotten me to where I am now. If I mentioned names, I would leave some out, and you don't have enough space to write them down anyway," Quaynor says with a deep laugh and a shy smile. "I can't call my academic career a 'great achievement' because I did what I had to do. I would rather express gratitude to the people who supported me than talk about myself."

Quaynor was born in Accra, Ghana's capital, to a family of medical profession- als. He dreamed of becoming a doctor like his father. But, in Ghana, Quaynor's intelligence and desire could not overcome societal assumptions about people with serious physical disabilities—more benignly, that they are weaklings to be sheltered and protected.

"When you have a culture that says certain people belong in certain categories, it's not easy to surmount that," he says.

Quaynor's father insisted that his son attend regular school. Aside from a rough beginning in elementary school, "Kids can be cruel, no matter what the country," Quaynor points out, Quaynor proved himself to be a good student. His instructors and the school's headmistress supported and encouraged him, and, eventually, his classmates came to know him as Solomon Quaynor, not just a kid with a disability.

But when Quaynor entered high school, he found himself excluded from activities and events in which people assumed he could not or should not participate.

"I can't speak as to why the difference between grade school and high school was so stark, but it was more painful," he recalls.

In the 10th grade, Quaynor tried out for the drama club, certain that he would be rebuffed. After all, he told himself, how many Shakespearean roles were written for kids on crutches? But the drama teacher gave him a chance. Quaynor stayed in the club for the rest of high school, exhibiting talents for soliloquy, projection (despite his otherwise reserved demeanor), and dramatic writing. Although public speaking still makes him nervous, Quaynor credits his theatrical experience with helping him to give academic presentations in college.

"The ability to command a stage is a very important skill," Quaynor says in his hushed but sturdy West African patois. "What I learned in that drama group has helped me ever since. That teacher told me much later that at first she was not sure about me. I'm glad she gave me a chance. Some others might not have."

As challenging as life was for him in Ghana, at least there Quaynor could depend on his family's support. It wasn't until 1991, when he began his studies at Kent State University—including lab courses that were extremely demanding for him, physically—that he realized just how much support had meant. "Once I got here and was without my family, I wanted to give up," he says. "But I didn't realize how important the emotional support was until I didn't have it. If I had grown up in a different family, I probably would have given up."

"I haven't had an easy time at all since I came to the United States, but I knew others would battle their issues," Quaynor declares. "If I failed, Quaynor adds, "Some others in Ghana would have said to my family, 'We told you so. What was the point of you taking him to school?'"

So, Quaynor persevered. After graduating from Kent State in 1996, he spent two years conducting postgraduate research. In 1999, in a sharp departure from his original ambition of becoming a doctor, he enrolled at Oklahoma State to study English. An advisor had suggested that he combine his flair for science and his writing talent (honed during his drama club days) to write science textbooks.

After graduating from Oklahoma State, Quaynor discovered biostatistics. In that field, he says, he can assist in diagnosing genetic diseases by finding correlations between particular disorders and the genes and genetic flaws that might cause them.

"Let's say you start with 1,000 genes," he says. "Some people think you can whittle that down to 25 or 50 genes, then whittle it down even further. I wish I would have thought of what I wanted to do earlier." Because it's computer-based, biostatistics gives Quaynor access to the medical field without pushing his physical limitations.

Quaynor enrolled as a biostatistics graduate student in Pitt's Graduate School of Public Health in 2004, spending the bulk of his days this year in a computer lab in Parran Hall. He has participated in some student activities at Pitt, most notably as an ambassador for the University's Office of International Services last year, meeting with incoming students.

After spending most of the last 16 years in school, Quaynor remains only a few years from the health-sciences career he yearned for as a child. He hopes, after completing his doctoral studies at Pitt, to work for an international health organization or teach and conduct research at a university. Quaynor is considering remaining in Pittsburgh after completing his doctoral studies. He does not want to go anywhere else, he says—unless it's back to Ghana.

Quaynor has not returned since leaving in 1991 to study in the United States. He loves his country, misses it, and shares its rich culture with non-Ghanaians when he can. But he vowed 16 years ago not to return home until he could prove wrong that element of his culture that had perceived him as helpless.

"I can't go back empty-handed," Quaynor declares. "I left Ghana a very headstrong kid who thought he could do anything. The issue was never okay with me. I resolved to get to the highest level of education I possibly could."

"Now, I'm this close."
Dawn Hartman will receive a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Pitt today with a G.P.A. of just under 3.7.

Not bad for a young woman who shouldered an unusual burden during adolescence—namely, running a household and caring for three younger siblings.

Hartman’s father died suddenly when she was 14, and when her mother became too despondent to care for her children, Dawn stepped in. Shopping, cooking, cleaning, and running errands became the norm for Hartman, whose siblings were 9, 8, and 6 years old at the time. Unfortunately, Hartman’s schoolwork suffered, and she entered foster care at age 16.

Suddenly, after two years of playing the role of a parent, Hartman was separated from her siblings and expected to conform to a 10 p.m. curfew. She found it difficult to surrender her independence. “When you’re a teen, you think you’re an adult that other people do,” says Hartman, “and wanted to have me as part of her family.”

Hartman reveals that she herself had been in foster care. “I was 14 through the Mentors for Berks Youth organization. I was trying to bridge the gap between adults that other people do,” says Hartman, “and fast-talking, focused young woman.”

Hartman’s mother died the following year, but Hartman persevered, earning a 4.0 grade average at Reading (Pa.) High School. Her SAT scores were slightly below what Pitt required, but an essay she submitted as part of the application process—describing her home life—earned her admission to the University’s School of Arts and Sciences.

Among her Pitt academic accomplishments was serving as a teaching assistant, rare for an undergraduate. This spring, she taught two recitations of the course Russian Fairy Tales, with a total of 40 students. This, while holding down a a job as a waitress at Pamela’s Restaurant in Squirrel Hill.

Simply by completing her degree here, Hartman beat the odds against foster children succeeding in higher education. Only half of all foster children complete high school, according to the National Association of Social Workers; only 11 percent pursue postsecondary education, and, of those, 4-7 percent graduate. Hartman uncovered those bleak statistics for herself while interning this year in the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, working with teens transitioning out of foster care.

“Some foster children don’t have the financial resources for college,” Hartman says. “Often, they’re moved from foster home to foster home, which means relocating to a lot of different school districts. People want them to go to college, and sometimes they get accepted, but then they realize they just can’t handle it.”

While Hartman was interning at the Department of Human Services, she was interviewed by a young film student producing a documentary on foster children. Only late in the interview with the filmmaker did Hartman realize that she herself had been in foster care.

