Provost James V. Maher to Step Down in 2010

Dr. James V. Maher, provost and senior vice chancellor at the University of Pittsburgh, today announced his intention to leave that position and return to the faculty at the beginning of the next academic year or as soon after that as his successor can be in place. The University’s chief academic officer since June of 1994, Provost Maher has served with distinction and is widely credited with helping to lead Pitt through a period of unparalleled progress.

In accepting Dr. Maher’s resignation, Pitt Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg said, “It is hard to imagine anyone being better at his or her job than Jim Maher has been as our provost. Among the many positive qualities that he brought to this key leadership role are his extraordinary breadth of knowledge, a well-developed ability to identify talented individuals and to anticipate academic trends, and a deep dedication to Pitt that has extended across most of his adult life. He has earned both the gratitude and respect of all of Pitt’s many constituent groups and has touched, in significant and consistently positive ways, virtually every aspect of life within our University. “I certainly could not have had a more capable and committed professional partner than Jim Maher,” Chancellor Nordenberg continued. “I will miss working with him on a daily basis when he leaves the provost’s office. However, particularly given the knowledge and insights that Provost Maher has acquired over the past 15 years, he will remain a unique institutional asset, and we will find other ways, in addition to his contributions as a faculty member, to make use of his special talents for the further advancement of Pitt.”

In commenting on his decision to bring his distinguished and lengthy tenure as Pitt’s provost to an end, Dr. Maher stated, “I am very proud to have been a key member of Chancellor Nordenberg’s team during these years of dramatic progress for the University. I am optimistic that the University of Pittsburgh will continue to elevate itself among the nation’s best research universities, and I only regret that I cannot go on indefinitely in pursuit of that goal.”

—Provost James V. Maher

In the search for America’s next generation of scientists, the University of Pittsburgh and WQED Multimedia have produced Science Mission 101, an educational, competitive reality television program wherein two teams of Pittsburgh-area high school students compete to unravel scientific mysteries. Aimed at reaching underserved middle-school students and accepted for national distribution by American Public Television (APT), the half-hour pilot of Science Mission 101 will premiere at 8 p.m. Nov. 15 on WQED-Pittsburgh TV.

In the pilot episode, host Mike Lee challenges Team Awesome and Team Dominate to investigate whether amoebae like those found in our digestive systems prefer to eat specific types of bacteria—and whether that preference relates to the fact that only certain bacteria make people sick. The students expose an amoeba to different strains of the bacterium Salmonella—which is found in raw or undercooked food—to determine whether it prefers to eat one strain over the other. Students perform their work in laboratories within Pitt’s Department of Biological Sciences and on the Pitt Mobile Science Lab, a traveling laboratory outfitted with high-end equipment used to perform scientific investigations.

The Pitt Mobile Science Lab is a self-contained, fully equipped, traveling laboratory primarily used for the outreach programs in the Department of Biological Sciences. The 70-foot tractor-trailer was purchased in 2008 through a National Institutes of Health Clinical and Translational Science Award. It is sponsored by Pitt’s Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute and through the Science Education Partnership Awards given to the Department of Biological Sciences. Collaborative partners include the Pittsburgh Life Sciences Greenhouse, the Lycem Group, Thermo Fisher Scientific, and the Pittsburgh Tissue Engineering Initiative.

The two teams present their findings to judges from Pitt’s Department of Biological Sciences and are evaluated based on cooperation, creativity, interpretation of experimental data, presentation, and scientific thought. The judges are Alison Slinsky Legg, Mobile Science Lab director and director of outreach programs for the Department of Biological Sciences; Graham F. Hatfull, Eberly Family Professor and chair of the department; and Kristen Butela, a graduate student in the lab of Pitt biological sciences professor Jeffrey Lawrence.

Science Mission 101 will repeat at noon and 7:30 p.m. Nov. 15 and 4:30 p.m. Nov. 16. Additional resources for students and teachers will be available at www.sciencemission101.com by the time the show premieres. Funding to produce the pilot for Science Mission 101 was provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Education through the Pennsylvania Public Television Network (PPTN), PPG Industries Foundation, and the University of Pittsburgh.

