University of Pittsburgh Alumnus Bert O'Malley has been awarded the 2011 Ernst Schering Prize for international excellence in medicine and basic biological and chemical research. One of the most prestigious German science honors, the annual prize, which carries a cash award of €50,000, was established by the Ernst Schering Research Foundation in 1991 and is bestowed internationally for particularly outstanding basic research in the fields of medicine and chemistry. The prize will be awarded Sept. 20 at an invitation-only ceremony in Berlin. It honors O'Malley's pioneering work on the actions of steroid hormones and nuclear receptors, as well as his training of more than 250 students and postdoctoral fellows who now serve as professors, deans, and chief executive officers for research centers around the world.

O'Malley, currently the Tom Thompson Distinguished Service Professor and chair of the molecular and cellular biology at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, helped uncover the workings of estrogen and progesterone and the regulation of eukaryotic gene expression. He described the molecular events that allow hormones to influence genes to make proteins, and discovered “coactivator” and “corepressor” gene regulators that profoundly influence tissue development and physiology.

“This is a significant and much-deserved honor,” said Arthur S. Levine, Pitt's senior vice chancellor for the health sciences and dean of the School of Medicine. “Dr. O'Malley has made outstanding contributions to our understanding of how actions of steroid hormones and nuclear receptor mechanisms influence genes to make proteins, and how estrogen is regulated by progesterone and the regulation of cellular actions of estrogen in the ovary.”

In its profile of Pitt on USA Today's Web site, the editors at The Princeton Review commend the University for producing Rhodes, Marshall, Truman, Udall, Goldwater, Churchill, and Gates Cambridge scholars; for the Pitt KST program that “links students to cultural amenities in the city”; for holding the distinction of being home to one of just 10 European Union Centers of Excellence in the United States funded by the European Commission; for “earning...a top ranking in the Top American Research Universities; for student athletes achieving a grade point average of more than 3.0—3.49, and 130 earned a 3.5 or higher, including 25 students who achieved a perfect 4.0 GPA. When you think about the demands placed upon student-athletes at a great University, for 290 of our students to achieve a grade point average of more than 3.0 is extremely impressive,” Pitt Athletic Director Steve Pederson said. “Special thanks should be extended to the coaches and staff, who encourage and support this kind of excellence. We are proud of the many good works of our student-athletes, including their more than 2,700 hours of community service and their commitment to making a difference in the lives of others.”

The 4.0 student-athletes were: Elizabeth Adams (tennis), Kellyn Black (cheer and dance), Kimmy Borza (women's tennis), Jonathan Buchanan (men’s swimming and diving), Meagan Dooley (volleyball), Minh Evans (tennis), Kaitlyn Flynn (women’s track and field), Aaron Hassett (football), Moe Keplhart (women’s soccer), Rousseau Kluever (men’s swimming and diving), Philip Konieczny (baseball), Sarah Looney (women’s swimming and diving), Cookie McIntyre (women’s swimming and diving), Kristen McMullan (women’s swimming and diving), Pierre-Antoine Meunier (men’s swimming and diving), Alyssa O’Connell (softball), Bradley Rocco (men’s track and field), Krista Rubini (gymnastics), Ben Rubino (cheer and dance), Allison Sanders (cheer and dance), Daniel Schneider (football), Ryan Tomei (wrestling), Leah Ullio (women’s track and field), Samson Weiser (men’s track and field), and Lauren Zammerilla (cheer and dance).

“For 25 students to achieve a perfect 4.0 GPA is astounding,” Pederson added. “While we admire and appreciate their successes in their chosen sport, we value their commitment to education more.”

Pederson also announced the Academic Team Awards. The Most Improved Team was softball, which earned a cumulative 2.92 GPA.

In his typically humble fashion, he later said that he had just done what “anyone else in Pittsburgh would have done given the situation.” One of the rescued women strongly disagreed. From her hospital bed, she said, “He’s my hero. My kids want to hug him.”

A few days later, our Executive Vice Chancellor Jerry Cochran and I were discussing this incident. A single statement that passed between us captured our shared feelings perfectly: “If we did not already have enough reasons to love Jamie Dixon.” And over the course of his nearly eight years as the head men’s basketball coach at the University of Pittsburgh, Jamie has given all of us plenty of reasons to love him—as a highly accomplished professional and as a very special person.

In what was not only Jamie’s first year as our head coach but his first year as a head coach anywhere, his team won its first 18 games, the third-best start for a rookie coach in NCAA Division I history; won 31 games overall, a Pitt record; won the Big East regular season title; and advanced to the NCAA’s Sweet Sixteen. And rookie coach Jamie Dixon, who many had thought was not ready for the job, was named Big East Coach of the Year.

That extraordinary start was a sign of the good things to come, because Jamie just kept building. In every one of his...
Chancellor’s 2011 Staff Awards Announced

By Alex Russell

Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg has announced the winners of the 2011 Chancellor’s Awards for Staff for Excellence in Service to the Community and to the University.

The Award for Staff for Excellence in Service to the Community recognizes staff members whose work in the community surpasses the expectations of the organizations they serve and whose commitment and effort have made significant impacts on the community. The four award recipients are:

* James P. Gallagher, research systems manager for the School of Dental Medicine;
* Christine E. Miller, administrative assistant, Department of Health and Physical Activity in the School of Education;
* Bryan M. Valentine, director of student life at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown; and
* Marjan E. Wencel-Tracey, assistant to the executive director of enrollment management at the University of Pittsburgh at Titusville.

The Chancellor’s Award for Staff Excellence in Service to the University recognizes staff members who not only exceed job standards and expectations in performing their duties but also make a significant impact on the University through their commitment and performance.

The following five Pitt staff members were chosen to receive the award:

* Kazi Islam, manager of Peptide Synthesis Core Facilities, Center for Bioengineering;
* David W. Nanz, officer, University of Pittsburgh Police Department;
* Laurie A. Sallows, office administrator, Office of General Counsel;
* Dorothy Shallenberger, administrator, Department of Music; and
* Kathleen Zidorovich, financial researcher administrator, Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences.

All award recipients’ names were recognized during Pitt’s Feb. 25 Honors Convocation. Each awardee will receive a $2,500 cash prize and have his or her name added to a plaque displayed in the William Pitt Union that is inscribed with the names of all recipients of the Chancellor’s Awards.

