NEWS BRIEFS
EVENTS
NOTABLES

SEARCH

PRINT THIS ISSUE
PRINT PAST ISSUES
FEEDBACK

UVM HOMEPAGE

Improving Children's Health Care

Improvement is the thing: Judith Shaw runs VCHIP, a comprehensive effort to boost childrens' health in Vermont. *(Photo: Natalie Stultz)*

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FULL STORY ▶

CURRENT NEWS BRIEFS AND EVENTS

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THE WEEK IN VIEW

***Sept. 22,* 7:30 p.m. Lane Series Concert: Dougie MacLean will perform original songs and stories focusing on his Scottish roots. Ira Allen Chapel. Information: Lane Series or 656-4455**

***Sept. 23,* 9 a.m. Memorial Service: for Professor James Petersen, a UVM archaeologist who was murdered Aug. 14. Ira Allen Chapel.**

***Sept. 28,* 4 p.m. University Scholar Seminar: "The New Biology of RNA," with John Burke, professor of microbiology and molecular genetics. Memorial Lounge, Waterman Building. Information: University Scholars**

***Sept. 28,* 7:30 p.m. Play: "Beyond Therapy," by Christopher Durang. Not recommended for children younger than 14. Royall Tyler Theatre. Tickets: $5-$17. Information: UVM Theatre or 656-2094**

Improving Children's Health Care

Innovative research-driven program becomes national model

By Rachael Moeller Gorman
Article published Sep 19, 2005

Improvement is the thing: Judith Shaw runs VCHIP, a comprehensive effort to boost childrens' health in Vermont. *(Photo: Natalie Stultz)*

From the moment a doctor walks into an exam room she has, on average, about 10 minutes to work magic. That isn't much time for anything besides a flick of the stethoscope and a peek at a chart. Certainly not long enough for a sermon on healthy eating, an immunization check or a screen for substance abuse. Such preventive measures are dreams for most doctors — they want to provide them, but lack of time and a systemized approach leave them with their hands tied.

But not in Vermont, not with children. The College of Medicine's innovative five-year-old Vermont Child Health Improvement Program is a national model for bringing academicians and pediatric practitioners together to share techniques that pay off in better child health. The program's 12 statewide initiatives touch on almost every aspect of childhood well-being, identifying and encouraging the kind of preventative measures that the health-care system is often ill-prepared to provide.

"Quality-improvement people like to say the gap between what we don't know and what we know in health care is smaller than the gap between what we know and what we actually do," says Dr. Mort Wasserman, professor of pediatrics and one of the founders of VCHIP. "We know what we need to do. The system is just not set up to deliver it."

Tackling a range of issues

In the early 1990s, Vermont began thinking seriously about how to fix this frustrating problem. UVM College of Medicine physicians Wasserman, Jeffrey Horbar and Paula Duncan were working on national projects to improve health care for children, and the Vermont Department of Health (which is VCHIP's lead partner) was creating a single schedule of preventive standards for Medicaid children, and then all children.

The effort accelerated dramatically in 1999, when a California-based philanthropic group called the Packard Foundation decided that instead of giving money to a smattering of small quality-improvement programs all over the country as they usually did, they wanted something bigger. That something became the National Initiative for Children's Health Care Quality, created to improve children's health care across the country by applying a program called the "Breakthrough Series" to pediatric practices. NICHQ began working on pilot programs in North Carolina but soon decided they wanted to take their work to a grander scale — an entire state.

Very few states were small enough for such a comprehensive program. Even

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fewer had the right people already in place, a list of preventive standards ready to be implemented and a strong spirit of cooperation. Vermont did.

NICHQ's original plan for Vermont included only a Preventive Services Initiative to optimize health care for children. The Vermonters had a bigger vision: Creating an entirely new program to solve a broader range of children's health care issues. But they needed a strong, visionary leader to achieve that goal. They found that mixture in Judith Shaw, a nurse and veteran of Children's Hospital Boston. In January 2000, Shaw founded VCHIP.

The "Breakthrough Series" model is the frame on which VCHIP hangs its efforts. It focuses not just on education, but on measurement, goal-setting, collaborative learning, action and a final compilation of results.

"What we do is different — we go beyond chart audits. We show them how they're doing and how they compare to other practices," said Shaw. "Then we work with them intensely to help improve their system of care."