Pitt’s Biological Sciences Outreach Program has supported local K-12 education for the past 15 years, providing professional teacher training workshops, hands-on science experiments for K-12 students, and an outreach education associate’s degree program that introduces graduate and undergraduate biology students to K-12 teaching (http://www.pitt.edu/~biology). Since 1995, Pitt has supplied high school science teachers with “Pitt Kits” that contain supplies to create and implement inquiry-based modules to teach their students throughout the year. The program has reached more than 33,000 students within a 50-mile radius of the University.
Bartholomew Roland has remained steadfast in his dedication to following a scientific path. “Science and the pursuit of knowledge have always intrigued me more than any other career,” he said.

A student in the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine’s Interdisciplinary Biomedical Graduate Program, Roland is helping to investigate how sodium-potassium pumps—which are part of the human brain and critical to neuronal function—supply themselves with energy.

Roland was recently named an Achievement Rewards for College Scientists Foundation (ARCS) Scholar. ARCS is a nonprofit, national volunteer organization of women dedicated to providing scholarships to academically outstanding U.S. citizens who are studying science, medicine, and engineering. Sue Harter, president of the ARCS Pittsburgh chapter, says the chapter funds 29 scholars at both Pitt and Carnegie Mellon University. “Our 150 women members and the corporations, foundations, and other individuals who support us share our same concerns for our region and our country’s future,” she said.

Prior to enrolling in Pitt’s School of Medicine, Roland attended Central Michigan University, where he became enamored in Huntington’s Disease research. He said he was amazed to realize that a simple expansion of a piece of DNA could lead to a disorder that impairs physical movement, cognition, and psychiatric well-being. During his college years, Roland’s love of research led him to jobs in the labs of Dow Chemical Company and a research assistantship in the Brain Research and Integrated Neuroscience (BRAIN) Center at Central Michigan University and the Field Neuroscience Institute in Saginaw.

Roland plans to complete his PhD in pharmacology or pathology with a focus on neuroscience. After receiving his doctorate, he hopes to continue his research at an academic institution.

Roland said he appreciates the recognition and financial support provided to him by the ARCS Foundation. “To me, the ARCS Foundation means a new source of hope. Because of the support of these generous women, I have finally been able to devote myself full-time to the study of neurodegenerative diseases in order to find new ways to treat these conditions,” he said.

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Continued from page 1

Board of Trustees and assistant chancellor. It is expected that the committee as a whole can be fully constituted over the course of the next few weeks.
Continued Progress Amid Continuing Economic Challenges

The following is the print version of Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg’s Oct. 30, 2009, report to the Pitt Board of Trustees.

The beginning of every academic year is an exciting time. After the comparative calm of summer, we are jolted back to our own set of realities by the sudden, significant, and sustained surge of energy traveling with our students as they “repopulate” our campuses. In human terms, I doubt that there is anything quite like it in any other kind of institution.

Once again, I can report that we enrolled the best-qualified freshman class in our history here in Oakland. I hope that is a message I will be able to continue repeating and that you never will tire of hearing. But I also want to make the point that—though we tend to focus on Oakland undergraduate applications as one of our key institutional measures—applications, enrollment, and student credentials are up across most of our programs on all of our campuses.

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At an Oct. 29 Health Sciences Committee meeting, for example, Dr. Arthur Levine, senior vice chancellor for the health sciences and dean of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, reported that the credentials presented by this fall’s entering class in the School of Medicine are equal to those of Harvard’s entering class. And to single out one other important example, enrollment at the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford passed the 1,500 mark this term. That has been a longtime goal—hard to achieve in a beautiful, but somewhat remote and sparsely populated, portion of our state. That has been a longtime goal—hard to achieve in a beautiful, but somewhat remote and sparsely populated, portion of our state. That has been a longtime goal—hard to achieve in a beautiful, but somewhat remote and sparsely populated, portion of our state.