The filmmaker was really intrigued by that and wanted to have me as part of her documentary,” says Hartman. “It’s me and another person she’s following around.”

The filmmaker has interviewed Hartman at home, in the classroom, and while conducting a workshop at The Bridge, a downtown transition organization for foster teens. Hartman says she’s reluctant to talk about her experience in foster care because many people pigeonhole foster children and teens as troublesome. She’s been on the receiving end of rude and misinformed comments more than once, she says.

“I forgive people for their ignorance because there’s not enough known about foster care, especially in the college arena. There are not enough foster care kids here for people to develop good thoughts about,” Hartman says, adding that she hasn’t met one other person at Pitt who, to her knowledge, had been in foster care.

Hartman believes she has found her professional niche in community service. During her years at Pitt, she has taught and read to young children through the Jumpstart early-education project, worked at a YMCA day camp, performed community service work during an alternative spring break, and tutored Somali refugee children in language, social, and cultural skills.

“Many Lou Kline, who teaches business courses at Reading Area Community College, became Dawn’s mentor when Dawn was 14 through the Mentors for Berks Youth organization.

“It was like finding your soulmate in life,” Kline says of her relationship with Dawn over the past nine years. “The events leading up to her mother’s passing, through the funeral and a complex foster-care situation... Dawn’s composure and focus were incredibly mature.” Kline and at least 20 other friends and relatives from the Reading area plan to attend Pitt’s commencement ceremony today to celebrate with Dawn.

Reflecting on her four years at Pitt, Hartman says her time abroad—studying at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, with side trips to Australia, Thailand, England, and China—was the highlight of her college career. Her original purpose in traveling Down Under was to take a break from public service and waitressing work, focus on her studies, and reflect on where she wanted to go with her life. But she found she couldn’t limit herself only to academics.

“It just ate at me not to be doing any service work at all, so I actually worked for the University of Auckland’s winter office, trying to get people to do community service around New Zealand,” she recalls. Dawn says the trip to New Zealand opened her eyes about her goals in life.

“It helped me realize my desire for service is more than breaking away from a stereotype of foster children, she says. “It’s my passion and my calling in life.”

Leon Sanders III: Pursuing His Passions for Japanese Culture And Scientific Research

Leon Sanders III (left) has had the opportunity to immerse himself in two of his passions, Japanese culture and scientific research. Sanders, who recently returned from studying in Tokyo, coauthored a scientific paper titled “Neural Network for Automated System to Diagnose Blood Clot,” which he presented during the International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Applications in Innsbruck, Austria, in February. He is pictured with the conference’s keynote speaker, Dieter Fensel, director of Austria’s Digital Enterprise Research Institute.

Sanders’ research focused on the development of a device to diagnose one of the 10 most life-threatening blood clot disorders. The device also provides diagnostic techniques to target a specific disorder, information a person can take to a doctor’s office for verification. Sanders will graduate from Pitt today with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Japanese and a certificate in Asian studies. He plans to pursue a master’s degree in biology and a Ph.D. degree in the study of viruses, with his primary focus on HIV/AIDS and Ebola research.
During his 10 years as a radio journalist in Alaska, David Totten reported on issues ranging from aviation safety above the rugged Alaskan landscape ("Those mountains are littered with broken planes," he notes) to the impact on indigenous Inuit people of the melting ice pack near the Arctic Circle; as the ice melts, Inuit villages literally are breaking loose and sinking into the ocean.

As news director of KENI-AM Anchorage/News 650 and in covering economic development issues for the Alaska Public Radio Network, Totten also attended many midnight sessions of the Anchorage Assembly and reported on such urban planning efforts as the Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan, which sought input from Anchorage residents on how they wanted their city to develop over the next two decades.

Over time, Totten grew interested in participating in city planning and economic development projects, not just reporting on them. That interest led him to enroll in Pitt’s Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA), from which he today will receive his master’s degree in public administration.

“I wanted to take part in some of the exciting projects that the people I was interviewing were doing,” Totten explains. “I had covered city and state politics heavily and wanted a chance to be involved in running a city or region, bringing in some of the exciting new advances in e-government and digital democracy.”

A Tuscon, Ariz., native who grew up in California, Totten studied screenwriting at California State University at Northridge before switching his major to journalism and enrolling at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. Like screenwriting, he reasoned, journalism offered the chance to tell stories.

As his interest in journalism waned and he began looking at prospective graduate schools, GSPIA rose to the top of his list because of its cross-disciplinary curriculum. “I really like that they have the international focus as well as the [focus on] public administration,” he says.

According to Totten, Pittsburgh is a great place to study how cities work and how communities are built. The city is a “living laboratory on urban and regional affairs,” he says.

“Pittsburgh has a lot going for it, and a lot of changes ahead of it. It’s a neat place to see where things are working and where they aren’t working.”

Totten is most interested in urbanism, regional approaches to problems, and “smart growth,” which seeks to combat urban sprawl. “These are all things that Pittsburgh is striving towards,” he says. “The people here get excited about new ideas and are willing to try new things.”

At Pitt, Totten has indulged his appetite for urban and regional affairs through a variety of projects, including his work at the University’s Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC). Totten was involved with one of the center’s main projects, the Pittsburgh Neighborhood and Community Information System, created for nonprofit and community-building organizations. The Web-based system displays such indicators as vacant properties, crime reports, liquor licenses, and erosion risk for Pittsburgh’s neighborhoods. Users must complete training sessions before they can secure a password for access to the system.

Totten helped to develop a database for COPC managers that tracks those who have completed the training programs. He also assists in the marketing of new training programs to new and prospective users. In addition, he recently completed a program evaluation of COPC. Totten and his evaluation group assessed COPC based on various community-building goals, including connectedness, identity, participation, trust, and vision/planning.

Last summer, Totten did research on how to incorporate land-use policy to revitalize an underperforming shopping center in the borough of Crafton. He confronted challenging issues, including the fact that the shopping center crosses the Crafton borough line into Ingram; also, a 17-acre parking lot made it difficult to get from one end of the shopping center to the other. In assessing the revitalization project, Totten worked with the shopping center’s owners, individual store owners, and officials from Crafton and Ingram. He also conducted a survey to find out what purposes the shopping center’s customers wanted it to serve. Totten recommended that the shopping center get involved with the Main Street program, a nonprofit organization that revitalizes downtown shopping districts. He also suggested that a comprehensive plan be established in cooperation with Ingram.

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—David Totten

report helped push them into holding a joint borough council meeting,” Totten says. “So if nothing else, we can get more cooperation between boroughs.”