Research, metrics and learning

VCHIP's first project, the Vermont Preventive Services Initiative (or VPSI), set out to improve the preventive services of ten pediatric practices. They soon discovered that the project was far more popular than they had anticipated: 32 of the 35 pediatric practices in the state wanted to join. Soon, family practices were asking to be involved. To accommodate them, VCHIP looked to the Vermont Department of Health and Medicaid, which provided additional funding.

VCHIP audited each practice's charts to get a baseline measurement of preventive services. They looked at nine areas: immunizations, tuberculosis risk assessment and screening, anemia risk assessment and screening, tobacco risk exposure, sleep position risk identification and dental screening by two years, blood pressure, dental and vision screening by four years, and lead screening. Based on how well (or not well) they were doing, the practice picked anywhere from one to all nine preventative service areas to improve.

Then the "learning sessions" began. A session involves teams of physicians, nurses and administrative staff from all the different practices coming together for an entire day. During that day, they focus intensely on their problem areas, guided by VCHIP-trained facilitators, and share their own solutions to problems.

"Everyone was encouraged to think critically about how to improve, and they were quite creative," said Shaw. "One practice recognized that their lead-screening rates were really low, and when they went back to try to figure out why, they found out that the families had to travel all the way to Fletcher Allen to get their lead tests done. The families left the office and never did it. So the practice implemented a system of finger sticks in their office — their rates shot up."

While working on the VPSI, researchers realized that many of the issues children were facing had their roots much earlier — all the way back to birth. VCHIP decided to take their work to the hospitals.

All twelve Vermont hospitals with birthing centers, including Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in New Hampshire, agreed to participate in the Vermont Hospital Preventive Services Initiative. Using the same approach, VCHIP worked with newborn nursery staff and focused this time on immunizations, nutrition, metabolic screening, hearing, sleep position, smoke exposure, car seat safety, domestic violence, follow-ups and more. Again, VCHIP found that when a group focused on a particular area identified during the learning sessions, their outcomes improved.

"When we did these learning sessions, we mirror the standard nursing work day and we plan well ahead — nobody can come with beepers, no phones, we sequester the teams," said Dr. Chuck Mercier, associate professor of neonatology and the faculty lead on VHPSI. "The opportunity to work together to problem-solve — to see how different approaches can be addressed within their birthing centers — is probably the key experience that a lot of the groups appreciated. And it showed in their results."

The program formed the basis for a new nationwide program run by NICHQ called Great Beginnings, a series of Webcasts for 70 hospital teams all over the country. The program includes listservs and chat rooms for both participants and the experts. Mercier is the lead faculty for that program as well.

A subsequent project looked at improving care for adolescents. Then VCHIP, using funding from the national March of Dimes, took on prenatal care statewide. Now VCHIP is using a recent Commonwealth Fund grant to form "improvement partnerships" to help other states learn from Vermont's experience.

"I get calls weekly from people around the country wanting to learn from us. The Commonwealth Fund grant is going to allow us to describe in a guide or toolkit how VCHIP operates," Shaw says. "We'll take the VCHIP model of starting small, working in partnership with public health and pediatricians, family practices, hospitals, and community organizations to improve the quality of children's health care." She is currently helping New Mexico and Utah start their own versions of VCHIP. "Oftentimes people in academia do their own research in isolation of what's going on around them, but I think what we've done with VCHIP is to connect the academicians, public health and the healthcare providers together with a single goal — improving the system so that all the children in Vermont get the best health care possible."

A longer version of this article first appeared in *Vermont Medicine*. It is available on the Web (PDF issue download) at Vermont Medicine summer 2005.

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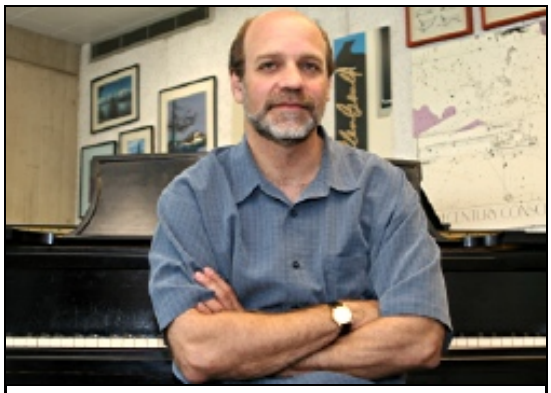
Haunting Melodies

By Kevin Foley
Article published Sep 21, 2005



Pianist Paul Orgel's UVM-recorded new CD collects four long-ignored compositions from Holocaust victims. *(Photo: Kevin Foley)*

In the moments before he sits at the piano bench, gathers himself, and begins sending the composer's notes aloft with all the skill and sensitivity he can muster, Paul Orgel would rather not speak, and he would prefer that his audience focus exclusively on the music.

