University Update

Budget-Building in the Face of Historic Cuts

To: Members of the University Community
From: Mark A. Nordenberg
Date: July 8, 2011

A Year of Progress and of Challenge

The year just closed was another in an unbroken succession of years characterized by high performance and remarkable progress at Pitt. It was a year that saw inspiring examples of individual accomplishment emerge from within each of the University’s constituent groups. It also was a year in which key measures of institutional progress continued their dramatic climb.

Two telling examples convey a clear sense of our still-building momentum in education and research. We set yet another record in applications to the undergraduate programs on the Oakland campus and know that next fall’s freshman class will be the strongest in Pitt history. And though a precise calculation of research expenditures cannot be made until the books are formally closed, we already know that we will have smashed our previous record for research expenditures and will be at or near $800 million—an incredible sum that is important not only for our work but because of the nearly 3,000 jobs those funds support in the regional economy.

Despite these significant successes, though, both the past year and the year ahead almost certainly will be known mainly for the serious challenges they have and will present, particularly in terms of state funding. In opening his first budget address—delivered on March 8, exactly four months ago today—Governor Corbett noted that he had inherited a deficit of more than $4 billion and pointedly remarked, “A nation that once produced wealth beyond calculation has now produced debt beyond reckoning.” He went on to describe the process of dealing with that large deficit in everyday terms:

“In many ways what we need to do is the same as reviving an abandoned apple tree. If the tree isn’t tended and the branches pruned that tree will grow into a tangle of limbs and leaves. But it will bear no fruit. We need to take this tree, so long overgrown, and cut back what is unfruitful. And we need to do that essential pruning on all branches of government. We need to do the hard cutting so the tree can once again bear fruit. And that fruit is jobs.”

A Year of Progress and of Challenge

By Patricia Lomando White

The University of Pittsburgh is once again opening its campus to students from around the globe who want to learn to be engaged, informed, innovative leaders from world-renowned professional mentors at the third annual Student Leadership Summit of the Pitt Hesselbein Global Academy for Student Leadership and Civic Engagement, to be held July 23-26 at the University’s Pittsburgh campus.

The by-invitation-only summit—comprising a series of daily workshops—will open at 3:30 p.m. July 23 and conclude at noon July 26 in the William Pitt Union. A highlight of the summit is the Hesselbein Lecture at 5 p.m. July 25 in the O’Hara Student Center (formerly the Concordia Club), featuring retired Brigadier General Belinda Pitt alumnus Frances Hesselbein (right) and retired Brigadier General Belinda H. Pinckney, who served in the U.S. Army for 34 years and is a leading authority on diversity, leadership, and family relations in the military. Pinckney’s lecture, which is free and open to the public, will examine the state of global engagement, leadership, and military service. A reception will follow the lecture at 6:15 p.m. RSVP to program manager Angela Miller McGraw at angelm@ pitt.edu or 412-624-5203. The Hesselbein Global Academy was created in 2009 to honor the ongoing legacy of Pitt alumnus Frances Hesselbein, recipient of the 1998 Presidential Medal of Freedom and chair of the board of governors of the Leader Institute (formerly the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management). The academy’s mission is to inspire, develop, and reward accomplished student leaders as they meet the challenges of tomorrow.

“Once again we are bringing in an amazing group of student leaders from around the world, as well as some of the finest leaders from the public and private sectors,” said Pitt Vice Provost and Dean of Students Kathy Humphrey. “Many students who participated in the previous two summits have said it was one of the highlights of their collegiate careers because of the people who are involved and the format of the programs.”

The summit provides a forum for student leaders to engage in an elevated level
Six Pitt Students Receive 2011 David L. Boren Awards for International Study

By Patricia Lomando White

Four University of Pittsburgh Honors College students—Stacey Stachera, Russell Ottalini, Lorraine Keeler, and Cody Dickerson—have received 2011 David L. Boren Fellowships, and Pitt School of Law student Sarah Paulsworth and Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA) student Ashley Fitzgerald have been awarded 2011 David L. Boren Fellowships, all for international study. Stachera and Fitzgerald will study in Tanzania, Ottalini in Japan, Keeler in Brazil, Dickerson in China, and Paulsworth in Kazakhstan.

For the third consecutive year, the Institute of International Education, which administers the awards on behalf of the National Security Education Program (NSEP), received a record number of applications for the undergraduate Boren Scholarship. This year, 944 undergraduate students applied for the Boren Scholarship, and 152 were awarded, and 625 graduate students applied for the Boren Fellowship, and 17 were awarded.

This is the ninth consecutive year that at least one Pitt student has been awarded the honor. Since 1997, 26 Pitt students have received Boren Scholarships and 17 graduate students have received Boren Fellowships.

Stachera, from Erie, Pa., will be a senior at Pitt this fall, majoring in political science with a concentration in international relations. She also is working to earn certificates in African studies and global studies. Stachera is studying Swahili this fall at the State University of Zanzibar. Her future plans include graduating from Pitt with a BA degree, fulfilling her Boren requirement in the U.S., and studying at the Department of State or USAID, and earning a master’s degree in international development or peace and conflict resolution.