Totten says his journalism background has helped him at Pitt in a variety of ways. Not only has it made him a clear and concise writer of reports, term papers, and essay tests, he says, but it has taught him to take nothing at face value and to question everything. He says he also has learned the importance of looking for connections. “Whose mind do you have to change to enact a policy?” he asks himself as he goes about his work. “How will one policy connect another?”

As a reporter, Totten would report on new stories each day. He says his work in GSPIA has the same flow. “I start on a project, I finish a project, I move on to the next one. It never gets boring. There is always something new,” he says.
From Accra to Ulaanbatar, From Hungary to the Himalayas

Pitt students conduct research and immerse themselves in foreign cultures, thanks to Nationality Rooms scholarships

By Patricia Lomando White

University of Pittsburgh students will jet to far-off places this summer to conduct research in clinics and laboratories, participate in archaeological digs, and immerse themselves in the cultures and languages of Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America—all thanks to summer-study-abroad scholarships provided by the Pitt Nationality Rooms and Intercultural Exchange Programs.

Among the students’ research interests are Freudian epistemology, tomb reliefs from the Eastern Han Dynasty, medieval illuminated manuscripts, and the influence of environmental factors on health care. Since 1948, Nationality Rooms committee members and their friends have raised nearly $1.7 million to award 933 scholarships, enabling Pitt students to experience other countries through five weeks of cultural immersion and study.

Following is a list of the 37 Pitt undergraduate and graduate students who have been awarded Nationality Rooms study-abroad scholarships for summer 2007.

Undergraduate Awards

Suzanne A. Adjogah, a sophomore communication science major, has received the African Heritage Classroom Walter C. Worthington Foundation Scholarship to study the Arabic language and Moroccan culture at the School for International Training in Rabat, Morocco.

The Savina S. Skevis Award will support Jenna L. Arnett, a junior neuroscience major, as she takes advanced courses in Spanish language, researches healthcare issues, and participates in a community health practicum at the Pontifical University Catholică Madre Maestra in Santiago, Dominican Republic.

Sophomore English writing major Rachel E. Belloma will study the Hebrew language and Jewish culture at the Rothberg International School of Hebrew University in Jerusalem under the Israel Heritage Room Committee Scholarship.

Lauren J. Bruce, a junior majoring in philosophy, will use her Helen Pool Rush Grant to study human trafficking and prostitution through the Denmark International Studies Program in Copenhagen.

The Women’s International Club Award will enable Abigail F. Bulfington, a sophomore anthropology and religious studies major, to study Arabic and participate in an archeological dig in Madaba, Jordan.

The Italian Room Committee Scholarship will support junior accounting and Italian major Matthew D. Carulli as he studies Italian language and culture through the Pitt-in-Italy Program in Syracuse, Sicily.

Sophomore Timothy M. Dempsey, a history and philosophy of science major, has received the William and Bernice McKeever Memorial Award to participate in an HIV/AIDS field school sponsored by Ohio University in Gaborone, Botswana.

English writing, psychology, and anthropology major Martin E. Doppel, a junior, will use the Mary Campbell Cross Memorial/Irish Room Committee Scholarship to participate in a dig at the Deserted Village through the Achill Archaeological Field School on Achill Island, Ireland.

The Ruth Crawford Mitchell Merit Award will fund Caitlin E. Henry, a sophomore majoring in French and history, as she studies French language and culture through the Pitt-in-Program in Nantes, France.

Junior political science and philosophy major Sheila E. Isong has received the Pauline Hickman Memorial Grant to study African aesthetics and civilization and research the 1945 Pan African Congress in Accra, Ghana.

The Italian Room Committee Grant will enable Edward R. Kastenhuber, a junior bioengineering major, to study Italian language and history and participate in a writing course at the Mediterranean Center for Arts and Sciences in Syracuse, Sicily.

The Women’s International Club Grant will support junior Tanya E. Keenan, a neuroscience and political science major, as she studies HIV/AIDS and healthcare, as well as clinical interventions and community development, during the Children’s Family Health International in Durban, South Africa.

Priscella Liu, a sophomore majoring in Chinese, will use the John H. Tsui Memorial Award to attend the International Chinese Language Program in Taiwan.

The David L. Lawrence Memorial Award will enable Zachary A. Morris, a junior majoring in urban studies, political science, and philosophy, to conduct ethnographic surveys in the ger districts surrounding Ulanbatar, Mongolia.

Anthropology and history and philosophy of science major Teresa A. Nicholas has received the Rachel McMasters Miller Award to conduct research on the transmission of culture through museums and to participate in a museum internship in Ulanbatar, Mongolia.

Junior Dana-Leigh Puzio, majoring in psychology and administrative justice, will use the Women’s International Club Grant to study Spanish language and art history at the Universidad de Alcalá de Heneres in Alcala, Spain.

Ross Y. Rader, a junior majoring in English literature, has received the Savina S. Skevis Grant and will participate in an internship with a publishing company in London.

Majoring in theater arts and studio arts, junior Lori Anne Sharpless will use the CARYL KLINE AWARD for Mid-Career Women to study painting and directing at the Parsons School of Design in New York City and to participate in a summer program at Pitt-in-Paris.

The Japanese Room Committee Scholarship will enable ATHANASIOS G. SIKOLAS, a junior majoring in Japanese, to study Japanese language and culture at Waseda University in Tokyo.

Sophomore philosophy and political science major Curtis E. Smith has received the Ruth Arvey Memorial Award, which will enable him to study the Hungarian language and culture through the Lexia International Program in Budapest.

The Helen Pool Rush Award will enable Bethany A. Wengler, a junior majoring in French and communication science and disorders, to study French language and culture through the Pitt-in-France Program in Provence, France, and to participate in the International Congress for the Deaf in Spain.

Senior Stephanie Zator, a junior majoring in German and psychology, has received the German Room Committee Scholarship to study German literature and culture at the Freie Universität Berlin.

Graduate Awards

The Indian Room Committee Scholarship will enable Turini Anand, a student in Pitt’s School of Medicine, to participate in healthcare activities with the Himalayan Health Exchange in rural areas in India near the Tibetan border.

Julia A. Finch, a graduate medieval art and architecture major, has received the Austrian Room Committee Scholarship to study medieval illuminated manuscripts and participate in an internship with Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften in Vienna.

The Herbert E. Lieberkind/Danish Room Committee Scholarship will support research by Jessica R. Fischoff, a creative nonfiction graduate student, at Christiania, a 36-year-old commune in Copenhagen that is undergoing dramatic change and possibly facing destruction.