Public Service to the Community

The award selection committee was impressed by the more than 20 years of service that Gallagher has given to the Boy Scouts of America and, more specifically, to Troop 296. In addition to the time he devotes to weekly troop meetings, weekend activities, and a two-week summer camping trip, Gallagher also serves on the Steel District Training Committee and is actively involved in mentoring Scout leaders. “However, perhaps your greatest impact has been the work you have done that has helped more than 300 young men achieve the rank of Eagle Scout,” the chancellor wrote in his notification letter to Gallagher. “It is no wonder, then, that you are known as ‘the heart and soul of Troop 296’,” Nordenberg added.

Miller particularly impressed the selection committee with her devotion to the Crescent Hills Civic Association and to making her neighborhood a better place. The committee praised the many hours she contributed to anti-littering efforts, including work with her local school district to engage students and teachers in statewide and local clean-up days and to encourage the addition to the school curriculum of a waste management program. Nordenberg, in his congratulatory letter to Miller, was particularly pleased to learn that Miller successfully lobbied to have Penn Hills included as one of the communities visited by Pitt students on “Pitt Make a Difference Day,” and that she actively participates alongside them. In addition to serving her own community, she devotes herself to Pitt’s Volunteer Pool, including work for Pitt’s “Day of Caring” and “Christmas Day at Pitt.”

Nordenberg said the award selection committee was impressed by Valentine’s dedication and commitment to Habitat for Humanity. “Through your role as director of student life, you have been very active in encouraging Pitt-Johnstown students to become involved with Habitat. In that same vein, Committee members were particularly impressed by your personal involvement in not only building houses, but also in recruiting and coordinating volunteers—including staff and faculty, as well as students.” Valentine also serves as president and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Central Westmoreland Habitat for Humanity Chapter. Edward D. Ford, the former president of the Westmoreland organization, wrote in his nomination letter that “Under [Bryan’s] leadership, the formerly floundering board of directors became a cohesive unit, dedicated to eliminating poverty housing and homelessness in Western Pennsylvania.” Valentine previously received the Chancellor’s Award for Staff Excellence in Service to the University, in 2005.

Wencel-Tracey was honored for her involvement in Thinking Partnerships, an educational non-profit organization that provides educational support to students who face significant personal, social, and/or academic challenges. She has served on the executive board of the organization since its inception in 2005 and has served on numerous committees, including the Board of Directors and as past president. She has also been involved in the organization’s annual fund-raising events and has contributed to the organization’s financial stability.

The Chancellor’s Award for Staff for Excellence in Service to the University recognizes staff members who not only exceed job standards and expectations in performing their duties but also make a significant impact on the University through their commitment and performance.

The Award for Staff for Excellence in Service to the University recognizes staff members whose work in the community surpasses the expectations of the organizations they serve and whose commitment and effort have made significant impacts on the community.

UPCI Plans March 10 Cancer Genomics Symposium

By Alex Russell

The University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute (UPCI) will hold a full-day symposium, “Cancer Genomics and Beyond: Implications of Next-Generation Sequencing,” on March 10 in the Herberman Conference Center, UPMC Cancer Pavilion, UPMC Shadyside, 5130 Centre Ave.

Nancy E. Davidson, director of UPCI and UPMC Cancer Centers and an internationally renowned expert in breast cancer research and treatment, will deliver the introductory remarks for the March 10 event, the second of three symposia celebrating UPCI’s 25th Anniversary.

Topics and presenters for the March 10 symposium organized by Michael Becich, chair and professor, Department of Biomedical Informatics, follow:

- “Cancer Genomics and Beyond: Implications of Next-Generation Sequencing,” M. Eileen Dolan, professor of medicine in the Section of Hematology/Oncology at the University of Chicago;
- “Personalized Genomic Analyses of Human Cancer,” Victor E. Velculescu, associate professor of oncology and director of cancer genetics for the Ludwig Center at Johns Hopkins, co-director of cancer biology at the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center;
- “Personalized Genomic Medicine: The Future is Now,” Mark S. Boguski, associate professor, Center for Biomedical Informatics, Harvard Medical School, and the Department of Pathology in Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center; and

The event is free and is open to Pitt faculty, students, and staff. For more information and to register, visit www.upci.upmc.edu/symposia/cancer_genomics or call 412-623-3205. Deadline to register is March 3.

The final symposium will be held on May 3 and is titled “Personalized Medicine, in Honor of Jeffrey Shogun, M.D.” Shogun (MED ’82), who died in January 2010 at age 56, was a clinical professor of medicine in Pitt’s School of Medicine and the director of business operations, and chief business officer for UPMC Cancer Centers.

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Common Pleas Judge Joseph K. Williams III Crafts a Life Based Upon Preparation and Opportunity

The hallways leading to the courtroom of Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas Judge Joseph K. Williams III offer a cacophony of human drama: lawyers talking in hushed tones on cell phones, young parents struggling to keep bored toddlers under control, handcuffed defendants heading to trial with a police officer on either side, worried family members anxiously waiting for their case to be called.

But enter Williams' office just off his courtroom, and the tone is quiet, orderly—quite a contrast to the human free-for-all outside. Many of the office decorations represent the 160 years of Williams family history in the Manchester area on Pittsburgh's North Side, and of the solid upbringing he received there.

Art work—including a lithograph of the Saint-Gaudens Civil War sculpture of the Massachusetts 54th Infantry from his grandfather's vestibule, another of Market Square during the 1950s, as well as a pen-and-ink work by the recently retired Pittsburgh artist, T-More—adorns the walls. All of art, Williams said, helps him to keep his "perspective...to every thing there...I assess the issues that are important to me, I start measuring where I am on some type of meter."

By just anyone's measurement, though, Williams has excelled. Born and raised in Manchester with three brothers and two sisters, Williams grew up in a house on Decatur Street, an alleyway that also was called home (at different times) by Common Pleas Judge Michael E. McCarthy and Pennsylvania Superior Court Senior Judge Robert E. Colville. The Williams home housed an extended family, with relatives staying, and going to a farm in Verona 22 years ago to raise his family, and pursuing a host of volunteer work and personal hobbies. Williams has developed several historically significant properties in Manchester, including an old Queen Anne home, which housed his legal offices on the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Chateau Street. He is also a collector of Persian and Caucasian carpets and was once a serious dog breeder and competitor in the international dog sport of Schutzhund (testing and training dogs for police-type work). His expertise and dedication to the latter helped him pay his way through law school.