Ottalini, a junior from Silver Spring, Md., is majoring in Japanese and sociology. He is studying at Sophia University in Tokyo for the coming academic year. He intends to study the language along with Japanese lifestyles in urban and traditional contexts while abroad. Upon completion of his Pitt degree, Ottalini plans to attend graduate school to earn a master’s degree in either urban studies or international studies.

Keeler, from Seattle, Wash., will be a junior at Pitt this fall, majoring in environmental studies with minors in Latin and Portuguese. She will be participating in two programs in Brazil next year, the first semester in Belém and the greater Amazon region, and the second in Salvador da Bahia. Keeler hopes to graduate from Pitt with a BPhil degree incorporating her majors and the research conducted this summer and in Brazil. After completing the required government service in the EPA, she will pursue a master’s degree in public policy and a Ph.D degree in sustainability/ environmental policy.

Dickerson, from Plattsburg, Mo., will be a Pitt junior this fall, majoring in religious studies and preparing to begin work toward a Bachelor of Philosophy degree in international and area studies. Dickerson will spend the fall semester at Beijing Foreign Studies University focusing on language acquisition and the second semester at Yunnan Nationalities University in Kunming where he will study both the Chinese language and Chinese minority policies. After earning his Pitt degree, Dickerson plans to fulfill his service requirement in the U.S. Department of State. He hopes to use this experience to shape his plans for graduate school and ultimate goal of becoming a foreign service officer.

Fitzgerald, a second-year Pitt law student from Fairless Hills, Pa., is a JD candidate working on certificates in comparative and international law and Russian and Eastern European studies. Her Boren award includes both domestic study and study-abroad components. During the summer, she will be studying at the Indiana University-Bloomington in the Summer Workshop for Slavic, Eastern European, and Central Asian Languages and in intensive Kazakh classes. She also plans to travel to Kazakhstan to take part in the Eurasian Regional Language Program and work on her Boren Fellowship project, “The Legal Framework for Ethnic Stability in Kazakhstan.” The project includes language study, research, and the composition of a scholarly paper. Paulsworth plans to pursue a career with the U.S. government working on legal issues related to human rights and humanitarian law.

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The mission of NSEP, established by the National Security Education Act of 1991, is to develop the national capacity for educating U.S. citizens, understanding foreign cultures, strengthening U.S. economic competitiveness, and enhancing international cooperation and security. The Boren Scholarship is named for David L. Boren, principal author of the legislation that created NSEP in 1991. Boren served as governor of Oklahoma from 1974 to 1978 and as a U.S. senator from Oklahoma from 1979 to 1994. He currently serves as the president of the University of Oklahoma. Boren is widely respected for his academic credentials, his lifetime support for education, and his distinguished political career as a reformer in the American political system.

For the fifth year, students from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law are spending their summer in Europe as Nordenberg Fellows. The fellowships are funded by the Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg Professorship, held by Pitt law professor Ronald A. Brand. Each Fellow receives $6,000 in funding from the Nordenberg Chair.

A brief biography of each honoree follows.

Lauren Mullen, from Linesville, Pa., is interning at the European Court of Auditors in Luxembourg. Mullen graduated from New York University with a degree in international relations and a minor in Spanish. She received numerous scholarships at NYU and is a recipient of the Pitt Law Merit Scholarship. Mullen was a member of the 2011 Pitt Law Team at the Mardi Gras Sports Law Competition, held at the University of Tulane School of Law. As an undergraduate, Mullen spent a semester in Italy.

Thomas Rollins, from Salt Lake City, is spending the summer at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law in Hamburg, Germany, conducting research on comparative law and policy regulation of trans-Atlantic trade in the ports of Hamburg and New York. The Max Planck Institute is the premier comparative and international private law research institute in Europe. Rollins graduated from the University of Utah Honors College program with degrees in history and international studies and a minor in German. He received numerous scholarships at Utah and coauthored an article published in the Hinkley Journal of Politics in 2009. Rollins spent two summers in Germany in a language immersion program.

Kimberly Stains, from Altoona, Pa., is interning at the Missouri Missouri Vojnovic Zdravkovic law firm in Belgrade, Serbia. Stains graduated from Grove City College with a dual degree in political science and Spanish and was named most outstanding pre-law student at her undergraduate institution. She spent a summer abroad in Beijing and a summer and semester abroad in Buenos Aires. She also was a research assistant at the Universidad Anahuac in Mexico during the summer 2010 and worked as an intern in 2009 for Terrance F. McVerry, judge of the U.S. District Court of the Western District of Pennsylvania. She also served as a K&L Gates Public Interest Fellow at the Education Law Center in June 2011.
Top-Notch Researchers Propel Pitt's Drug Discovery Institute

By Shannon Barnes

Sitting atop the University of Pittsburgh's Biomedical Sciences Tower 3 (BST3), researchers in Pitt’s Drug Discovery Institute (DDI) are searching for new methods to alleviate suffering caused by a variety of diseases. Their research includes studying the delicate protein interactions involved with cancer, designing new drug compounds, and developing automated technologies to enhance existing research methods. Their interests are diverse, yet their mission is the same—to advance global health.