The Indian Room, a communication science and history and philosophy of science graduate student, has received the James Affleck/Scottish Room Committee Scholarship and will do research in Edinburgh on the popularization of scientific ideas.

Eugene Manastreski Memorial Award winner James A. Johnson, a graduate student in anthropology, will conduct research in Kyiv and participate in an Iron Age archaeological dig in Bel’sk, Ukraine.

Graduate French literature major Zachary A. Karpowicz, a David L. Lawrence Memorial Award winner, will enable him to study the German language and will fund his research costs at the Sigmund Freud Museum and Library in Vienna.

Penelope Nelson-Bissett, a human security major in Pitt’s Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, was awarded the African Heritage Room Committee Scholarship to study the Human Rights Education and Development program at the Senghor Center in Dakar, Senegal.

Supported by the Franches and Sully Nesta Award, Italian literature graduate student Carla Pesce will research the 19th-century Italian women’s movement in the “Men on Men” series, including publication and marketing plans in Turin and Milan.

Kathryn G. Shick, a junior majoring in Pitt’s Graduate School of Public Health majoring in infectious diseases, has received the Pitt-Enrichment Award to study human trafficking and public health issues in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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Perfect 4.0 GPA Awards

the development of the leaders of tomorrow. We are witnessing men and women will carry them forward excellence demonstrated by these young our scholar-athletes. The commitment to Feb. 1 awards breakfast. “I am so proud of Director Jeff Long said at the University’s and in the athletics arena,” Pitt Athletic are required to achieve in the classroom and in the athletics arena,” Pitt Athletic Director Jeff Long said at the University’s Feb. 1 awards breakfast. “I am so proud of our scholar-athletes. The commitment to excellence demonstrated by these young men and women will carry them forward in serving their communities and in their careers after graduation. We are witnessing the development of the leaders of tomorrow.” Following are the award winners.

Perfect 4.0 GPA Awards

Cheer and Dance Team Melanie Matthews, Aimee Moore Football Brian Bennett, Tyler Palko Gymnastics Nicole Drane, Robyn Marszalek

Among the 311 honorees, a Pitt-record 23 achieved perfect 4.0 GPAs and 124 were named Big East Academic All-Stars—also a school record.

Baseball Chad Baker, Justin Cicciello, and Kyle Landis Men’s Basketball Charles Small

Women’s Basketball Karlye Lim Cheer and Dance Team Beth Abbott, Megan Barna, Christina Colalillo, Gina DiCicco, Verle Haines, Karen Inquartano, Nicole Kaminski, Rachel King, Shown Lucci, Lauren McCormick, Angela Russo, Samantha Schenk, Emily Spade, Kaitlin Turnley, and Kayla Young Football Justin Acierno, Vernon Botts, Steve Buches, Jovani Chappel, Mark Estermyer, Ron Idoko, Frank Kochin, Conor Lee, John Puhls, Kevin Smith, and Lucas Stone Gymnastics Dani Bryan, Samantha DeBene, Cassie Minnick, April Pearson, and Lindsay Swan Men’s Soccer Tyler Bastianelli, Matt Langton, and Conor Luskin Women’s Soccer


Cimmie Baird, Hanna Bratton, Katie Butrie, Kristin Ciazzo, Lindsay Champ, Kristin Criner, Amy He, Allie Horvath, Kelli Kraliman, Erin Meachen, Beth Newell, Kelly O’Hara, Kelly Redeye, Erika Rodriguez, Kathy Siuda, Sara Sullivan, and Sarah Wagner

Men’s Track and Field/ Cross Country Tim Konoval, Curtis Larimer, Mike Long, Matt Raquet, and Brian Woods


Men’s Volleyball Azadeh Boroumand, Madelyn Egan, Melissa Ferguson, Monica Maccellari, Kim Norris, Stephanie Ross, and Nicole Taurence

Women’s Volleyball Wrestling Tim Allen, Matt Darnell, Christo...
Kristin Brown
A leader in the pool and in the classroom

By Sophie Duck

Chuck Knoles, Pitt’s longtime swimming and diving head coach, enjoys talking about graduating senior Kristin Brown, and he usually goes beyond using typical sports language in doing so.

“There is a well-known descriptor that has been used for many years to describe a man who is well-rounded physically, mentally, and spiritually—‘Renaissance man,’” Knoles says. “Kristin has similarly brought a well-developed persona to the swim team. She is what I would call a ‘millenium woman.’ She is athletic, artistic, and very bright.”

Four years ago, Brown joined a Pitt women’s swimming and diving team that had gone 3-7 the year before. In her first season, the East Berlin, Pa., native led the squad to six wins and earned All-Big East honors as part of its freestyle relay team. She also held “top-five” times among the Panthers in the 50-, 100-, 200-, and 500-meter freestyle events, setting the tone for her career as one of Pitt’s most accomplished women swimmers.

The Pitt News named Brown its Pitt Female Athlete of the Year, a rare honor for a freshman.

Brown is exceptional in the classroom as well as in the pool. She was honored as a 2006-07 Big East/Aeropostale Swimming and Diving Student-Athlete of the Year. She also received the Pitt School of Arts and Sciences’ Dean’s Award and Undergraduate Studies Award. She will graduate from Pitt today with a bachelor’s degree in studio arts and art history.

“Kristin has achieved academically and performed with the best in her major,” Knoles points out. “Her leadership skills grew with her social and physical development. In her senior year, she was one of the best captains, male or female, Pitt’s swim team has seen. The standards she set for herself and her teammates were very high and will serve as a benchmark for future teams.”

During the Pitt athletics department’s Senior Awards Banquet on April 9, Brown was named the female recipient of the University’s Blue-Gold Award for 2007. The awards are presented annually to male and female Pitt seniors who represent the student-athlete ideal based on academic scholarship, athletic achievement, leadership, and citizenship.

“I’ve never been around a player — college or professional — who prepares the way Tyler does,” says Pitt Head Football Coach Dave Wannstedt.

When evaluating prospects, NFL teams take into account brains and heart as well as brawn. Fortunately for Palko, he scores highly in each of those categories.

For the last three autumns, Palko was Pitt’s starting quarterback. He finished his collegiate career as the Panthers’ third all-time leading passer, ranking just behind the legendary Dan Marino. Palko’s Pitt legacy, however, transcends statistics. Many observers agree that he will go down as one of the smartest—and toughest—quarterbacks in the school’s illustrious football history.

He was twice selected to the All-Big East Conference Team for his play on the field, and twice named to the Big East’s All-Academic Football Team for his excellence in the classroom. Palko completed his Bachelor of Arts degree in communication and rhetoric last May and took economics courses here last fall while quarterbacking the Panthers in his final year of NCAA eligibility.