Williams took the oath of office for his judgeship on Nov. 10, 2008, after he was appointed by then-Governor Edward Rendell to fill an unexpired term on the Court of Common Pleas. In November 2009, Williams was elected to a 10-year term and continues to serve on the Criminal Division bench.

He said that serving on the bench "feels very natural and as though all the pieces have come together."

The teachings of his parents and grandparents have given Williams an unerring sense of right and wrong. "My father used to tell me that 'you have to move to the light. No matter what people do to maintain the status quo, you have the responsibility to do what's fair and just.'"

"A lifetime of legal work and observing life itself have shown him the frailty in us all—and the amazing ability of some to recover from bad mistakes. Williams said he frequently tells defendants standing before his bench that 'we all fall down from time to time. But the issue is: 'Do you learn from it?' Some of us learn from falling, others curl up in a fetal position and stay down for the rest of their lives.'"

Meanwhile, outside the quiet retreat of Williams' office, the courtroom is filling up. He gets up from his desk, gathers his robe, and heads through a side door into the cacophony that awaits: attorneys talking to his clerks, families whispering among themselves, and everyone waiting anxiously for the judge to be seated at the bench.

"It was at Yale that I learned for the first time that 'luck' happens when preparation and opportunity converge," he said. It was one of many sayings from his father, Joseph Williams Jr., that still stick with the judge today.

Williams returned to Pittsburgh after finishing high school at Yale; he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology from Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh, respectively. In 1985, he graduated from Duquesne University School of Law.

The path leading from law school to his 2008 donning of judicial robes included devoting 24 years to a private, Manchester-based legal practice, marrying and moving out to a farm in Verona 22 years ago to raise his family, and pursuing a host of volunteer work and personal hobbies. Williams has developed several historically significant properties in Manchester, including an old Queen Anne home, which housed his legal offices on the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Chateau Street. He is also a collector of Persian and Caucasian carpets and was once a serious dog breeder and competitor in the international dog sport of Schutzhund (testing and training dogs for police-type work). His expertise and dedication to the latter helped him pay his way through law school.

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Pitt Honors 290 Scholar-Athletes During Feb. 21 Annual Breakfast

Continued from page 1

The Top Men’s Academic Award for the second year in a row was the men’s soccer team, boasting a collective 2.89 GPA. The women’s tennis team earned the Top Women’s Team and Overall Team award for the first time ever. The team recorded an impressive 3.40 GPA overall, with seven members earning a 3.5 GPA or better and three earning a 4.0 GPA.

PERFECT 4.0 GPA AWARDS

Baseball
Philip Koniecny

Cheer and Dance Team
Kellin Black, Ben Campo, Allison Sanders, and Lauren Zammarilla

Football
Travis Hassertt and Daniel Schneider

Gymnastics
Krista Rubini

Men’s Swimming and Diving
Jonathan Buchanan, Rousseau Kluever, and Pierre-Antoine Meunier

Men’s Track and Field
Brudley Rocco and Samson Weiser

Software
Yassica O’Connell

Tennis
Elizabeth Adams, Kimmy Borza, and Minh Evans

Women’s Swimming and Diving
Sarah Looney

Women’s Swimming and Diving
Cookie McIntyre

Kristen Mccullan

Beth Newell, Megan Simko, Elena Spak, Sara Sullivan, Cailltin Trant, Yolandi Van Der Merwe, and Yolandi Van Rooyen

Women’s Track and Field/Cross Country
Missy Gelnick, Emily Brehm, and Julie Wissel

Women’s Volleyball
Chase Broussard, Vincent DelPulma, Kyle Kaminski, Garrett Larkin, Mark Madukere, Bradley Rocco, Samson Weiser, and Patrick Wylie

GOLD AWARDS (3.5-4.0 GPA)

Baseball
Matt Iannazzo, David Kaye, Philip Koniecny, and Kevan Smith

Men’s Basketball
Ashton Gibbs, J.J. Richardson, and Nick Rivers

Women’s Basketball
Abugail Dowd and Katie Popovec

Cross and Dance Team

Football
Pat Bostick, Myles Carageen, Pat Castello, John Eigler, Kolby Gray, Kevin Harper, Aaron Hassertt, Dan Schneider, Mike Shanahan, Andrew Tagliatletti, Tyler Tauch, Christopher Yankowski, and Tyler Yonechuk

Women’s Gymnastics
Alana Adrian, Danielle Bryan, Jennifer Liberato, Molly Moyer, Krista Rubini, Lori Taylor, and Sarah Thomas

Men’s Soccer
Justin Boehm, Orane Gordon, Andrew Kalas, Daniel Mark, Zachary Matthews, and Joe Prince-Wright

Women’s Soccer
Abigail Baidoo, Laerts Berber, Allison Finch, Ashley Hinder, Morie Kehpert, Katheryn Kunugi, Karin Lippert, Emily Peters, Kristina Risnik, Katrynne Rhube, and Morgan Sharick

Softball
Ciera Dannen, Keli Gynoyer, Alyssa O’Connell, Reba Tuti, and Kayla Zinger

Men’s Swimming and Diving
Jonathan Buchanan, Andrey Dubiel, Charles Hause, Rousseau Kluever, and Charles Zettel

Women’s Swimming and Diving
Vivanna Gullia, Sarah Hancock, Lilli Lelli, Sarah Looney, Tiffany Malatesta, Lauren Matevish, Lisa McDonald, Cookie McIntyre, Kristen Mccullan, Beth Newell, Megan Simko, Elena Spak, Sara Sullivan, Cailltin Trant, Yolandi Van Der Merwe, and Yolandi Van Rooyen

Blue Awards (3.0-3.49 GPA)

Baseball
Ray Black, David Chester, Jonathan Danielczyk, Anthony DePauve, Zach Duggan, Lucas Ellet, Chris Harner, Brad Lull, Jeff Kelly, J.R. Leonardi, John Schultz, Josh Smith, Travis Whitmore, and Derek Wilson

Men’s Basketball
Gilbert Brown, Tim Frye, Aron Nwankwo, Lamar Patterson, Dante Taylor, Austin Wallace, and Cameron Wright