Drug discovery is a classic example of translational science, or “bench to bedside” research (or in this case, “bench to bottle”). Advances made in the laboratory lead to new and more effective pharmaceutical products for patients. The road to drug discovery, however, is never a straight path. In the early stages, medicinal chemists and structural biologists dissect the intricate interactions between proteins so they can hypothesize potential drug targets and determine which compounds are likely to disrupt or enhance a biological function. Once they’ve identified an area of interest, that target is screened against thousands of compounds to find one (or several) that might disrupt the protein-protein interaction. When a “hit” is identified, organic chemists find the best and most efficient methods to synthesize and scale up those compounds in the laboratory. Biologists then validate the compounds in the lab and in living things to determine effectiveness, safety, and stability. If any of these qualities is less than optimal, the molecule gets sent back to the chemists for improvement.

A Novel Concept

Pitt’s Drug Discovery Institute opened its doors in 2006, one of the first tenants of the $205 million BST3, a research tower with modern, open laboratories and a sophisticated floor plan. When Arthur S. Levine, senior vice chancellor for the health sciences and dean of Pitt’s School of Medicine, designed the concept for BST3, he envisioned collaboration at the most basic levels of science, believing that sharing physical space and technologies would encourage more collaboration. Barry Gold, DDI associate director and professor and chair of pharmaceutical sciences in the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Medicine, and the School of Pharmacy—and create a unique mosaic of scientists, from organic chemists to clinical scientists, who work along the continuum of drug discovery.

Dennis Curran, a Pitt Distinguished Service Professor and Bayer Professor of Chemistry in the School of Arts and Sciences, notes that chemists and clinicians often don’t speak the same language, but he believes the key to continuity is having leaders who can span the scientific spectrum. “Everyone has [his/her] own niche in academia, but we have great leaders who can relate to people up and down the pipeline,” says Curran, who specializes in organic compound synthesis.

The Research Team

Curran was a key collaborator in the development of AR67, an anticancer drug that is currently in phase II clinical trials with Arno Therapeutics Inc. AR67 is being tested in patients with glioblastoma multiforme, a highly aggressive brain cancer. He developed the drug with the late Thomas G. Burke, a professor of medicine at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine. Curran is working on the synthesis of several compounds: “Being academicians, we aren’t satisfied with just making more of the same compound. If we have a difficult synthesis, we want to make it better. We’re interested in pushing the edge of the possible in moving a compound to a drug candidate.”

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Pitt's Drug Discovery Institute has entered an exciting transition period under the new leadership of D. Lansing Taylor (right), Allegheny Foundation Professor of computational and systems biology in Pitt's School of Medicine. The institute has four associate directors, including Barry Gold (left), a professor and chair of pharmaceutical sciences; Edward Chu, professor of medicine and of pharmacology and chemical biology as well as chief of the Pitt School of Medicine’s Division of Hematology-Oncology and deputy director of the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute; Peter Wipf, Distinguished University Professor of Chemistry and director of Pitt’s Combinatorial Chemistry Center; and Ivet Bahar, John K. Vries Professor and chair of computational and systems biology.

By Shannon Barnes

Dr. Curran, a Pitt Distinguished Service Professor and Bayer Professor of Chemistry in the School of Arts and Sciences, won a key collaborator in the development of AR67, an anticancer drug that is currently in phase II clinical trials with Arno Therapeutics Inc. AR67 is being tested in patients with glioblastoma multiforme, a highly aggressive brain cancer.
of computational and systems biology in the School of Medicine, Dömling created an online tool, called anchor.query (http://anchorquery.cebb.pitt.edu/), which allows researchers to search easily for these anchors and define promising areas for drug discovery. Dömling’s current PPI of interest is the interaction between the cancer-related proteins p53 and MDM2/MDMX. When the proteins interact, they form a small, deep cavity—the type that is ideal for drugs to bind to and effect a change in function. “This PPI is a hot topic in drug discovery right now, and no drugs have been approved that disrupt this type of interaction in cancer cells,” Dömling says. Dömling will be leaving Pitt in September to become chair of chemistry at the University of Groningen in The Netherlands, but will maintain research collaborations at Pitt via an adjunct appointment.

Peter Wipf is Distinguished University Professor of Chemistry, an associate director of DDI, and director of Pitt’s Combinatorial Chemistry Center, which was established in 1998. He is best known for his groundbreaking work in the total synthesis of complex organic molecules and was instrumental in advancing the use of combinatorial chemistry techniques at Pitt. Combinatorial chemistry is a synthesis method that became popular in the 1990s as a way for chemists to create large numbers of compounds in a very short period of time. As these new technologies and methods of organic synthesis were further developed at the Combinatorial Chemistry Center, the center was expanded in 2002 as part of a larger National Institutes of Health center initiative and became the University of Pittsburgh Center for Chemical Methodologies and Library Development. Wipf believes this type of diverse, multi-investigator center of excellence allows scholars to pool their expertise to discover novel therapies for major as well as neglected diseases.