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During the past 30 years, the number of male births has decreased each year in the United States and Japan, according to a Pitt-led study published in the April 9 online edition of Environmental Health Perspectives.

In a review of all births in both countries, the study found that significantly fewer boys than girls were born and that an increasing proportion of fetuses that died were male. The researchers noted that the decline in births is equivalent to 135,000 fewer White males in the United States and 125,000 fewer males in Japan over the past three decades. Environmental factors may help to explain these trends, they said.

“The pattern of decline in the ratio of male-to-female births remains largely unexplained,” said Devra Lee Davis, lead investigator of the study, professor of epidemiology in Pitt’s Graduate School of Public Health, and director of the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute’s Center for Environmental Oncology. “We know that men who work with some solvents, metals, and pesticides father fewer boys. We also know that nutritional factors, physical health, and chemical exposure of pregnant women affect their ability to have children and the health of their offspring. We suspect that some combination of these factors, along with the older ages of parents, may account for decreasing male births.”

Davis explained that environmental factors, such as prenatal exposure to endocrine-disrupting environmental pollutants, may impact the SRY gene—a gene on the Y chromosome that determines the sex of a fertilized egg. Other factors that also may affect the viability of a male fetus include the parents’ weight, nutrition, and the use of alcohol and drugs.

In the study, Davis and her colleagues reported an overall decline of 17 males per 10,000 births in the United States and a decline of 37 males per 10,000 births in Japan since 1970. They also found that while fetal death rates have generally decreased, the proportion of male fetuses that die has continued to increase. In Japan, among the fetuses that die, two-thirds are male, up from just over half in 1970.

The study also examined the ratio of African American male-to-female births to that of Whites in the U.S. The researchers found that while the number of African American male births has increased modestly over time, the ratio of male-to-female births for African Americans remains lower than that of Whites. In addition, they noted that African Americans have a higher fetal mortality rate overall and a higher proportion of male fetuses that die.

“These results are not surprising, since the Black-White ratio in terms of infant mortality has remained the same for almost 100 years,” said study co-investigator Lovell A. Jones, professor and director of the Center for Research on Minority Health at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. “Given the higher mortality rates for African American males in the United States, these results re-emphasize the need to determine all factors, including environmental contaminants, that are responsible for this continuing health disparity.”

“Given the importance of reproduction for the health of any species, the trends we observed in the United States and Japan merit concern,” added Davis. “In light of our findings, more detailed studies should be carried out that examine sex ratio in smaller groups with defined exposures as a potential indicator of environmental contamination.”

The study was supported by the Heinz Endowments, the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute, DSF Charitable Trust, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the W. Alton Jones Foundation.

Antidepressants Safe for Children And Adolescents, Pitt Analysis Finds

By Jocelyn Uhl Duffy

Antidepressants are safe and effective for treating anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and major depressive disorder in children and adolescents, according to a meta-analysis of 27 major studies. The findings, published recently by Pitt School of Medicine researchers in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), call into question the controversial “black box” warnings placed on the drugs by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA); the warnings state that antidepressant medications pose a small but significantly increased risk of suicidal thoughts and behavior for children and adolescents.

“As clinicians, our first concern is for the health and safety of our patients,” said Pitt Professor of Psychiatry David A. Brent. “When the FDA placed the ‘black box’ warning on antidepressants, it raised a great deal of concern about how we were to treat our young patients who we thought could possibly benefit from antidepressant therapy. Most clinicians, patients, and their families found themselves questioning whether or not they should be using treatments out of fear of the risks. By combining data from most of the significant studies of antidepressant use in adolescents and children, we’ve been able to examine a balance of benefits and risks of these medications.

“Antidepressants are safe and effective for treating disorders like anxiety, OCD, and depression in children and adolescents,” Brent added. “While there is a small, increased risk of suicidal thoughts in those who use antidepressants, it would be much, much riskier to not treat these children and adolescents dealing with these disorders.”

For the study, Pitt researchers extracted data on study characteristics, efficacy outcomes, and emergent suicidal events from 27 trials of second-generation antidepressants used to treat pediatric major depressive disorder, OCD, and anxiety in children and adolescents under the age of 19. Researchers found that one in 100 participants in the studies included in the meta-analysis had new-onset suicidal ideation, or suicidal thoughts, while on medication. Even fewer acted on these thoughts, and there were no completed suicides.

The results showed that antidepressants were most effective in treating anxiety, moderately effective for treating OCD, and modestly effective for depression.

“While I support the FDA’s role in monitoring the safety of medications, in this case, the FDA should reconsider the ‘black box’ warning on these medications,” said Brent. “Our study supports the cautious and well-monitored use of antidepressant medications as a first-line treatment for anxiety, OCD, and depression.”

The Pitt study was funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, one of the National Institutes of Health.
Pitt-developed Vaccine Halts Progression Of Pancreatic Cancer in Some Patients

By Clare Collins

A dendritic cell-based therapeutic vaccine for pancreatic cancer developed by researchers in Pitt’s School of Medicine has stunted the disease from progressing in a handful of patients three years after vaccination.

The results, announced during the annual meeting of the American Association of Cancer Research April 14-18, provide promising evidence that the vaccine can trigger a patient’s own immune system to rally against pancreatic cancer and offer new insights into how the vaccine could be made even more effective.

“Pancreatic cancer is extremely resistant to chemotherapy and radiation and, as a result, has a very high mortality rate. One strategy to improve the odds of survival is to help the immune system recognize the presence of pancreatic cancer cells and attack them. Our study, although small, demonstrates that this strategy can be used with some success in pancreatic cancer patients.”

—Andrew Lepisto

The current study, the fourth in a series of MUC1 vaccine trials at the Pitt School of Medicine, included 12 patients with pancreatic cancer who received the vaccine by injection once every three weeks for a total of three doses and were given a booster six months later. Four patients demonstrated a stable and continuous presence of antibodies against MUC1 and show no evidence of disease more than three years after the vaccination was completed and close to five years after diagnosis and surgery.

The research team also examined the specific immune response to the vaccine by sampling the blood of the patients involved in the study. They found that all the patients had an active immune response to the vaccine. They also learned that the number of suppressor T cells, a special type of T cell that stifles the activation of the immune system, increased following each vaccine injection, potentially limiting the greater efficacy of the vaccine.

“Pancreatic cancer is one of the most difficult cancers to treat because it is undetectable by a physical exam, asymptomatic, and progresses quickly. Most patients die within six months of diagnosis. These factors limit the amount of data available for research, hindering significant advances in the understanding and treatment of the disease.”