But his central project of the last several years, a program of music from four composers imprisoned in Czechoslovakia during the Holocaust, makes those preferences untenable.

"I'm of the belief that music has to exist on its own merits," Orgel, an affiliate artist in the music department, says. "To pay attention to music because of where it comes from historically or what emotional state the composer was in is a side issue. The music has to be abstract from the situation… but this music puts that notion to the test.

"If they hadn't been (in a concentration camp), I still would be playing them because I believe in the music. I think that is very important. I always wonder, though, is there some level of crassness about this? The Holocaust attracts interest because it is so horrifying, am I trading in that in some way? It's a moral dilemma. It has to come from some purity of motive, which means the music."

The pieces, which Orgel has played in concerts around the world and now in a new compact disc recorded at UVM, miraculously survived the war even though three of its four creators, all prisoners at the *Theresienstadt* camp (also commonly called Terezin, after the Czech town), were not. Then the work languished in obscurity for 50 years before being rediscovered in the early 1990's. Even then, the compositions remained obscure and were rarely performed or recorded and never with the care Orgel believes their quality demands.

Orgel finds the music and history of the Czech camp deeply moving, compelling, at times overwhelming. In concert, he narrates the performance, making the challenging cognitive leap from spoken exposition to musical expression to try to explain the terrible backdrop to the pieces and his personal connection to them.

"My mother was a refugee from the Holocaust," Orgel says. "Her immediate family all escaped, they all got of Vienna in 1938, going to Yugoslavia, then to England, then to here. However, there were branches of her family that died at Terezin, who were Czech Jews from this exact part of the world. When I look at the faces of these composers, I see part of my family. It is very personal, very moving to me, almost unbearable."

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Dark parody

Orgel, an intense and introspective pianist with an unusually broad repertoire extending from the classical to the contemporary, is constantly searching for new music to play, and he's long had an affinity for Czech music. But exploring that rich history, he says, leads to an inescapable truth: "You become aware that Czech music history stops in some sense with the war." So when he heard about the Terezin music he felt that he should really get to know it, but he wasn't sure exactly what he would find.

He carefully explored the work of the composers that he eventually built his program around – Viktor Ullmann, Pavel Haas, Gideon Klein and Karel Berman – and picked the pieces that spoke the clearest to him, two composed at the camp, one written during the war, and one earlier piece. The music, Orgel says, is diverse and evocative, conjuring everything from a rural Czech folk dance to modern dissonance. As he became more deeply involved with researching and playing the music, Orgel says he gradually was drawn deeply into the history.

"The Holocaust aspect of it kind of snuck up on me, and became an interest as I got more involved with the music. It became a very serious interest. It has to," he says.

In outline form, the history the compositions share is this: During World War II, the Gestapo used the walled Czech city as a concentration camp. About 144,000 Jews were sent there, and 33,000 died of hunger, disease, overwork. About 88,000 were deported to Auschwitz and other death camps. Just 19,000 prisoners survived.

Despite this, Terezin's nightmares were restrained at least when compared to the even more pervasive horrors of other camps. The prisoners, which included a large number of affluent, intellectual Jews from Prague, Vienna and Germany, labored under inhumane conditions, but were also allowed to write, compose, teach music, give concerts. (The Nazis even forced an actor-prisoner to shoot a glowing propaganda film about the camp's cultural life. He was killed at Auschwitz shortly after finishing.) "It all existed as a kind of a parody of what had existed in their real cities in Eastern Europe. They threw themselves into it, and it was their survival in some way," Orgel says.

This comforting persistence of art through tragedy inevitably freights the music with metaphor. Professor David Scrase, a music lover and director of the UVM Center for Holocaust Studies, which helped support Orgel's recording and sponsored one of his performances, says that the tragic circumstances of the composers deepens his personal appreciation of the music.

"These are musicians who did not deviate from the path they were on because of the horrendous situation that they found themselves in. Some of the movements almost have jauntiness. It's not gloom or doom, even though their situations were perilous. They were able to continue their art in spite of the Holocaust," Scrase says.