Her research team focuses on protein-protein interactions, but she offers a unique biological perspective. She explains that her lab has traditionally looked at rational drug design as a dynamic process at the molecular level. By studying the atomic motions of proteins, researchers can glean how these proteins interact and rationalize which are likely to be inhibited by small molecules. “In the newest wave of drug discovery, however, we realize that you can design an inhibitor that binds well and has high activity, but we want to know what happens when you put it in the body,” Bahar says, adding that her group focuses on protein dynamics, or how the proteins move and interact. “Structure is important, but it is a snapshot. We want to observe how the protein achieves its function—then we can design the drug.”

Joining this systems biology approach is Andreas Vogt, a research assistant professor of computational and systems biology in the School of Medicine. Vogt has done substantial work in high-content imaging technology, which allows researchers to obtain data from individual cells and analyze the effects of drugs on their target of interest in a cellular context. Vogt also performs image-based analysis of whole organisms, such as zebrafish, which are an ideal system for in vivo high-content screens. These tropical freshwater fish are vertebrates and share biological similarities to higher organisms; they are optically transparent, and their tiny embryos can easily be stored in 96-well microplates, a standard format for high throughput screening. Using his imaging technology and an artificial intelligence-based image analysis method called Cognition Network Therapy, Vogt has detected and quantified structures of interest in zebrafish embryos.
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Paul Johnston is a research professor of pharmaceutical sciences and manager of the Pittsburgh Molecular Library Screening Center (PMLSC), a federally funded joint venture between Pitt and Carnegie Mellon University that was part of the NIH Roadmap Initiative Molecular Library Screening Center Network pilot phase. Johnston is also coprincipal investigator and manager of the Pittsburgh Specialized Application Center (PSAC), a component of the National Cancer Institute’s Chemical Biology Consortium (CBC). CBC is part of the Experimental Therapeutics (NEXT) Program, a partnership between the National Cancer Institute’s Division of Cancer Treatment and Diagnosis and Center for Cancer Research, and is tasked with streamlining the development and testing of promising new anticancer drugs to expedite their delivery to the bedside.

Johnston is a pioneer in developing and performing high throughput cell-based screening assays. He worked in the pharmaceutical industry for 14 years and has close ties with Pittsburgh biotechnology experts. This experience, along with his creativity and innovation with HTS and HCS assays, has allowed him to build one of the nation’s top academic screening facilities. The PMLSC and PSAC offer advanced services to investigators who are interested in screening large libraries of small molecules against targets of interest, using such advanced technologies as liquid-handling robots; multimode plate readers with luminescence, fluorescence, fluorescence polarization, time-resolved fluorescence, and absorbance detection capability; HCS fluorescence microscopy platforms with live cell and kinetic screening options with image storage and analysis databases; sophisticated screening microscopes; and biosafety level 2 tissue culture hoods and incubators.

Combining Business and Basic Science

DDI is in an exciting transition period, as it shifts focus with its new director D. Lansing Taylor, Allegheny Foundation professor in the School of Medicine’s Department of Computational and Systems Biology. Taylor pioneered high content screening methods to automate cell and experimental animal drug discovery and marketed these technologies through his company, Cellomics, Inc., now part of ThermoFisher. He also founded several Pittsburgh-based biotechnology companies, most recently Cellumen and Cermostics, which applied cellular and tissue systems biology to drug safety and diagnostics.

As both an entrepreneur and an academician, Taylor provides a unique industrial perspective with a deep appreciation for basic science. “There is no single isolated target that we can perturb with drugs, so it is essential to understand the biological systems and address this complexity upfront, using functional model systems such as sophisticated cell models and small experimental animal models, like C. elegans [roundworm] and zebrafish. We can use these live models to gain biological insight very early on in the drug discovery process.” Taylor is energetic about his new role and the future of drug discovery. Even before he began his first day in his new position, Taylor coined this tagline that demonstrates his enthusiasm and vision for DDI: “Novel chemistries and systems biology to drug safety and diagnostics.’”

Taylor plans to use his business acumen to reach out to potential partners in industry. He notes that both Harvard University and Washington University in St. Louis, two national leaders in drug discovery, have recently developed partnerships with large pharmaceutical companies. He is confident that Pitt’s academic prowess will attract the pharmaceutical industry, as well: “We have tremendous talent, world-class facilities, and the drive to push discovery into the future.”

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Pitt's Center for Vaccine Research Targets Emerging Infections, Biodefense Capabilities

By Shannon Barnes

Ted Ross, a professor of microbiology and molecular genetics at Pitt’s School of Medicine, was attending the 2009 Third International Conference on Influenza Viruses for the World in Cannes, France, when U.S. government officials announced that they had isolated a novel strain of the H1N1 flu virus. The new strain comprised both influenza and swine flu, the officials said, and the implication was clear. Influenza had jumped species, moving from pigs to humans.