The academic life of the campus is more vibrant than it ever has been, and our students are avid consumers of it. Our Hillman University Library Director Rush Miller tells me that he has never seen so many students in the library, and the number of students staying in such public areas as the Common Room has grown dramatically.

The Petersen name is synonymous with extraordinary generosity. And recent weeks have given us the chance to recognize private donors and their support—which have become increasingly important at a time when public support for higher education continues to be in a far cry from the first such event that I attended, as a Chancellor’s Circle donor, and that you never will tire of hearing.

But our “basic business”—as you can tell from the well-publicized “party school rankings” where we never contend for top spot—is not celebrations. The academic life of the campus is more vibrant than it ever has been, and our students are avid consumers of it. Our Hillman University Library Director Rush Miller tells me that he has never seen so many students in the library, and the number of students staying in such public areas as the Common Room has grown dramatically.

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Continued Progress Amid Continuing Economic Challenges

Continued from page 3

some 20 years ago. It probably is not true that we all could have been stuffed into a phone booth, but a small seminar room would have accommodated all of us.

Recent weeks also have given us the chance to acknowledge individual giving on a truly spectacular scale. We celebrated the completion of the Mascaro Center for Sustainable Innovation at a ribbon-cutting held in conjunction with a meeting of the Board of Visitors of the Swanson School of Engineering. And less than two weeks ago, we announced the most recent commitment of John and Gertrude Petersen—this gift to support what will be known as the Petersen Sports Complex—the future home to our baseball, softball, and men’s and women’s soccer teams.

As the new term unfolded, we had the chance to welcome distinguished guests. Some came from considerable distances. The two most obvious examples in that category were José Manuel Barroso, the president of the European Commission, and Dimitry Medvedev, the president of the Russian Federation. I only wish that you all could have been here, because it was a truly memorable afternoon. And, as you would expect, the presence on our campus of these two world leaders brought very positive attention to Pitt all around the globe.

Other important outside guests ranged from the all-star lineup of speakers assembled for our ninth annual celebration of science to the winner of this year’s Drue Heinz Prize in Literature—the country’s most prominent award in short fiction, which we present annually. And throughout the fall, we have hosted a rich array of cultural activities.

Some of our distinguished guests came from within the “Pitt family.” For example, within a larger group of Homecoming Week honorees, just last week (Oct. 22), we inducted a new class of Legacy Laureates. That group included your Board colleague Lee Noble, as well as such other distinguished Pitt graduates as the President of the Taipei Medical University, the Dean of the Yale Nursing School, and the founding Chancellor of the University, the Dean of the Yale Nursing School, and the founding Chancellor of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, as well as two of the first three African American women to enroll in our nursing school in the early 1940s. Their stories were inspiring not only because they broke color barrier but because they went on to craft lives of such impact with their Pitt degrees in hand.

Important and well-deserved honors also were received by members of our Board from non-Pitt groups. Just in the last several days, to give two telling examples, Eva Blum was named a Distinguished Daughter of Pennsylvania, a very high honor, and Keith Schaefer was named the CEO of the Year by the Pittsburgh Technology Council for the outstanding work he has done in leading BPL Global, which is positioned to be one of this region’s great 21st-century commercial successes.

The presence of Keith and the work that he is doing here are telling examples of the type of largely unrecognized contribution that our University makes to regional economic development. In past presentations, I have reminded you that such contributions, though they are now getting more attention, actually are an important part of our regional history.

To repeat just two examples:

• Jerry McGinnis, a young man from Illinois, came to Pitt for graduate school, stayed in the region, and founded Respironics, which has become a major regional employer and a force in its area of specialty around the world; and
• John Swanson, a young man from Upstate New York, came to Pitt for graduate school, stayed in the region, and founded ANSYS, which has become a major regional employer and a force in its area of specialty around the world.