Some of the composers were almost paralyzed by the privations of the camp, others, especially Viktor Ullman, were remarkably energized. You can hear the defiance and hope, Orgel says, in his "Piano Sonata No. 7," composed in the camp shortly before his death, which ends with a fugue of variations on a Zionist song.

"(The fugue) ends up integrating Protestant hymn tunes and a Jewish melody that's transformed and Czech national melody… the statement seems to be an ecumenical tying together of the strands that is the exact opposite of the Nazi philosophy," Orgel says.

Music from the Holocaust

After the "seasoning" of 15 or 20 live performances in locales ranging from Burlington to Krakow, Orgel recorded the music early this year on UVM's two-year-old "Colodny piano," a Steinway grand of, Orgel says, world-class quality. He collaborated with engineer John McClure, a well-known, semi-retired

classical music producer who once worked at Columbia Records, where he recorded Leonard Bernstein, Stravinsky, Glenn Gould and others. Orgel's "Music from the Holocaust," which was recently issued by Phoenix Records, will go into wide distribution on sites like amazon.com in early October. Information: www.paulorgel.com

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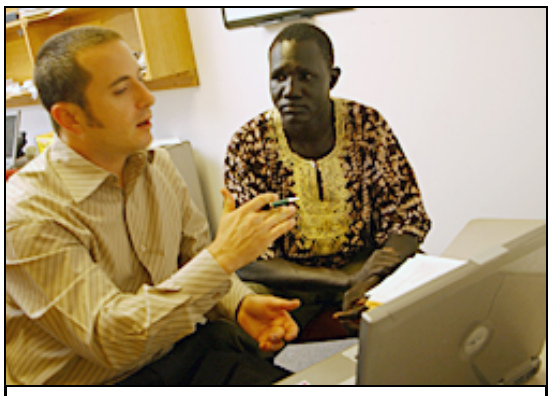
Cubicle Sabotage

Professor's surveys seek to understand roots, reach of on-the-job vengeance

By Jon Reidel

Article published Sep 21, 2005



Positive working environment: Professor David Jones is shown here collaborating on research with McNair scholar Abraham Awolich. *(Photo: Sally McCay)*

The phrase "workplace revenge" tends to evoke images of disgruntled employees assaulting their boss, trashing an office or sabotaging a computer system. The reality is that about three-quarters of Americans engage in trivial or serious acts of dysfunctional and counterproductive behavior at work, making the topic of revenge and other motives for such behavior of pressing importance to companies.

David Jones, assistant professor of business administration and expert on workplace fairness and revenge, says workplace revenge takes many forms, but that it stems from an elemental cause. "It's almost always an interpersonal offense. It boils down to disrespect," he says. "People who engage in revenge often tell stories like 'a supervisor yelled at me in front of my co-workers and said I was useless.' It happens a lot more than some people might think and that's when thoughts of revenge usually start."

Jones, who arrived at the university last fall after finishing his doctorate in industrial and organizational psychology from the University of Calgary, focuses his research on incidence of workplace revenge and counterproductive behaviors (things like gossiping and surfing the Web) in relation to how employees perceive fairness on the job. He's currently writing a chapter for a forthcoming book about why certain forms of mistreatment put some people over the edge and make them commit acts of revenge. The results are usually ones that affect fundamental human needs relating to self-esteem and self-interst, such as an unfair promotion decision or a demeaning comment.

With undergraduate and graduate degrees in psychology, Jones' research is unusual within the School of Business Administration and brings a new perspective to the courses he teaches. In "Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior," he conducts a fairness exercise in which students fictitiously receive an A or C-. Students responses show that they are more accepting of the C- when they receive a respectful explanation about how the grading was conducted. If instead, the professor says something like "You got the grade because you probably didn't study enough," Jones says, the perceived fairness goes way down.

Bottom-line issue

These same principles carry over into the workplace, and are a major reason for the loss of productivity and other behaviors that ultimately affect profit. As a consultant for organizations trying to mitigate the issue, Jones says one of the first things he tells managers is that revenge is fiscally and emotionally costly to the organization and the people involved.

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“We care about how we are seen by our colleagues and want to feel like we’re a valued member of the team, so if a supervisor is constantly putting you down and demeaning you, it affects your self-esteem and can be very stressful. It’s not just about the organization's bottom line; it’s about people's psychological well-being. It can go on for years and really wear people down,” he says.