The tone of the Cannes meeting changed dramatically, with some participants catching early flights home, and a few prominent international flu researchers canceling their planned talks in favor of impromptu lectures on zoonoses, or animal viruses that can be transmitted to humans. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) called Ross, an expert in pathogen-host interactions, and asked for help in characterizing the virus in animal models. Ross instructed his team to learn everything they could about H1N1, and they worked with human samples to test in early June. “There was a lot of anxiety,” Ross recalls.

Ross’ lab is part of the Pitt’s Center for Vaccine Research (CVR), which comprises federal and affiliate scientists. The CVR was established the same year as Pitt’s Drug Discovery Institute (2006) and is also housed in Biomedical Science Tower 3. The two entities share the same mission—to improve global health—yet they focus on two different aspects: disease treatment and prevention. CVR scientists study a wide range of bacterial and viral pathogens, but their main focus is on emerging infections and biodefense. Ross, a professor of microbiology and molecular genetics in Pitt’s School of Medicine, is an expert in pathogen-host interactions. His research focuses on the development of effective vaccine design for infectious agents such as influenza and HIV. His research team includes research specialists Corey Crevar (left) and Donald Carter (right).

But then the virus throws up a yellow flag—drugs to quickly treat that person.”

Curran’s belief is true. “Both the CVR and DDI are product-oriented centers—the ultimate in translational science. The ideas bubble up from the ground floor of the BST3 and float through the hallways of the various departments, maturing and evolving, until they get to us. Our job is to translate the science into interventions that will improve public and global health.”

Ross believes that the events that transpired during the H1N1 pandemic demonstrated how unprepared our nation is for a major biological emergency. A vaccine was not made widely available to the public until months after the peak of the outbreak. He says, “If a bioterrorist had hit the general population as hard as it did young people, the pandemic would have been much more devastating.” He hopes that new-generation vaccines will greatly speed up the flu vaccine production process, lowering manufacturing costs and making vaccines more widely available much more quickly.

“Will or where will the next biologi- cal threat come from? No one knows for sure, but these CVR researchers will be on the front lines, ready to fight!”

1.7 million people in 2009. CVR researcher JoAnne Flynn, a professor of microbiology and molecular genetics, and her colleagues have developed imaging technology to better understand how the bacteria respond to drugs. The hallmark of TB is the presence of large, inflammatory clumps of bacteria and immune cells, called granulomas. Flynn, using a $12 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, installed one of the world’s first hybrid positron emission tomography/computed tomography (PET/CT) scanners in a Biosafety Level 3 laboratory, enabling her to watch the granulomas (what she calls “hot spots”) in real time and to see how they respond to different drugs over the course of a treatment regimen. Previously, researchers were limited to examining tissues postmortem. Flynn’s serial imaging technology represents a major breakthrough in TB imaging and will likely lead to quick advances in vaccine and drug development.

Flynn’s imaging center is housed in the CVR’s Regional Biocontainment Laboratory (RBL), one of 13 federally funded labs that study potential bioterrorism threats and develop vaccines and therapies for such diseases. RBL Associate Director Kelly Stefano Cole, a professor of immunology in the School of Medicine, notes that in the field of biodefense, vaccine development and drug discovery complement each other. “Of course we would need new vaccines, but if there was a bioterrorist attack and a pathogen was intentionally released, we would need quick access to large stockpiles of therapeutics to treat or blunt the effects of the illness,” Cole says. “Likewise, if a researcher is accidentally exposed to anthrax in the laboratory, we also need drugs to quickly treat that person.”

Burke affirms the commonality between vaccine development and drug discovery. “Both the CVR and DDI are product-oriented centers—the ultimate in translational science. The ideas bubble up from the ground floor of the BST3 and float through the hallways of the various departments, maturing and evolving, until they get to us. Our job is to translate the science into interventions that will improve public and global health.”

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The T2K experiment is primarily funded by Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology. Pitt is one of 70 U.S. institutions working on the project with support for the American collaborators also coming from the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Science. The J-PARC facility was damaged during the March 2011 earthquake in Japan (Paolone was one of the researchers at the facility during the quake). The complex is expected to begin operating again by late 2011.

—Morgan Kelly

Pitt to Host Third Annual Summit of the Hesselbein Global Academy

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of leadership training by working closely with accomplished professionals during the four-day event.

Nine well-recognized professionals will serve as mentors during the Hesselbein Summit, including J. Roger Glunt, president of Glunt Development Co., Inc. and Jayar Construction Co., Inc. Glunt is a former member of the University’s Board of Trustees, a graduate of the Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business, and former president of the Pitt Alumni Association.

Forty-six students from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Israel, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Singapore, Uganda, and the United Kingdom are scheduled to attend. They will join domestic students from large and small American colleges and universities from 16 different states.