Women’s Basketball
Chelsee Cole, Kiera Dunn, Selena Nwude, and Shayla Scott

Cheer and Dance Team
Nicolete Benncik, Joe Bickel, Hannah Brady, Katie Casella, Brianna Clare, Amanda Eggert, Dorinda Fella, Justin Gilbert, Katie Hall, Caylen Harris, Olivia Heifenderfied, Emma Helmes, Jessica Liten, Caitlyn Smmarr, Corey McMullen, Danielle Narslesky, Brianna Norris, Michael Nuzzio, Fallon O’Donnell, Madiyn Pini, Brittany Post, Michelle Proviano, Kaysa Siewezczak, Brooke Simmens, Jeralyn Smith, Alyssa Standlick, Anna Sweeney, Caitlin Timoney, Kyle Vafiadou, and Briann Zuzlak

Football
Kevin Barthelemy, Jeremiah Davis, Dom DeCicco, T.J. Clemmens, Jacob Delmonico, Jarred Hallovy, Henry Hynmoksi, Andrew Janocco, Adam Lazenga, John Malecki, Chris Mike, Randel Murris, Marcus Pecora, Tristan Roberts, Tim Sonseri, Joseph Trebitz, Kristopher Wildman, Manny Williams, Matt Wikile, and Brett Zuck

Women’s Gymnastics
Kelsey Ainsworth, Mallory Brewer, Jessica Byich, Kori Macdonald, Shannon McCommon, Laura Rigney, Shannon Vafiadou, and Amy Varela

Men’s Soccer
Wes Alpern, Matt Baker, Alex Betancourt, Terrence Boland, Andrew Cliford, John Cordier, Alex Fischetti, Keegan Gunderson, Sam Luff’s, Connor Malone, Ethan Talbott, and Michael Whatakter

Women’s Soccer
Klarssa Ames, Danielle Benner, Elizabeth Carroll, Kathleen Caslin, Ashley Cuba, Alexendra Jaffe, Morgan Masci, and Lyndsay Pierson

Softball
Ashley Amistade, Cary Berliner, Ashley Carroll, Kathleen Caslin, and Mallory Mccoll

Blue Awards (3.0-3.49 GPA)

Baseball
Ray Black, David Chester, Jonathan Danielczyk, Anthony DePauve, Zach Duggan, Lucas Ellet, Chris Harner, Brad Lull, Jeff Kelly, J.R. Leonardi, John Schultz, Josh Smith, Travis Whitmore, and Derek Wilson

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Below: Thirty-three members of Pitt’s football team who had GPA averages between 3.0 and 4.0 were honored as scholar-athletes during last week’s ceremony. Among them were, from left, T.J. Clemmens, Pat Bostick, Manny Williams, and Jeremiah Davis.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PITF ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT
Pitt: A Powerful Force in Building Brighter Tomorrows

Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg

This is the print version of Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg’s Winter 2011 Report to Pitt’s Board of Trustees, delivered on Feb. 25.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning, everyone. It always is great to be with you. I want to open my remarks in a somewhat different way today—by showing you a five-minute video from a program called The Circuit, which is sponsored by the U.S. Air Force. The segment features Micah Toll, who is a senior mechanical engineering major in our Swanson School of Engineering.

As you can tell from that clip, Micah is a very special young person. Here at Pitt, he has been a two-time winner in the Big Idea Competition sponsored by the Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence in the Katz Graduate School of Business and College of Business Administration. I should note that support for this competition has been provided, from the very start, by Trustee Bob Randall and his wife, Rita. Recently, Bob and Rita made a more permanent commitment to this initiative, which is designed to stimulate and reward innovative ideas from within our student body, and a now will be known as The Randall Family Big Idea Competition. Thank you, Bob!

Returning to Micah Toll, in 2009, he received a first-place “Big Idea” award for developing the disaster-recovery building materials featured in his profile on The Circuit. In that same year, he and a friend won first place in a sustainable design contest sponsored by the Mascardo Center for Sustainable Innovation for developing a lightweight, inexpensive, portable wind turbine that generates enough electricity to light several rooms or power appliances. They hope to sell kits so that people can build their own turbines for about $1,000.

In 2010, Micah won another first-place Big Idea award for developing a kit to test for toxins in imported Chinese drywall. His kit is more accurate and far less expensive than others on the market. He also won five awards at the 2006 and 2007 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair and is developing his third company, based on his design for a personal electric vehicle. Please join me in acknowledging this impressive young Pitt inventor and entrepreneur.

As I said from the outset, Micah obviously is a very special student. But what I know you have come to appreciate is that Pitt is full of students who are special in a broad range of ways. Let me give just two additional examples of very recent forms of high-level recognition.

• Richard Kyle, a third-year law student, has been named a Robert Bosch Foundation Fellow. The Bosch program is designed to enhance German-American relations and transatlantic understanding. Richard was one of just 20 fellows chosen from more than 600 applicants and will spend the next year in Germany, working on commercial legal reform and international dispute resolution.

• Paulina Gonzales and James Sears, undergraduates in the School of Arts and Sciences, have been chosen to receive 2011 Woodrow Wilson-Rockefeller Brothers Fund Fellowships for Aspiring Teachers of Color. These fellowships help fund the completion of a master’s degree in education, preparation of a teaching license in a high-need public school, and a three-year teaching assignment. This was the first year that Pitt was invited to nominate candidates, and Paulina and James won two of just 25 fellowships awarded nationally.

Beyond these award winners, as I have said on many past occasions, there are countless University of Pittsburgh students who are producing prize-winning performances every day as they engage in a broad range of activities that add richness to their Pitt experiences and contribute to their overall growth. We will have the chance to recognize some of them at today’s Honors Convocation.

Pitt students sit at the top of the list of our shared reasons for being so deeply committed to the work that is done here. They top that list not only because of our current respect for them, but because of our belief in their potential. And because we regularly see that powerful potential realized in the achievements of our alumni, that faith is far from blind. Let me give two inspiring examples from just this month.

• Wen-Ta Chiu, who earned both his master’s degree and his Ph.D. from our Graduate School of Public Health, was named Taiwan’s minister of health, effective Feb. 1. Dr. Chiu had been president of Taipei Medical University. He returned to campus in 2009 as a Legacy Laureate. Here, he is shown with his wife and son, who was a student in the Graduate School of Public Health at the time. Dr. Chiu’s father also was a graduate of the School, making his a three-generation Pitt family.

• And just last week, it was announced that Bert O’Malley, who earned his undergraduate and medical degrees from Pitt, has been selected to receive the 2011 Ernst Schering Prize for international excellence in medicine and basic biological and chemical research. Dr. O’Malley is known as the father of molecular endocrinology and as a pioneer in the development of “team science.” His work has helped advance, among many other things, our understandings of reproduction, genetic disease, and endocrine cancers. He was named a Pitt Legacy Laureate in 2007, received the National Medal of Science in 2009, and was our Commencement speaker in 2009.