Jones, who developed and validated employee selection and performance appraisal systems for the Canadian Armed Forces and other public and nonprofit organizations, has applied principles of workplace fairness to projects within government, retail and information technology sectors. One of his hardest jobs is convincing managers that workplace revenge isn’t something committed only by unstable individuals. Theft (taking pencils counts), sabotage, unexcused absenteeism and vandalism aren’t uncommon, while more than 75 percent of North American workers admit to counterproductive behaviors such as wasting time at work, badmouthing others and giving co-workers the silent treatment.

“I take personality measures for various reasons, but one is because the general public thinks of people who engage in revenge at work as a little off-kilter, and that’s just not the case,” says Jones. “Sure, someone who steals $3,000 is presumably ‘different’ than others and has different ethics and morality, but the most common forms of revenge occur among people who are not different psychologically in their makeup than the average person. Almost everybody I talk with about revenge responds by saying, "Oh, you must talk to a lot of wackos." Then after about 10 minutes I make them realize that they’ve done it themselves. These are just regular people who felt disrespected and struck back.”

Finding ‘vengeful’ participants

Most companies don’t want Jones asking their employees about perceived workplace fairness, which makes it difficult to collect data and perform case studies. In order to improve his access to data, Jones works hard to have companies benefit from his research, usually providing a report based on his research and a general employee attitudes survey. ‘Work venting’ Web sites have produced some study subjects for him, although Jones says not knowing their backgrounds creates problems, especially when they share more serious offenses that he must keep confidential.

In one case, a man told Jones that after being yelled at by his boss in front of his co-workers, he cut a key to the office, quit his job, and returned six months later in a ski mask to steal $10,000 in cash and destroy some crucial records. “He told me he felt justified in his actions,” he says. Jones’ findings indicate that individuals who engage in these more serious types of revenge, carefully consider their options, the possible consequences of these options, and then coolly calculate the costs and benefits of their actions. “It’s interesting because the same factors that are attributed to the ‘going postal phenomenon’ such as unfairness and disrespect apply here as well. The question is why do people react differently to the same disrespectful action?”

His current research attempts to pinpoint which specific types of unfair actions by employers “set off” employees and push them to commit acts of revenge. He also looks at more positive responses to fairness in the workplace, such as cooperative behavior and loyalty. On the prevention side, Jones offers human-resources training in how to treat employees when potential conflicts arise.

“Preventing revenge boils down to treating people with dignity and respect and resolving conflicts among others by getting them to listen to each other to determine the root cause of the conflict,” he says. “Some of this may sound obvious, but you’d be surprised at how many managers don’t understand this or practice it in the workplace.”

NEWS BRIEFS

Women, Science and a Storm

Sep 20, 2005

Like the hurricane itself, when three of UVM's female geographers presented perspectives on Hurricane Katrina on Sept. 15, the talk started mildly enough, explaining the physical geography and climatology that is integral to understanding how the storm formed and why it affected the landscape as it did.

'Mathematica' Creator, MacArthur Fellow to Discuss Complexity

Sep 20, 2005

Stephen Wolfram received a MacArthur "genius grant" at age 22, later developed the indispensable computational software system "Mathematica" and eventually turned, with characteristic ambition, to complexity theory, writing and publishing a lavishly illustrated and exuberantly argued 1192-page book, *A New Kind of Science*, in 2002. He will give the first lecture in the new College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences's Distinguished Lecture Series on Sept. 30 at 4 p.m. in Carpenter Auditorium, Given Building.

Service-Learning Hits Stride

Sep 19, 2005

Emerald-green nickel solution bubbles furiously in one of a long line of tanks, the hum of machinery saturates the humid air and a small group of students, safety goggles in place, begin absorbing the complexities of the challenge before them.

Medical Professor Drawn into Katrina Service

Sep 20, 2005

Hurricane Katrina wound her way into Dr. Benjamin Littenberg's life via e-mail.

Littenberg, Henry and Carleen Tufo professor of medicine, had submitted an inquiry during a general internal medicine listserv discussion about Katrina relief efforts. After receiving the number for the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals from a colleague at Tulane's medical school, he made a call. The response came the next day, while Littenberg was hiking in Waterbury's Little River State Park. At 5:30 a.m. on Sept. 4, he was bound for Baton Rouge.