Five Pitt students will participate, including Olivia Enders, a junior from Millersburg, Pa., who is majoring in English literature, religious studies, and philosophy; Katherine Malekoff, a senior from Greensboro, N.C., who is majoring in urban studies and sociology; Tara Matthews, a senior from Elkridge, Md., who is majoring in economics and political science with an emphasis in global studies; and Ashley Raleigh, a senior from Mars, Pa., who is majoring in political science, legal studies, and chemisry; and Andrew Taglianetti, a senior from Bridgeville, Pa., who is majoring in business management with a concentration in marketing and finance.

From 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. July 25, students, under the direction of their mentors, will apply what they learn to solve a specific organizational problem at such participating organizations as Collegiate YMCA, Community Human Services, Conservation Consultants Inc., Ladies Hospital Aid Society, Leadership Pittsburgh, Pitt’s Office of Veterans Services, United Cerebral Palsy, and Sustainable Pittsburgh.

“Having been a part of the first two summits, I am excited to return to campus and work with another outstanding group of students and mentors,” said Hesselbein, who will be in attendance at this year’s summit. “One of the incredible things that happened at both summits is the strong bond that has formed between the students, as well as between the students and their mentors.”

Of Pinckney, Hesselbein said, “She is one of the finest leaders I have ever known, and it will be such a privilege for the students attending the summit as well as the Pitt community, to hear her unique perspectives about what it takes to be an effective leader in our global society.”

Pinckney is founder, president, and chief executive officer at BHP Consulting, LLC, providing strategic direction on military transition planning, financial management, and public-private sector partnerships. The first African American female inducted into the Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame, Pinckney has been accorded numerous honors, including the Department of Defense Outstanding Diversity Military Service Award, the Defense Superior Service Medal, four Army Commenda tion medals, and the Alpha Kappa Alpha President’s Award for exemplary service to humankind.

In addition to her work with the military, Pinckney also advocates for at-risk youth through the Charles Houston Community Center in Alexandria, Va. Pinckney holds a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from the University of Maryland, a Master of Public Administration degree in financial management from Golden Gate University, and a Master of Science degree in national resource strategy from the National Defense University.
The impact of comparative under-funding also can be seen in institution comparisons. For example, our state appropriation during the last fiscal year, before the deep recent cuts were imposed, represented less than 10 percent of our total operating budget. Most of the institutions that have been grouped with Pitt in the top cluster of public research universities in the annual assessment of The Top American Research Universities receive a state appropriation representing a markedly higher percentage of their total budgets. Berkeley, 26 percent; Florida, 32 percent; North Carolina, 22 percent; and Wisconsin, 18 percent. Within that top group, in fact, only the University of Michigan, at 7 percent, lagged behind Pitt, and with these recent cuts, Pitt has fallen to 7.7 percent.

Facing Historic Cuts

Even acknowledging the state’s budget challenges, given Pitt’s proven productivity and this record of pre-existing pruning, the Governor’s initial budget proposal was a shock to virtually everyone. That proposal recommended that our Education and General (E&G) appropriation be cut by 50 percent and that our four academic medical center lines—supporting important programs in the School of Medicine, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, the School of Dental Medicine, and Graduate School of Public Health—are completely eliminated. Legislators from both parties appeared to be among the most surprised and quickly rallied to the cause of funding restoration. Everyone who cares about Pitt—or, more broadly, about public higher education—always will be grateful for their support.

Over the course of the following months, a campaign to secure substantial restoration of funding for public higher education was waged. The state budget enacted last week provides for a 19 percent reduction to our E&G appropriation and a 50 percent reduction to our academic medical lines. Our total reduction is 22 percent—or more than $40 million—a higher-percentage reduction than the other state-related universities because a larger portion of our operation traditionally had been allocated to the academic medical lines. Our 22 percent reduction compares to over all reduction in state spending of 4 percent. Though our position did improve since early March, the cuts imposed also made, then, remain deep and disproportionate.

To place these funding levels in context, current cuts take Pitt’s appropriation all the way back to its Fiscal Year 1995 level.

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PA Appropriations as Percentage Of Pitt’s Total Budget

1966: 35%
2012: 7.7%
As has been noted, the distinguishing budgetary challenge of this fiscal year is the $40-plus million cut to our state support. We also face unavoidable expense increases in such areas as health insurance, facilities costs, technology investments and licensing fees, and the need to make additional academic investments, some driven by growing enrollments and others by the levels of quality that must be maintained to be competitive as a high-value provider. Putting to the side expenses that can be met through such alternative revenue sources as research grants, we expect these additional cost increases and investments to total about $30 million. When added to the $40-plus million cut to our state appropriation, the budget gap to be closed, then, is $70-plus million.