Of course, even though their records of accomplishment stand out, Dr. Chiu and Dr. O’Malley do not stand alone. Instead, they stand in the midst of the more than 277,000 living alumni of our University—a group that includes other nationally and internationally acclaimed achievers but that also includes even larger numbers of people who have used the power of higher education, often in less public ways, to elevate their own lives and to contribute to the lives of those around them.

Even after more than three decades at Pitt, I regularly am amazed by the almost countless ways and often surprising locations in which our graduates are making a difference, here and in more distant locations. On Sunday, for example, I received a photograph taken at the first meeting of the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission Working Group on Child Protection, held in Moscow just last week.

The U.S. delegation was organized by Luke Dembosky, who sits just to the right of the redheaded glasses. Mr. Dembosky is a 1994 Pitt law school graduate who has been assigned by the Department of Justice to our embassy in Moscow. The Russian delegation was led by Pavel Astakhov, who sits just to the left of the redhead with glasses. Mr. Astakhov is the national commissioner for children’s rights in Russia.

Mr. Astakhov earned his Master of Laws degree at Pitt in 2002, and his stay among us could have been viewed as a form of temporary political refuge. At the time, he was under great pressure in his own country, tied to his legal defense of a Penn State professor who had been charged with espionage. That professor was convicted Continued from page 6

Pitt Board of Trustees Chair Stephen R. Trinch (ENGR ‘77, KGSB ‘77), Pitt senior Micah Toll, and John A. Swanson (ENGR ‘66ECE). Pitt trustee and School of Engineering Distinguished Alumni. Right: One of Toll’s two award-winning Big Idea projects.

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Pitt Alumni Make a Difference

Luke Dembsky, J.D. ’94 and Pavel Astakhov, LL.M. ’02, are Pitt School of Law graduates who headed up the U.S. and Russian delegations, respectively, of the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission Working Group on Child Protection. The group held its first meeting in Moscow last week. Dembsky is seated second from right and Astakhov, fourth from right.

Examples of alumni who are making a difference, whether those examples come from the halls of government in Moscow or the neighborhoods of Pittsburgh, help fuel our passion for higher education. And over the course of our long history, state government has embraced and helped advance that special mission.

... Unfortunately, as we have discussed on many past occasions, that support has eroded significantly over an extended period of time—with our appropriation representing more than 30 percent of the University’s budget in the mid-1970’s, less than 20 percent by the mid-1990’s, and just under 10 percent today.

but then pardoned—a sequence of events not unusual in the Russian criminal system. Mr. Astakhov then came here to get away, to study and to reshape his career, something that he has successfully done. Before leaving campus, as a sign of his gratitude to the University, he presented me with his own oil painting of the Cathedral of Learning.

Back at the time of our founding, the preamble to the Act of Feb. 28, 1878, which established our first charter, declared that “the education of youth ought to be a primary object with every government.” And 45 years ago, when Pitt became a state-sponsored university, the Commonwealth assumed a new, and more central, role in supporting our high-quality programs of higher education.

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Continued on page 7
is more than $23,700. That is a difference of about $9,600, or more than 1.5 times that attributed subsidy. But the difference becomes even more stark when viewed in its true historical context. In that regard, it is important to remember that the essence of the mid-1960’s agreement between the state and Pitt was that state support would be provided in amounts sufficient to enable Pitt to charge in-state students less than the private university tuition that had been charging to that point. It would seem most directly relevant, then, to compare Pitt’s in-state tuition to the tuition charged by its private peers.

Pennsylvania is the home to four AAU research universities. Two—Pitt and Penn State—are public, and two—Carnegie Mellon and the University of Pennsylvania—are private. At CMU, undergraduate tuition for the current academic year is $41,500. That is almost three times higher than Pitt’s in-state charge. And the single-year dollar gap between CMU’s private-university tuition and Pitt’s in-state tuition is more than $27,000, almost enough to pay for two years of in-state tuition at Pitt.

It is harder to compare Penn, which adds a very large general fee to its stated tuition charge. But however one sorts that out more precisely, Penn’s charges, too, are more than $40,000—over $25,000 more than Pitt’s in-state tuition and more than four times larger than the attributed subsidy.

Put most simply, what that means is that Pitt has consistently delivered on its end of the current investment in Pitt and its private peers.

Unfortunately, the erosion of state support almost certainly is going to get even worse, for public universities and for their students, during the year ahead. That, I should make clear, is a product of the revenue and expense structure inherited by Governor Corbett. To state the obvious, the $4 billion budget deficit that Pennsylvania now faces was not created by our new governor during his first few weeks in office, even though he and his team must now deal with it.

Their lack of fault, though, will not make life any easier for those who will be adversely affected by the cuts to come, and that unfortunate group almost certainly will include Pennsylvania’s public research universities and their students. To express even more directly a point earlier made, the University of Pittsburgh did not benefit by a single dollar from the run-up in state spending in recent years. In fact, because some costs traditionally borne by the state were shifted to the federal government, the current investment of state dollars in Pitt actually is lower than it was eight years ago. However, large portions of the state budget cannot be meaningfully reduced, at least in the short-term—so, fair or not, we almost certainly will be expected to help balance the state budget.

What is not clear—in Washington or in Harrisburg—is what priorities will shape either the size of these looming cuts or the longer-term recovery from them. As one legislative leader said to me last week, when you are facing a $4 billion budget deficit, there are no good choices. That almost certainly is true. However, there are better choices—or at least “less bad” choices—and it needs to be remembered that even short-term cuts can have long-term consequences.

To frame the responsibilities of government in everyday terms, it has become customary, particularly for those most committed to deficit reduction, to draw on the analogy to the basic constraint faced by every family—the need to live within its means. But the comparison almost always stops at that point, without encompassing the even more telling aspects of the analogy—the values that shape family priorities and the parental struggles to advance those priorities once they have been set.

The families whose approaches to life we traditionally have honored are those in which the highest parental priority is helping the next generation. Moving this a bit “closer to home,” as a society, we always have celebrated, in particular, the efforts of parents who sacrifice spending on themselves, or who find ways to generate more family income by taking on additional work, in order to provide their children with a college education.