Keith Schaefer, of course, was born, raised, and educated in Pittsburgh. However, he was “long gone” for many years, with most of his career spent in California. It was not until he was honored as a Distinguished Alumni Fellow, became a leader of the Pitt Alumni Association, and was elected to this Board that he really began re-engaging...
in Pittsburgh. And that positioned him to assume the CEO’s position in this exciting new company.

One of the first things that the Pitt.edu is an economy that has been so directly to
strong university research is a theme that was sounded in publications throughout the
country during the past year. That theme
received even greater attention, and in more
distant locations, when President Obama
selected Pittsburgh to host the G-20 Summit.
In connection with that event, both the “eds
and meds” sector generally and Pitt, more
particularly, received well-placed coverage
for their contributions.

As you all know, we also do connect,
both to the broader society and to our
home communities, in important
ways that are not tied directly to research.
For example:

- Some 450 members of our staff and faculty participated in the
  United Way’s Day of Caring. The Day of Caring concept was pioneered here in
  Pittsburgh, and Pitt has been a leading participant right from the start.

- Even more recently, Pitt was the top-ranked public university in the 2009 edition of
  Saviors of Our Cities: A Survey of Best College and University Civic Partnerships. “Best
  neighbor universities,” as they are called in this assessment, are distinguished by their
  “long-standing efforts with community leaders to rehabilitate the cities around them, to
  influence community revitalization and cultural renewal, and to encourage economic
  expansion...urban development and community service.”

This impressive accumulation of good news and good deeds should not be misunderstood as a message that we have moved into this new academic year without any challenges, however. In fact, over the course of the last several weeks, our three biggest problems have been G-20, H1N1, and SB1036.

All of you are familiar with the G-20 protests and accompanying claims of excessive force and the H1N1 virus and fears of vaccine shortages. These matters have been widely covered in the popular press, and we have been reporting to you on them. Let me, then, focus on SB1036—which, in my judgment, has not received all of the attention it deserves.

SB1036 is the bill that has passed the Pennsylvania Senate and that provides funding for Pitt’s FY2010 appropriation. Even more to the point, SB1036 is one of several bills that have been “held hostage” in the House as wrangling over competing positions on gaming legislation continues.

It has been said that the Pitt, Penn State, Temple, and Lincoln appropriations all are being held up because we are “nonpreferred” institutions, and, in the legal sense, we are “nonpreferred.” However, being in that category generally means that a higher threshold of support is required when a vote is taken, not that bills will be kept from a vote of the members.

Think about our current situation. Legislation authorizing support for the universities that enroll the largest number of Pennsylvania students that attract research funding far in excess of their state appropriations and that are among the most powerful economic engines in the Commonwealth is being held up because competing caucuses cannot agree about the fees and taxes to be paid by the “table games industry.” When you think about the way that most Pennsylvanians would rank their own priorities, that “nonpreferred” term seems even more clearly to be misplaced in this context.

In fact, when you think about the plain meaning of the term, Pennsylvania’s state-related universities actually have become the preferred choice in higher education for many of Pennsylvania’s hardest-working and most-able students. And Pennsylvania’s state-related universities clearly have become preferred centers of research—within the community of government, corporate, and foundation sponsors. And because of that combination of strengths in research and education, the great weight of current commentary suggests that if you were looking for ways to sustain or revitalize a regional economy, Pennsylvania’s state-related universities would be viewed as preferred engines of growth.

Even one who was trained as a lawyer and who also are more likely, then, to stay here after college—are not preferred. And they are saying that the roughly one million alumni of our state-related universities—the biggest block of whom live here in Pennsylvania and do care deeply about their universities—are not preferred. And they are saying that the roughly 30 communities in which we have campuses or other key facilities that function as drivers of the economy are not preferred.

| Otto von Bismarck, known as “The Iron Chancellor”—as opposed, I guess, to your much less imposing “Steel City Chancellors”—once said that “laws are like sausages, it is better not to see them being made.” Four full months into the fiscal year without a completed budget, the real question in Pennsylvania is more basic—whether it should be seen or not, does Pennsylvania even have a functioning budget process? Certainly, the products that we might reasonably have expected have not been forthcoming.