A Position for Modest Compensation Increase

In the midst of what came to be called the “Great Recession,” the University froze the salaries of its employees. Repeating that pattern this year would make the creation of a balanced budget easier and almost certainly would be politically popular in some quarters. However, we continue to live with lingering, negative consequences of that decision. Pitt salaries, which were always at or somewhat below the mid-range of our peers, are less competitive than they were before that freeze. Importantly, they also are lower than salaries paid by Pennsylvania’s other public research universities. Also of real importance is the fact that we have no clear sense of when our budgetary circumstances will improve. It is thus hard to ask employees to sacrifice for a year or two as an institution moves through difficult times. However, when the success of an enterprise depends so heavily on human talent, when employees are known for their hard work and dedication, and when demand for the services that they support continues to be high, it is more problematic to indefinitely defer all action with respect to compensation.

We have attempted to balance the budgetary challenges that we face and the needs of the members of our faculty and staff by creating a modest salary increase pool of 2 percent of our year’s budget. That pool will be allocated on the following basis—a 1.5 percent salary maintenance award for all employees who have received at least a satisfactory performance review for the past year; 0.5 percent to employees in the mid-range of our peers, on the basis of merit, market, and equity. All salary increase decisions will be made, as usual, after careful review of the needs of the members of our faculty and staff. However, as a further reflection of our challenging circumstances, those increases ultimately will be capped, and the pool will be available only for employees whose base earnings are $40,000 or less. Salary increases for all other employees will take effect on January 1, 2012. The fact that we have been able to weather this year’s budgetary crisis is a tribute to all of the people of Pitt and to our many friends. When this institution and its important work were threatened, concerned alumni, faculty, staff, and students stepped forward as advocates. As noted, our case was well received within the legislature and also drew the support of many other friends, including leaders of the business community who know firsthand what an indispensable difference a strong Pitt has meant to the progress of this region.

Looking to the Future

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But our ability to deal with the prospect of almost unimaginable cuts extends far beyond advocacy. We have achieved distinctive levels of academic quality and have become a more significant force for wide-ranging forms of good in the broader community, even as we have built internal financial strength. Absent that foundation, to which so many of you contributed, our ability to respond to the cuts ultimately imposed would have been far more limited.

As our home state confronted a daunting budget shortfall, we were asked to do far more than our fair share to help re-position it for an even brighter future. In looking toward that future, our shared quest, as described by the Governor at the close of his inaugural address, is to find “a true commonwealth that allows this generation and future generations to dream with credible hope.”

For nearly 225 years, Pitt has helped position generations of Pennsylvanians to define and effectively pursue their dreams, in the process contributing to the Commonwealth’s collective strength. Our own, unchanged dream is to continue playing what has been a role of increasing impact as we build a better future together and to do so with support appropriate for our important mission.
In the past 15 years, the wealth of data available to astronomers through new and larger digital-optimized telescopes has revolutionized our understanding of the Universe’s inner workings. However, these vast stores of images have also generated a cosmic headache as thousands of researchers have produced an unorganized torrent of different measurements.

The popularity of large surveys mushroomed after 2002 with the public release of photos from the Sloan Digital Sky Survey, the most influential survey project in the past decade, allowing astronomers the world over to pore over uniformly high-quality images of deep space. Studies of distant galaxies were previously limited to a few astronomers with access to the most powerful ground-based telescopes, explained Newman, a nationally recognized expert in astronomical surveys. New satellites and enormous digital cameras on specially designed telescopes have now obtained detailed images of vast swaths of the night sky, capturing cosmic evolution and activity spanning more than 10 billion years.

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In response, University of Pittsburgh researchers have undertaken a four-year, $1.6 million project supported by the National Science Foundation to create a single online source that astronomers worldwide can use to organize and quickly share their latest celestial observations. A publicly available tool called AstroShelf would allow researchers to add new measurements about astronomical objects, report their findings in real time, and work with one another’s data, explained principal investigator Alexandros Labrinidis, a professor of computer science in Pitt’s School of Arts and Sciences. Labrinidis leads the project with Pitt computer science professors Panos Chrysanthis and Liz Marai, as well as with Pitt professors of physics and astronomy Jeffrey Newman, Michael Wood-Vasey, and Arthur Kosowsky.

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Lectures/Seminars/Readings

Opera/Theater/Dance


The Importance of Being Earnest


Concerts
Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms, longtime favorite series for classical music lovers and fans, 10:30 a.m.-noon, Sundays through Aug. 15, Jones of Mellon Park, Fifth and Shady avenues, Point Breeze/Squirrel Hill, Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition, Bagel Factory, WQED-FM, 412-225-2493.


Art Nouveau and the Ubiquity of Style, The Frick Art Museum, August 12


Pitt PhD Dissertation Defenses
Andrew Semenovskiy, School of Medicine’s Center for Neuroscience/Neurobiology Graduate Program, 10 a.m. July 21, “Dissecting the Registration and Processing of Olfactory Events During General Anesthesia,” 1995 Starz Biomedical Science Tower.

Addie Weaver, School of Social Work, 1 p.m. July 21, “A Family Therapy Effective, Acceptable, and Sustainable for Mothers and Children: An Examination of Structural Family Therapy Implemented Within a Semi-Rural Community Mental Setting,” 2117 Cathedral of Learning.