Today, the application of the family analogy to governmental budgets rarely seems to reach that second stage. Elected officials do regularly say that we cannot, in good conscience, leave our children and grandchildren to deal with the crushing government debt that continues to grow, and it would be hard to argue with that. But comparatively little attention is paid to the crushing personal debts that may be incurred by many members of our society’s next generation if public support for public higher education is further slashed.

Of course, as noted, this is not just a matter of supporting the educational aspirations of individual citizens. It also is a matter of building collective strength, because Pennsylvania itself has been a major beneficiary of its investments in higher education.

In the 1960’s, the Commonwealth became an active partner in creating broader access to higher education. Its commitment, over time, was reflected in a range of actions—involving not only the state-related universities, but also community colleges, the State System of Higher Education, and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency. The direct beneficiaries of these actions were the young people of my generation and their parents. I wonder how many of us have forgotten about those boosts as we retreat from the responsibility to make such opportunities available, on roughly equivalent terms, to the young people of today, including those who are less fortunate.

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and extend beyond the well-educated citizenry.

Among other things, they include an education and health services sector that is the largest and fastest-growing employment super-sector in the Pittsburgh region.

• they include five vibrant campuses that are economic anchors in their home communities of Bradford, Greensburg, Johnstown, and Titusville, as well as Pittsburgh; and

• they include the impact of Pitt as a research powerhouse that attracts four dollars in research funding for every one dollar of state appropriation (probably an unequaled return on state investment) and that is recognized as a primary source of the ideas that will define our economic future.

As important as building the economy of the future may be, these research initiatives also have the potential to produce other benefits that can only be described as amazing. Think, for example, about the headlines from last week—announcing that Pitt researchers would receive nearly $7 million in federal support over the next three years to test two different types of brain implants designed to advance work that would permit paralyzed individuals, including “wounded warriors,” to control prosthetic limbs through the power of their own thoughts. As we think about the world that we would like to leave to the next generation, are we really prepared to say, as a society, that work of this type will no longer be a priority?

Abraham Lincoln, who had a few problems of his own to deal with as a highly placed elected official, once said, “The best thing about the future is that it comes only one day at a time.” In moving through what looms as a succession of difficult days, those words may occasionally be a source of comfort, as we meet some of our big challenges by breaking them down and tackling them one piece at a time.

However, it also is important to remember that we really are in the future-building business. By the work that we do with our students, we equip them to build their own futures while advancing the greater good. And through our research and public service missions, we contribute in unique and meaningful ways to the progress of our home communities and to the building of a better world.

For 224 years, Pitt has been a powerful force in building brighter futures. As we move further into a new century characterized by a rapidly changing and highly competitive world and faced with the need to nurture a vibrant society and to rebuild a strong and sustainable economy, Pennsylvania cannot afford to let that light go dim.

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Our overarching goal is to be among the best in all that we do. . . . By aggressively supporting the advancement of Pitt’s academic mission, we will clearly and consistently demonstrate that this is one of the finest and most productive universities in the world.

We have traveled an enviable distance in our pursuit of that never-ending goal, even though the path that we have traveled rarely has been easy. As we face what could be our most significant set of challenges yet, I look forward to pushing ahead with you and with all of the other groups that have been such significant contributors to the progress that has been a well-earned source of pride here at Pitt—faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends.

Continued from page 7

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Chancellor’s 2011 Staff Awards Announced

service to the March of Dimes, including serving as cochair of one of the organization’s fundraising campaigns that raised close to $500,000. The Chancellor was particularly proud of her efforts to ensure that a group of teenagers with special needs had a prom night to remember. Nordenberg, who also secured donations of a limousine from a local business and a dinner at a downtown restaurant, added that he “was personally moved when I learned that it was not without cost that this was important to you, but, rather, you hoped that your story would inspire others to serve,” just as Wencil-Tracy “has inspired her own children to give back to the community.”

Public Service to the University

Islam was commended by the award selection committee for his extraordinary dedication to the University and his equally impressive contributions to research, particularly to the development of cancer vaccines. He was praised by many of Pitt’s internationally recognized researchers for the impact he has made on the development of pioneering peptide production techniques. The Food and Drug Administration has employed the quality-control standards that Islam developed for its approval of peptides for use in human clinical trials. Islam worked directly with the FDA to develop an FDA-compliant scheme for the synthesis of these peptides and was able to develop a successful protocol. The chancellor, in his Feb. 15 letter notifying Islam of his award, quoted Paul Wood, assistant director of ConFacilities, who said that “not only did the FDA deem his [Islam’s] protocol valid, they also adopted his system as its standard for certified peptides.” Wood added that Islam “was able to save investigators on the order of $300,000 on every peptide synthesized.”

Nanz received letters of support for his nomination from his Pitt Police colleagues, as well as from members of the Allegheny County Sheriff’s Office, the Office of General Counsel, and the Athletics Department. Nanz was noted to his “above and beyond” service to the University and to the broader impact he has made on the community as Pitt’s K-9 officer. In this role, Nanz is often called upon to assist other police forces in the greater Pittsburgh community to assist with investigating bomb threats and explosive violations. Nanz recounted to Nanz, recounted the two lives that Nanz saved in 2011, adding that “words cannot possibly express our gratitude to you, nor can words express the pride that we take in knowing that you are a member of the Pitt family.”

Since joining the University as a receptionist in the Office of General Counsel, Sallows has received numerous promotions and now serves as Office administrator and a paralegal professional. Sallows is renowned for her grace under pressure—a valuable trait, given the contentious nature of many of the matters she handles, the chaotic nature of her job, and her noted talent in informing her of the award. “In writing in support of your nomination,” Lord noted, “Yvonne Keafer, Director of Risk Management and Insurance, noted, “Amony her many other attributes that set Laurie apart and make for truly “excellent” service to the University, she never sees any boundaries to her work. Anyone needing help is treated just the same. She does everything in her power to find a solution to their problem.”

Shallenberger was commended for always going the “extra mile” for the Department of Music’s faculty, staff, and students. Nordenberg said the award selection committee was impressed by Shallenberger’s initiative in creating the “Piano Replacement Project” after recognizing that not only were the department’s pianos in disrepair, but they lacked even a single professional quality piano that could be used for performances, teaching, or practicing. She wrote grants, designed a brochure for the campaign, developed mailing lists, and personally met with patrons, eventually raising all the money required to purchase quality pianos for the department. Shallenberger also created the “Love Award” to thank individuals who have provided excellent service to the Department of Music, including computer technicians, building engineers, electricians, and piano technicians. They received certificates of thanks and cakes. “It is my pleasure, then, to have the opportunity to say ‘thank you’ to you, Dorothy, for your own service to the University,” the chancellor wrote.