The Pitt study was funded by grants from the Lustgarten Foundation, the National Cancer Institute, and the Nathan Areson Fund for Pancreatic Cancer Research.

U.S. Critical Care Delivery System in Critical Condition

Stakeholder group led by Pitt researchers calls for reorganization of critical care in the United States

By Jocelyn Uhl Duffy

The demand for critical-care services in the United States will soon outpace the supply of specialists trained in intensive care, a situation that, if not remedied, may prove fatal for critically ill patients. The solution to this problem lies not in recruiting and training more personnel but in reorganizing the critical-care system nationwide, according to a report from a group of critical-care stakeholders led by Pitt School of Medicine researchers.

“We discovered that triphala fed orally was an extremely effective inhibitor of the cancer process, inducing apoptosis in cancer cells,” said Sanjay K. Srivastava, the UPCI study’s lead investigator and an assistant professor in the Pitt medical school’s Department of Pharmacology.

“Typically taken with water, it is thought to promote appetite and digestion and to increase the number of red blood cells. We discovered that triphala fed orally to mice with human pancreatic tumors was an extremely effective inhibitor of the cancer process, inducing apoptosis in cancer cells,” said Sanjay K. Srivastava, the UPCI study’s lead investigator and an assistant professor in the Pitt medical school’s Department of Pharmacology. “Triphala triggered the cancerous cells to die off and significantly reduced the size of the tumors without causing any toxic side effects.”

“Our results demonstrate that triphala has strong anticancer properties given its ability to induce apoptosis in pancreatic cancer cells without damaging normal pancreatic cells,” Srivastava continued. “With the activation of suppressor T cells, a special type of T cell that stifles the activation of the immune system, increased following each vaccine injection, potentially limiting the greater efficacy of the vaccine.”

“Pancreatic cancer is one of the most difficult cancers to treat because it is undetectable by a physical exam, asymptomatic, and progresses quickly. Most patients die within six months of diagnosis. These factors limit the amount of data available for research, hindering significant advances in the understanding and treatment of the disease.”

The Pitt study was funded by grants from the Lustgarten Foundation, the National Cancer Institute, and the Nathan Areson Fund for Pancreatic Cancer Research.

Popular Herbal Supplement Hinders Growth of Pancreatic Cancer Cells

By Clare Collins

A new study by the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute (UPCI) suggests that a commonly used herbal supplement, triphala, has cancer-fighting properties that can be used with some success in pancreatic cancer patients.

The study found that an extract of triphala—the dried and powdered fruits of Amalaki, Bibhitaki, and Haritaki trees—caused pancreatic cancer cells to die through a process called apoptosis—the body’s normal method of disposing of damaged, unwanted, or unneeded cells. This process often is faulty in cancer cells.

Triphala, one of the world’s most popular herbal preparations, is used to treat intestinal disorders. Typically taken with water, it is thought to promote appetite and digestion and to increase the number of red blood cells. We discovered that triphala fed orally to mice with human pancreatic tumors was an extremely effective inhibitor of the cancer process, inducing apoptosis in cancer cells,” said Sanjay K. Srivastava, the UPCI study’s lead investigator and an assistant professor in the Pitt medical school’s Department of Pharmacology. “Triphala triggered the cancerous cells to die off and significantly reduced the size of the tumors without causing any toxic side effects. “Our results demonstrate that triphala has strong anticancer properties given its ability to induce apoptosis in pancreatic cancer cells without damaging normal pancreatic cells,” Srivastava continued. “With the activation of suppressor T cells, a special type of T cell that stifles the activation of the immune system, increased following each vaccine injection, potentially limiting the greater efficacy of the vaccine.”

“Pancreatic cancer is one of the most difficult cancers to treat because it is undetectable by a physical exam, asymptomatic, and progresses quickly. Most patients die within six months of diagnosis. These factors limit the amount of data available for research, hindering significant advances in the understanding and treatment of the disease.”

The Pitt study was funded by grants from the Lustgarten Foundation, the National Cancer Institute, and the Nathan Areson Fund for Pancreatic Cancer Research.
Nutrients in Certain Vegetables May Provide Cancer-Fighting Benefit by Cutting Off a Tumor’s Blood Supply

By Clare Collins

Chemicals in cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, watercress, cabbage, and cauliflower appear not only to stop human prostate cancer cells from growing in mice but also may cut off the formation of blood vessels that “feed tumors,” according to a study by University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute.

The contribution of diet and nutrition to the risk, prevention, and treatment has been a major focus of research in recent years, because certain nutrients in vegetables and grains appear to protect the body against diseases such as cancer,” said Shivendra Singh, lead investigator and a professor of pharmacology and urology in Pitt’s School of Medicine. “From epidemiological data, increased consumption of vegetables reduces the risk for certain types of cancer, but now we are beginning to understand the mechanisms by which certain vegetables like broccoli may help our bodies fight cancer and other diseases.”

Singh’s study is based on phytochemicals, called isothiocyanates (ITCs), found in several cruciferous vegetables and generated when vegetables are either cut or chewed. Singh’s laboratory has found that phenethyl-ITC, or PEITC, is highly effective in suppressing the growth of human prostate cancer cells at concentrations achievable through dietary intake.

The current study follows previous research in which Singh’s laboratory found that mice grafted with human prostate tumors that received a small amount of PEITC daily for 31 days had significantly reduced tumor size when compared to a control group of mice. Now the researchers have shown that treating cells in culture with PEITC inhibits angiogenesis, a process that plays an important role in the growth and spread of cancer by forming new blood vessels that pass oxygen and nutrients to tumor cells.

“Angiogenesis is a major issue in cancer metastases,” said Singh. “Our results show that this compound is so powerful that constituents of many edible cruciferous vegetables may slow down, or even halt, this disease.”

The study was supported by a grant from the National Cancer Institute.

Natural Antioxidant Found in Many Foods and Red Wine Kills Leukemia Cells While Sparing Healthy Cells

By Jim Sweers

A naturally occurring compound found in many fruits and vegetables as well as in red wine selectively kills leukemia cells in culture while showing no discernible toxicity against healthy cells, according to a study by researchers in Pitt’s School of Medicine and the Heinz Cancer Center.

“This finding, published online March 20 in the Journal of Biological Chemistry and scheduled to be published in the print version of the journal May 4, offer hope for a more selective, less toxic therapy for leukemia.”