Tina-Marie Axl, Graduate School of Public Health’s Department of Epidemiology, 3 p.m. July 22, “Impacts of Vaccine Logistics on Vaccine Epidemiology,” First-Floor Parkville Annex Conference Room.

Sarah Choi, School of Medicine’s Molecular Pharmacology Graduate Program, 10 a.m. July 25, “Preclinical Studies on ATM Inhibitors as Anti-Cancer Agents,” 1395 Starz Biomedical Science Tower.

Salvatore Cherra, School of Medicine’s Cellular and Molecular Pathology Graduate Program, 2 p.m. July 25, “Understanding the Interaction Between LRRK2 and PINK1: Implications for Parkinson’s Disease,” 1104 Scaife Science Tower.

Hans Lottenbach, School of Arts and Sciences’ Department of Philosophy, 2 p.m. July 25, “Happiness, Apprehension, and Rational Choice Studies in Empiricist Moral Philosophy,” 1001B Cathedral of Learning.

Lidia Meireles, Joint CMU-Pitt PhD Program in Computational Biology, 2 p.m. July 26, “Rational Design of Small-Molecule Inhibitors of Protein-Protein Interactions: Application to the Oncogenic c-Myc-Max Interaction,” 3073 Biomedical Science Tower.

Jonqueline E. Townsend, School of Arts and Sciences’ Department of Biological Sciences, 2 p.m. July 28, “A New Spin on Specificity: EcoRi Endonuclease-DNA Complexes Studied by Thermodynamics and Electron Spin Resonance Spectroscopy,” A219B Langley Hall.


Wendy M. Martella, School of Arts and Sciences’ Department of Linguistics, 10 a.m. Aug. 2, “Testing the Aspect Hypothesis in L2 Russian,” 2809 Cathedral of Learning.

Ping Zhang, School of Arts and Sciences’ Department of Biological Sciences, 1 p.m. Aug. 2, “Signaling From Depolarization to Alternative Splicing: Identification of Molecular Links Mediating Inducible Exon Skipping,” A219B Langley Hall.

Zhen Jiang, Graduate School of Public Health’s Department of Biostatistics, 11 a.m. Aug. 9, “Dealing with Censorship: The Latino Experience in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,” 3106 Posvar Hall.

Laura Musin-Vergara, School of Arts and Sciences’ Department of Anthropology, 10 a.m. Aug. 19, “Dealing with Grieving: The Latina Experience in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,” 3106 Posvar Hall.

Brett Caleo, School of Arts and Sciences’ Department of Philosophy, 3 p.m. Aug. 22, “Self-Knowledge, Rationality, and Interpretation,” 1001B Cathedral of Learning.

Handmade Contemporary Craft in Ceramic, Glass, and Wood, Carnegie Museum of Art, Ongoing
An annual retreat for Pennsylvania’s young people who are in foster care will be held Aug. 8-12 at the University of Pittsburgh Johnstown (UPJ) campus, 450 Schoolhouse Rd., Johnstown, Pa.

Sponsored by the Pitt School of Social Work’s Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program and the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Office of Children, Youth, and Families, the event will offer more than 130 participants—ages 16 to 21—a week of educational sessions, group talks, arts and sports activities, and opportunities to bond with others in similar situations. Group members will utilize campus facilities and residence halls while setting goals, making connections, and examining options as they age out of foster care. A banquet with an address by foster care advocate LaTasha C. Watts closes the weeklong retreat.

The title of this year’s retreat is “Imagine . . . No Limits!” The young people will be challenged to identify potential barriers in their lives and discuss ways to overcome them.

“I’ve had the unique opportunity to talk with many young adults and to witness their excitement, connections, resiliency, and renewed commitment to achieving their goals,” said Helen Cahalane, principal investigator of child welfare education in Pitt’s School of Social Work and retreat facilitator for the past several years. “It is an amazing week continuing Pennsylvania’s efforts to improve our child welfare system through youth voice and leadership.”

Keynote speaker LaTasha C. Watts is an author and motivational speaker who lived in a variety of foster homes throughout Ohio until she aged out of the system two days before her 19th birthday. Watts faced numerous challenges, including abusive relationships, pregnancy, single parenthood, and diagnoses of both cancer and obsessive-compulsive disorder—all before she was 23. Having cleared many of those hurdles, Watts now has 10 years of experience working with young people in a variety of settings. She is founder and executive director of The Purple Project, a support and resource network for those involved with the foster care community. Her first book, I’m Not Broken, Just A Little Twisted, is due out later in 2011.

This past year was a significant one for youth in foster care in Pennsylvania, which is now the 24th state to use a Voluntary Post-Adoption Contact Agreement, preserving an adoptive child’s connection to siblings and other relatives. Pennsylvania also has a “bill of rights” for foster children. And older youth who have been involved with the child welfare system have presented their recommendations to policy makers for changes in that system. These suggestions are drafted every year during focus groups at the annual UPJ retreat.

The event’s banquet will take place from 6 to 8:30 p.m. Aug. 11 in the Living Learning Center Heritage Hall on the UPJ campus.

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