Though the headlines of earlier this month broadly proclaimed that a state budget had been put in place, that simply was not the case. Instead, there is important work yet to be done. And in approaching that work, our 21st-century lawmakers might do well to heed the advice of Benjamin Franklin, perhaps the greatest Pennsylvanian and the former Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

Well over two centuries ago, Mr. Franklin said, “An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.” That judgment, like much of Mr. Franklin’s wisdom, has stood the test of time and hopefully will guide the participants when work on the still-unfinished portions of the Commonwealth budget resumes in earnest.
Hard Rain
Pitt-led researchers create nanoparticle coating to prevent freezing rain buildup on roads, power lines

By Morgan Kelly

Preventing the havoc wrought when freezing rain collects on roads, power lines, and aircrafts could be only a few nanometers away. A University of Pittsburgh-led team demonstrates in the Nov. 3 edition of Langmuir how a nanoparticle-based coating developed in a Pitt laboratory can thwart the buildup of ice on solid surfaces and can be easily applied.

The paper, by lead author and Pitt doctoral student Liangliang Cao, presents the first evidence of anti-icing properties for a burgeoning class of water repellants—including the Pitt coating—known as superhydrophobic coatings. These thin films mimic the rutted surface of lotus leaves by creating microscopic ridges that reduce the surface area to which water can adhere. But the authors note that because ice behaves differently than water, the ability to repulse water cannot be readily applied to ice inhibition. Cao’s coauthors include Di Gao, a chemical and petroleum engineering professor in Pitt’s Swanson School of Engineering in whose lab the coating was developed; Jianzhong Wu, a chemical engineering professor at the University of California at Riverside; and Andrew Jones and Vinod Sikka of Ross Technology Corporation of Leola, Pa.

The team found that superhydrophobic coatings must be specifically formulated to ward off ice buildup. Gao and his team created different batches made of a silicone resin solution combined with nanoparticles of silica ranging in size from 20 nanometers to 20 micrometers, at the largest. They applied each variant to aluminum plates and then exposed the plates to supercooled water (-20 degrees Celsius) to simulate freezing rain.

Cao writes in Langmuir that while each compound containing silica bits of 10-or-fewer micrometers deflected water, only those with silica pieces less than 50 nanometers in size completely prevented icing. The minute surface area of the smaller fragments means they make minimal contact with the water. Instead, the water mostly touches the air pockets between the particles and falls away without freezing. Though not all superhydrophobic coatings follow the Pitt recipe, the researchers conclude that every type will have a different particle scale for repelling ice than for repelling water.

Gao tested the coating with 50-nanometer particles outdoors in freezing rain to determine its real-world potential. He painted one side of an aluminum plate and left the other side untreated. The treated side had very little ice, while the untreated side was completely covered. He produced similar results on a commercial satellite dish where the glossed half of the dish had no ice and the other side was encrusted.

A video available on Pitt’s Web site shows an aluminum plate glazed with Gao’s superhydrophobic coating (left) repelling the supercooled water. For the uncoated plate (right), the water freezes on contact and ice accumulates. The video can be accessed at www.pitt.edu/news2009/ice.html. The Langmuir paper is available on Pitt’s Web site at www.pitt.edu/news2009/DeGao.pdf.

LIFE WITHOUT OIL?

Bruce Babbitt, chair of the World Wildlife Fund, former U.S. Secretary of the Interior, and former governor of Arizona delivered a lecture titled “Life Without Oil: A Vision for the 21st Century.” The Nov. 3 lecture was part of the American Experience Distinguished Lecture Series, sponsored by Pitt’s University Honors College. As Secretary of the Interior, Babbitt created the National Landscape Conservation System, brought about a forest plan in the Pacific Northwest, helped restore the Florida Everglades, and was instrumental in the passage of the California Desert Protection Act and legislation for the National Wildlife Refuge System. He also is responsible for implementing the rules allowing for the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park.