Current treatments for leukemia, such as chemotherapy and radiation, often damage healthy cells and tissues and can produce unwanted side effects for many years afterward. So, there is an intensive search for more targeted therapies for leukemia worldwide,” said corresponding author Xiao-Ming Yin, a Pitt professor of pathology.

Leukemia is not a single disease but a number of related cancers that start in the bone-forming cells of the blood marrow. Meaning literally “white blood” in Greek, leukemia occurs when there is an excess of abnormal white blood cells. There are both acute and chronic forms of leukemia, each with many subtypes that vary in their responses to treatment. According to the National Cancer Institute, about 44,000 new leukemia cases were diagnosed in the United States in 2007, and there will be about 22,000 leukemia-related deaths.

Biologists have found that anthocyanidins—a group of naturally occurring compounds widely available in fruits and vegetables as well as in red wine—possess chemopreventive properties, Yin and his collaborators studied the effects and mechanisms of the most common type of a naturally modified anthocyanidin, known as cyanidin-3-rutinoside, or C-3-R (which was extracted from black raspberries) in several leukemia and lymphoma cell lines.

They found that C-3-R caused about 50 percent of a human leukemia cell line known as HL-60 to undergo programmed cell death, or apoptosis, within about 18 hours of treatment at low doses. When they more than doubled the concentration of C-3-R, virtually all of the leukemia cells died. C-3-R also induced apoptosis in other human leukemia and lymphoma cell lines.

When the investigators studied the mechanism of cell death in the leukemia cells, they found that C-3-R induced the accumulation of peroxides, a highly reactive form of oxygen, which, in turn, activated a mitochondria-mediated apoptotic pathway. Mitochondria are specialized structures located within all cells in the body that decompose nutrients needed by the cell to metabolize foodstuffs into energy sources. In the presence of treatments designed to target normal human blood cells with C-3-R, they did not find any increased accumulation of reactive oxygen species and there were no apparent toxic effects on these cells.

Previous studies have shown that C-3-R possesses a strong antioxidant activity, a characteristic shared by other polyphenols, such as those found in green tea, which could be responsible for their chemoprevention effects. Yin’s work suggests that although C-3-R demonstrates antioxidant effects in normal cells, it paradoxically induces an oxidative “stress” in tumor cells. This differential effect of C-3-R may account for its selective toxicity in the tumor cells.

According to Yin, these results indicate that C-3-R has great potential to be used in leukemia therapy with the advantages of being highly selective against cancer cells. Because this compound is widely available in foods, it is very likely that it is not only safe to use in food but also effective.

“Therefore, if we can reproduce these anticancer effects in animal studies, this would present a powerful tool for treating a variety of human leukemias and, perhaps, lymphomas as well.”
2007 Laureate Lectures to Feature Distinguished Biomedical Scientists

By Stephen Byers

Four distinguished biomedical scientists, including one who shared a Nobel Prize for research on the complexities of the human olfactory system, will be featured in the 2007 Senior Vice Chancellor’s Laureate Lecture Series.

Following is this year’s lineup of lecturers:

May 2—“New Opportunities at the Interface of Chemistry and Biology” by Peter G. Schultz, Scripps Professor of Chemistry at the Scripps Research Institute.

Upon being elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1993, Schultz was recognized for such pioneering contributions at the interface of chemistry and biology as generating catalytic antibodies, developing and applying combinatorial methods in chemistry and biology, and developing biosynthetic ways to introduce unnatural amino acids site-specifically into proteins. This last initiative, which has effectively expanded the genetic code beyond the 20 common amino acids on which all proteins are built, holds the potential to create a new generation of proteins that work as novel catalysts and drugs and that are unrestricted by the properties of naturally occurring amino acids.

Sept. 7—“Comparing the Roles of Protein Kinases Using High Throughput Functional Screens” by Edward E. Harlow, professor and chair of Harvard Medical School’s Department of Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology.

Harlow, a leading cancer researcher best known for his work on cell-cycle control in mammalian cells, focuses on new approaches for functional analysis of cells, including high throughput and unbiased screens for genes that affect key properties of cancer biology. In 1988, Harlow and his lab discovered how small DNA tumor viruses alter cell cycle control by synthesizing viral proteins that interact with and inactivate negative regulators of proliferation. Loss of these controls leads to cell proliferation in inappropriate conditions. This model is widely applicable to cancer, as the pathways targeted by these viruses are frequently mutated in human cancer. Discovering how inhibitors of these subvert cell regulation also provided new insights into how mammalian cells control cell division.

Sept. 26—“Unraveling the Sense of Smell” by Nobel laureate Linda Buck, member and associate director of the Division of Basic Sciences and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

The underlying molecular mechanisms of the olfactory system—it’s ability to detect 10,000 or more distinct odors and translate them into what the brain perceives and remembers as specific smells—is the focus of Buck’s research. Her studies extend to an exploration of how smells affect reproductive physiology and behavior. While working as a postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of Richard Axel at Columbia University, Buck identified a family of genes that encode odor receptors in the lining of the nose. They went on to independently study the organization of the olfactory system in both the nose and the brain and eventually shared the 2004 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their findings. In conjunction with her Laureate Lecture, Buck will receive the 2007 Albert C. Muse Prize for Excellence in Otolaryngology from the Eye and Ear Foundation of Pittsburgh and the Eye and Ear Institute of Pittsburgh.

Nov. 7—“Can Immunology Contribute to Chemotherapy? Challenges of Tuberculosis” by Carl F. Nathan, professor and chair of microbiology and immunology, R.A. Rees Pritchett Professor of Microbiology, and professor of medicine at Weill Medical College of Cornell University.

Nathan’s research is focused on the molecular mechanisms of innate immunity and host-pathogen interactions. His interests include the workings of macrophages and neutrophils, the role of inflammation in immunity, and the function of nitric oxide as a signaling molecule.

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From Accra to Ulaanbaatar

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Three Pitt Law Students Named Inaugural Nordenberg Fellows

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School-Record 311 Pitt Student-Athletes

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Stanley Prostrednik Grant to work with the Kakamega Environmental Education Program to develop infectious disease health-education programs for primary grade students in Kakamega, Kenya.

The Stanley Prostrednik Award will fund James E. Quinn IV, an international human rights law student in Pitt’s School of Law, in a United Nations internship in the Office on Drugs and Crime in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

With the James W. Knox Merit Award, Darmendra Ramcharran, an epidemiology major in Pitt’s School of Medicine, will conduct research in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on treatment methodologies for HIV/AIDS in combination with various hepatitis strains.

Danielle S. Shuttleworth, an occupational therapy major in Pitt’s School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, has received the Ruth Crawford Mitchell Memorial Award and will examine the effects of natural and man-made disasters on the indigenous population of Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala, and assess the need there for occupational-therapy-related services.