Sidorovich has the honor of being the only two-time winner of this award. The award selection committee said that since Sidorovich joined the Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences, she has continued to build a record of exceptional service. Her willingness to share her expertise in research compliance and grant administration to anyone in the University particularly stood out. The chancellor, in his Feb. 15 letter to Sidorovich, noted that Chief Financial Officer Arthur Ramicone wrote, “She is always at the forefront of emerging issues that affect the day-to-day grant operations of the University on an operating and financial basis, and she leads any required process change implementation.”

Arthur Levine, senior vice chancellor for the health sciences and dean of the School of Medicine, added, “She is the consummate teacher-coach with every facet of her very demanding position is recognized by everyone with whom she interacts.”

Jamie was named Naismith National Coach of the Year in 2009 and Phelan National Coach of the Year in 2010. He was head coach of USA Basketball’s Under-19 Team in the 2009 World Championships and led that team to a 9-0 record and a gold medal, which had not been accomplished by a U.S. team at that level age in nearly 20 years. For that achievement, he also was named USA Basketball’s National Coach of the Year.

In addition to receiving his bachelor’s degree in finance from TCU, Jamie earned a master’s degree in economics from the University of California at Santa Barbara. He is the consummate teacher-coach who is committed to the overall growth of his student-athletes. Jamie’s life has included tragedy as well as triumph. We witnessed his strength, his grace, and his vulnerability when his younger sister Maggie died, at the age of 29, shortly after the two of them had become the first brother and sister to coach their teams into the NCAA tournament in the same year. Jamie was a driving force in creating the Maggie Dixon Classic—which supports cardiac awareness and is played annually at Madison Square Garden in her memory. And Jamie has been an active advocate for a wide range of other worthy causes.

Jamie is devoted to his family. His son and daughter are fixtures at the Petersen Center for Pitt home games. I know he is pleased that his wife Jacqueline and his father Jim are both here tonight. And I suspect that we will see his mother Marge and sister anni at the Garden next month.

Jamie and I first talked about the possibility that he might become Pitt’s head coach over brunch in New Orleans during the 2003 Final Four. Among the things he said to me that morning was this: “As an assistant coach, one of my main jobs is to make the head coach look good. If you give me this opportunity, I promise that I will make the University look good.” What an understatement! Jamie Dixon has made the University, his sport, and everyone around him look good—both by what he has done and by the way in which he has done it. It is my great honor to proudly present the 2010 Dapper Dan Sportsman of the Year—University of Pittsburgh Head Men’s Basketball Coach Jamie Dixon.
Pitt-Led Researchers Report 6,000-Year Climate Record Suggests Longer Droughts, Drier Wet Periods for Pacific Northwest

By Morgan Kelly

University of Pittsburgh-led researchers extracted a 6,000-year record of wet and dry cycles from a Washington lake that shows that the famously rain-soaked American Pacific Northwest could contend with longer drought and dry seasons, but also is unlikely to see a period as wet as the 20th century any time soon. In a recent report in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the team linked the longer dry spells to the intensifying El Niño/La Niña climate pattern and concluded that Western states will likely suffer severe water shortages as El Niño/La Niña wields greater influence on the region.

The team produced a climate record from the lake mud by measuring the oxygen isotope ratios of the mineral calcite that precipitates from the lake water every summer and builds up in fine layers on the lake floor. More calcite accumulates in wet years than in dry years. They reproduced their findings by measuring grayscale, or the color of mud based on calcite concentration, with darker mud signifying a drier year.

The record in the sediment core was then compared to the Palmer Drought Severity Index, which uses meteorological and tree-ring data to determine drought cycles dating back 1,500 years. Abbott explained. The Castor Lake core matched the Palmer Index reconstructed with tree-ring and isotope data on it by 4,500 years, suggesting that lakebeds are better records of long-term climate change, the authors contend.

Analysis of the sediment core revealed that the climate of the Pacific Northwest fluctuated more or less evenly between wet and dry periods for thousands of years, the researchers wrote. Droughts tended to be brief, with 25 percent of dry periods during the past 6,000 years persisting for 30 years or more and the longest lingering for around 75 years. Wet periods tended to be shorter, with only 19 percent lasting more than 30 years and the longest spanning 64 years.

But since around 1000 CE, these periods have become longer, shifted less frequently, and, most importantly, ushered in more extreme conditions, Abbott said. The two driest cycles the researchers detected on the past 6,000 years occurred within only 400 years of each other—the first in the 1500s, and the second during the Great Depression. Wet periods showed a similar pattern shift, with five very wet eras crammed into the past 900 years. The wettest cycle of the past 6,000 years began around the 1650s, and the second-most sodden began a mere 300 years later, in the 1940s.

The change in cycle regularity Abbott and his colleagues found correlates with documented activity of El Niño/La Niña. When the patterns became more intense, wet and dry cycles in the Pacific Northwest became more erratic and lasted longer, Abbott said.

Pitt Named "Best Value" University by Princeton Review

The Princeton Review’s editors commend the University for producing Rhodes, Marshall, Truman, Udall, Goldwater, Churchill, and Gates Cambridge scholars; for the Pitt ARTS program that “links students to cultural amenities in the city”, for holding “the distinction of being home to one of just 10 European Union Centers of Excellence in the United States funded by the European Commission”; and for “earning…a top ranking in the Top American Research Universities annual report for four consecutive years.”

According to The Princeton Review, the selection of the schools in its “Best Value Colleges for 2011” was based on academics, cost of attendance, and financial aid. The methodology examined more than 30 factors using data from the company’s surveys of administrators and students at 650 institutions to determine if a school is a good value for its academic programs. The Princeton Review then compared each school’s survey responses to the others and published a list of “best value” schools.

The Princeton Review, which is not affiliated with Princeton University and is not a magazine, is known for its college, business, and law school guides and rankings. Categories reported on its Web site and in its books are based on the company’s surveys of higher education institutions and students attending the
Concerts

University of Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, performing Rimsky-Korsakov’s Scheherazade, 8 p.m., March 2, free concert, Bellefield Hall Auditorium, Pitt Department of Music, 412-624-4125, www.music.pitt.edu.


BNY Mellon Jazz Presents Hirami, Japanese jazzing and composer, 8 p.m., March 5-6, BNY Mellon Jazz, Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild Hall, 1815 Metropolitan St., Manchester, MCG Jazz, 412-322-0800, www.mcgjazz.org.