A LESSON ON RACIAL DIVERSITY

Lee Mun Wah (above), a renowned film director, author, educator, and diversity trainer, visited the University of Pittsburgh on Nov. 5 for a daylong seminar and workshop hosted by the Office of Cross-Cultural and Leadership Development. Wah presented the session titled “Unlearning Racism in Schools” to the Division of Students Affairs staff and other Pitt faculty and staff.


Hillman Library, Historical Exhibition of African American Progress at Pitt, ongoing, ground floor, 412-648-7710.

Lectures/Seminars/Readings

“Shopping Marketing: Where the Rubber Meets the Road,” Jeffrey Inman, Albert Wesley Frey Professor of Marketing, Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business, 7:30 p.m. Jan. 10, 500 Alumni Hall, Pitt Consumer Executive Lecture Series, 412-648-1680, landerson@katz.pitt.edu.

“Coca: Agentes Para la Historia de un Ser Humano,” in Spanish by Eduardo Torres Cuevas, director, José Maria Pino Suarez Medical History Center visiting scholar, University of Guadalajara, 4 p.m. Nov. 10, 3705 Pohr Hall, Daniel Henry History Center, www.history.pitt.edu.


“Applications of High Capacity Power Delivery Networks (FACTS and HVDC) for Green Energy Resource Integration and Management,” in English by Geoffrey Reid, professor, Swanson School of Engineering’s Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, noon Nov. 11, 434 Benedum Hall, Swanson School, 412-624-8001.

“El Hombre Artesano: Arte y Politica de la Tablilla de Chavín del Jirón Rekal- lata,” lecture in Spanish by María del Pilar Pérez,阐er, professor of Spanish, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 3 p.m. Nov. 11, 333 Cathedral of Learning, Pitt Center for Latin American Studies, www拉丁americanstudies.pitt.edu


“Introduction to Library Resources and Services on Rare Books of the University of Pittsburgh,” Matthew Zito, public service librarian, Pitt East Asian Studies, noon Nov. 12, 4130 Pohr Hall, Pitt Asian Studies Center, www.uacs.pitt.edu.


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Schenley Plaza Receives Silver Award at International LivCom Competition

By Baindu Saidu

Schenley Plaza’s transformation from a parking lot into a vibrant, green public space won the Silver Award in the Environmentally Sustainable Project Category during the 2009 International Awards for Liveable Communities (LivCom Awards) held Oct. 8-12 in the Czech Republic city of Pilsen.

The plaza’s $12 million redesign was a collaborative project of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and the Oakland Investment Committee of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. The Parks Conservancy operates the plaza in partnership with the City of Pittsburgh. Meg Cheever, president and CEO of the conservancy, presented the project to a panel of judges and an audience representing 15 countries.

Schenley Plaza is a five-acre parcel of land located on Forbes Avenue in Oakland between Carnegie Library and Pitt’s Hillman Library. It offers such amenities as food kiosks, a one-acre lawn, café seating, and a Victorian-style carousel.

State grants as well as funding from the Parks Conservancy, University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, Carnegie Museums and Library, UPMC, the Heinz Endowments, and the Richard King Mellon Foundation supported the project. Additionally, Pitt provided project and contract management services as well as legal services.

Pitt’s Office of Facilities Management (OFM) contributed to the plaza’s conceptual design and managed the construction process, said Ron Liebow, a project manager within OFM. The late Ana Guzman, Pitt’s then-vice chancellor for facilities management and a member of the Oakland Task Force, spearheaded the project. Guzman passed away on Dec. 1, 2008.

“It has been wonderful to see Schenley Plaza grow and develop over the past four years, and we are thrilled that it has received international recognition,” Cheever said. “Schenley Plaza’s conversion from a parking lot to a vital green gathering place has improved the quality of life in Oakland.”

The LivCom Awards, created to encourage the best practices, innovation, and leadership in sustainable development, is the world’s only competition for local communities that focuses on environmental management and the creation of liveable communities.

By Baindu Saidu

Clockwise from above: Schenley Plaza during construction, some of the new food concessions lining the walkways, and the carousel at the south end of the plaza.