The John H. Tsai Memorial Award will support graduate student Leslie V. Wallace, an Early Chinese art history graduate student, as she examines tomb reliefs from the Eastern Han dynasty (20-225 C.E.) that depict hunting scenes and consults with Chinese scholars in Shanghai.

Medical student Rebecca Walton-Toews’ Stanley Prostrednik Grant will make it possible for her to do infectious-disease-related research in both clinical and laboratory settings at the Hospital Nacional Cayetano Heredia in Lima, Peru.

James W. Knox Memorial Award recipient Zachary A. Zator, a student in Pitt’s School of Medicine, will conduct research on environmental factors that promote and impede access to health care in Hyderabad, India.

The Nordenberg Fellows, awarded through CILE in cooperation with the EU Center of Excellence, will fulfill Drabek’s wishes. Each Nordenberg Fellow will receive $5,000 to support his or her internship.

Drabek described as president of the Pitt Law Women’s Society and as a legal analysis and writing teaching assistant. She was a member of the Pitt team that competed at the 2007 William C. Vis International Commercial Law Competition.

She is the recipient of a 2007-08 Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship, which will use to support Polish in conjunction with her legal studies.

Garman has received the Truxall Fund Scholarship and a Nationality Room Scholarship at the School of Law. In 2006, Garman spent the summer as an intern at the European Roma Rights Center in Budapest. She has served as vice president of the International Law Student Association at Pitt and is an associate editor of the Journal of Law and Commerce.

Willey has studied at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland and the Federal Armed Forces Academy in Munich. In summer 2006, he participated in the summer session of Judge John A. Zottola in the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas. Willey was a member of the School of Law’s 2007 Niagara International Moot Court team.

In contrast to the world’s most gifted, creative and innovative scientists of our day to campus on a regular basis,” said Arthur S. Levine, Pitt senior vice chancellor for the health sciences and dean of the School of Medicine. “We continue to achieve that purpose with another outstanding panel of speakers this year, and I’m delighted to welcome them, not only for the benefit of our many scientists throughout the University but also because these visits provide a wonderful opportunity for the speakers themselves to discover what a dynamic research environment we have here.”
Pitt and Pittsburgh filmmakers will host the 9th Annual Russian Film Symposium from April 30 to May 5 in Room 106 of Pitt’s David L. Lawrence Hall (1175) and the Pittsburgh Filmmakers’ Wedmore Screening Room, 477 Melwood Ave., Oakland.

The symposium, titled Melodrama and Kino- Ideology, will bring together some of the most renowned scholars and critics currently working in the film, including Dmitri Soviev and Mikhal Tsinfroenkin, award-winning Russian cinema critics from St. Petersburg; Oleg Sulkin, a New-Rusian cinema director and critic; and resident film expert Marcia Landy, a Pitt Distinguished Service Professor of English/Film Studies.

All screenings are open to the public. Admission to Pittsburgh Filmmakers’ Wedmore Screening Room films is $5. Film students will introduce each film, and discussion sessions will follow each screening. The symposium schedule follows:

April 30—May 1
4:00 p.m.; Pittsburgh Filmmakers, 1175 Melwood Ave., North Side, 412-321-7723, www.pitt.edu/ArtsCenter.

April 30—May 1
9:30 a.m.; Pitt’s Volunteer Pool, 335 North Charles St., downtown, 412-682-3020.

April 30—May 1

May 1—Relations (2006), directed by Avdotia Smirnova, 10 a.m., and Inhale-Exhale (2006), directed by Ivan Dykhvynsky, 2 p.m., both in DLH

May 2—The First Step (2007), directed by Iuri Moro, 10 a.m.; and Transit (2006), Aleksandr Rogozhin, 7 p.m., Melwood.

May 3—Free Floating (2006), directed by Boris Khlebnikov, 2 p.m., and It's Time To Act: The Musical Performance, 5 p.m.; Harris Theater, 809 Liberty Ave., downtown, Silk Screen Asian American Film Festival, www.silkscreenfestival.org.

May 4—Two in One (2007), directed by Kira Matrova, 10 a.m.; Polymula (2005), directed by Artem Antonov, 2 p.m., and Arive (2006), directed by Aleksandr Velyedkin, 7 p.m., Melwood.

May 5—Euphoria (2006), directed by Ivan Vyppayev, 7 p.m., Melwood.

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April 30
Theatrical Performance, “It’s Time To Act: The Musical Performance,” Bill Perkins, Carnegie Mellon student and former U.S. Army officer, 10 a.m.—12:30 p.m.; and “Sunday Enzyme Cata,” Columbia University’s Department of Biological Consequence,” 2:50 p.m.; and “Applications for the Screen,” The Scripps Research Institute, Research Group, 1:30 p.m.;

May 2

May 3
Seminar, “Current-Driven Phenomena in Molecular Electronics,” Tamar Seidman, professor of chemistry and physics, Northwestern University, noon, 1175 Benedum Hall, km1013p@pitt.edu.

May 4

May 5

May 6
Musical Performance, “Blue Umbrella” (2005), directed by Vishal Bhardwaj, 8 p.m., Rodef Shalom Temple, 335 S. Braddock Ave., Edgewood, Silk Screen Asian American Film Festival, www.silkscreenfestival.org.

May 11
Ph. D. Dissertation Defense by Michael Stephens, Department of Music, “Two Looking at Ways of Measuring Practice,” 8:00 p.m., S. Braddock Ave., Chamber Music Hall, with a wine and cheese reception. Items also may be faxed to 412-624-1033.

May 12
Film Screening, Eun-Young Jung, Pitt Department of Modern Languages, “The Hereditary Link and Cancer: Ovarian Cancer Education,” 3:00 p.m., 302 Main Library, University of Pittsburgh, 412-624-4477, www.malmsfu.org.

May 13

May 14

May 18

May 19

May 20

May 21
Theatrical Performance, “The First Step (2007), directed by Kira Matrova, 10 a.m., and Inhale-Exhale (2006), directed by Ivan Dykhvynsky, 2 p.m., both in DLH

May 22

May 23

May 24

May 25
Good Friday at the Warhol Museum, 9:00 a.m.; Good Friday at 10:00 a.m., 1175 Benedum Square.

May 26

May 27

May 28

May 29

May 30

May 31
Congratulations to the Class of 2007

University of Pittsburgh

“They shall find wisdom here and faith—in steel and stone, in character and thought—they shall find beauty, adventure, and high victory.”

— John G. Bowman, Pitt Chancellor, 1921-45

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