Exhibitions
University Art Gallery, Mind Space: Maximum in Contrast, presented by Pitt’s Department of the History of Art and Architecture, through March 18, Frick Fine Arts Building, 412-648-2400.

Frick Art Museum, Frick Art & Historical Center, Storied Past: Four Centuries of French Drawings From the Blanton Museum of Art, featuring more than 60 drawings produced over a 400-year period, through April 17, 7227 Reynolds St., Phipps Breeze, 412-371-0600, www.frickart.org.


Marvin Does Marvin, Heinz Hall, March 10-13

Conferences
Pitt PhD Dissertation Defenses
Amy Kuhlebusch, School of Arts and Sciences’ Department of Sociology, 1 p.m., Feb. 28, The Effects of Economic Development, Urbanization, Women’s Rights Programs, Women’s Heritage Programs, and Women’s Market-Oriented Programs on Gender Inequality in India, 2431 Povich Hall.

Nikole Patzon-Hoffman, School of Arts and Sciences’ Department of Psychology, 11 a.m., Feb. 28, The Specification of Plurals, Glazer Colloquium, Learning Research and Development Center.

Samuel Shin, School of Medicine’s Center for Neuroscience Graduate Program, 2:30 p.m., March 1, “Neuronal Role in Sensory Neuropathy,” 1945 Saint Biomedical Science Tower.

Lei Lin, School of Arts and Sciences’ Department of Chemistry, 3 p.m., March 2, “Structurally and Stereochemically Diverse Tetracyclodipyrrol Synthesis via DDQ-Mediated Intramolecular Carbon Hydrogen Bond Activation,” Room 228 Eberly Hall.

Kelly Matthew Austin, School of Education’s Department of Administrative and Policy Studies, 2 p.m., March 2, “Parental Influences on First-Generation College Students: Case Studies of Enrollment and Persistence Among Trio Participants,” 4371 Purnell Hall.

John Mosiejewicz, School of Arts and Sciences’ Department of Chemistry, 3 p.m., March 3, “New Methods in Heterocyclic Preparation,” 307 Eberly Hall.

April Chambers, Swanson School of Engineering’s Department of Bioengineering, 2 p.m., March 10, “The Impact of Ship Expenditure on,” Room 229 Benedum Hall.

University of Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Belfarelli Hall, March 2


Ballet Hispanico, performing a fusion of Latin dance with elements of classical and contemporary forms, 8 p.m., March 5, Byham Theater, 101 Sixth Ave., Downtown, Pittsburgh Dance Council, 412-456-6666, www.pgharts.org.


Pitt Alumni Co-op, University’s Women’s Studies and Gender Development Center.

Valerie Young, recently appointed member of President Obama’s Council for Community Solutions, 3 p.m., Feb. 28, Zero-Level Auditorium, Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC, 300 Halket St., Oakland, Black History Month celebration, www.upmc.com, 412-644-1700.


“Guide Principles and Explanatory Model in K,” Joo Kyu Do, visiting scholar, Pitt Center for Philosophy of Science, 12:05 p.m., March 1, ATR Cathedral of Learning, Lunchtime Colloquium, Pitt Center for Philosophy of Science, 412-624-1052, pittcenter@pitt.edu.

Wilma Sobr, world-renowned green chemist and environmental activist, with introduction by Terrence J. Collins, Teresa Heinz Professor of Green Chemistry, Carnegie Mellon University, 7 p.m., March 2, Kresge Theater, Carnegie Mellon University, Carlow University’s Women’s Studies and Diversity Initiative, Pitt Women’s Studies Program, 412-578-6919, bjhogan@pitt.edu.


Proseis Little by Madeline George, play about the beauty and limits of interpersonal communication, March 12-14, City Theatre, 1500 Bingham St., South Side, 412-431-2489, www.citytheatrecompany.org.

Lectures/ Seminars/ Readings


A Panoply of Inventions

Self-Cooling Tennis Shoes, Nifty Water Purifier Will Be Showcased During Pitt’s High School Innovative Design Competition

By Morgan Kelly

To high school students lamenting the supposed impracticality of secondary education, the University of Pittsburgh has some self-heating socks designed by their peers that might persuade otherwise. Or perhaps a backpack/water purifier that ensures a clean drink even while tromping through the wilderness.

Such feats of practicality and invention are the centerpiece of Pitt’s Sixth Annual High School Innovative Design Competition slated for 9 a.m. March 2 in Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall, 4141 Fifth Ave., Oakland. The event is open to the public.

Sponsored by Pitt’s Swanson School of Engineering and the Learning Research and Development Center (LRDC), the competition concludes a yearlong Pitt program that trains area high school teachers and students to think like scientists and engineers by devising creative solutions to everyday problems. Thirty student teams from five area high schools will present their inventions, and the winning team will receive a paid internship in Pitt’s John A. Swanson Center for Product Realization.

The students’ work will be judged by Pitt and Carnegie Mellon University faculty members, as well as by representatives from local industries.

Amy Landis, an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering in the Swanson School, and Christian Schunn, an LRDC research scientist and professor of psychology, launched the program with a National Science Foundation grant and with support from the Quality of Life Technology Center, a collaborative project between Pitt and Carnegie Mellon. Landis and Schunn initiated the project with LRDC research associate Birdy Reynolds.

The most recent program began in spring 2010, when the Swanson School hosted an accelerated 12-week engineering course for eight science teachers from Wilkinsburg, North Catholic, Woodland Hills, and McKeesport high schools, as well as from Pittsburgh Public Schools’ Science and Technology Academy. The teachers enrolled in the Product Realization and Development course through the Swanson School’s John A. Swanson Center for Product Innovation, where they worked with an external client to solve a current research problem. These same teachers then spent four weeks in the summer at the LRDC translating their design experience into class lessons and projects for their students to work on in the fall.

Student designs draw from physics, chemistry, biology, and environmental science to address common needs. The 2011 competition includes such designs as:

• athletic shoes cooled by an internal fluid pump;
• an emergency water-purification kit that can clean at a rate of three gallons per minute; and
• a reflective device for senior citizens with diabetes—who often experience inflexibility and a limited range of motion—that lets them examine all sides of their feet easily.

More information on the design program and competition is available on Pitt’s Web site, or by contacting LRDC project coordinator Kevin Topolski at 412-624-7469 or topolski@pitt.edu.