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By Lee Ann Cox
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But then the lecture built speed and intensity before delivering its final wallop, using social geography analysis to criticize the federal government for its role in leaving vulnerable populations unprotected. The content was informative, even provocative, but not inherently feminist in outlook or interpretation. So why mention the gender of the faculty? Because the geography department is putting women in their place.

"There's a national debate raging around women in science," geography chair Glen Elder told the audience, referring to the now-famous controversy surrounding Harvard President Lawrence Summers after his speech last January suggesting that innate differences between men and women may explain the underrepresentation of women in top levels of science and engineering. "We are delighted to prove the contrary," Elder said.

Weaving together their expertise, biogeographer Shelly Rayback, state climatologist Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux, and social geographer Cheryl Dunkley left listeners with a broad-based sketch of geographic events that culminated in the unfolding disaster since Hurricane Katrina hit. The forum launched the lecture series "Women Taking Up Space," part of a broader effort in geography to attract female undergraduates to the field.

The idea for the lectures came from the culture of the geography department here, said Elder in an interview after the talk. As a discipline geography is unique in its mix of natural and social sciences and it happens that all of the physical scientists in the UVM department are women. "All the guys do the touchy-feely cultural stuff," Elder said. "It's our in-house joke. We wouldn't have a department if it weren't for women."

The series will continue with talks by Joni Seager, dean of the School of the Environment at York University, and Jackie Orr of Syracuse. Dates and times for the future sessions are not set.

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Wolfram's work in complexity revolves around his experimentation with "cellular automata," models constructed of grids of cells governed by simple rules that yield increasingly complex results as they play out. Even intricate equations, Wolfram argues, often fail to account for natural phenomena (a leopard's spots, for instance), while simple automata produce results highly reminiscent of natural patterns.

During his UVM speech, Wolfram will discuss his views of this "new kind of science," an endeavor, he says, that has revolutionary implications for human understanding. "Three centuries ago science was transformed by the dramatic new idea that rules based on mathematical equations could be used to describe the natural world. My purpose in this book is to initiate another such transformation..." he writes in his controversial best-seller.

Information: Speakers @ UVM

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Service-Learning Hits Stride

By Lee Ann Cox
Article published Sep 19, 2005

Nancy Hayden, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering, leads a service-learning class on a tour of a local manufacturing plant. *(Photo: Bill DiLillo)*

Emerald-green nickel solution bubbles furiously in one of a long line of tanks, the hum of machinery saturates the humid air and a small group of students, safety goggles in place, begin absorbing the complexities of the challenge before them.

They're at the Edlund Company, a manufacturer of industrial food service equipment with a record of maintaining high environmental safety standards. This factory is their classroom, their assignment is to design economically sustainable means of reducing the volume of hazardous waste the company needs to treat and transport.

The course, "Hazardous Waste Management Engineering," is one of 29 classes across 20 disciplines that, for the first time this semester, have a formal service-learning designation. A mix of graduate students and seniors from multiple disciplines will spend the semester working on a detailed investigation and analysis of the problem, and then issue recommendations that, by all accounts, the company will take very seriously.

"This is positive in all aspects," says Tom O'Rourke, Edlund's environmental health and safety administrator. "It's good for students to see things they're not used to seeing in the classroom. I'm going to be meeting challenging people who are going to challenge me to do better."

Mutual benefits
That's what service-learning is about, building equal, reciprocal relationships between the community and the campus, fulfilling needs for both, explains Carrie Williams, associate director of UVM's Office of Community-University Partnerships and Service-Learning, or CUPS.

For community partners — who currently range from the King Street Youth Center to Shelburne Farms — service-learning is an opportunity to tap into valuable research, expertise and support and build a meaningful, potentially long-term collaboration with the university.

"A lot of our partners wouldn't be able to take on larger initiatives or do long-term planning and policy research," says Williams, "because their staffs are too busy running programs on a daily basis."

For students the advantage of service-learning goes far beyond volunteerism. It transforms the theoretical into the tangible and puts their studies into context. Examining what all that means is part of the deal. The requirements for service courses include reflection and evaluation exercises such as journal keeping and group discussion.

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behavior of pressing importance to companies.

"One of the biggest things we try to do is dispel the notion that reflection is cheesy or soft," Williams says. "It's about using critical thinking to help students identify what they've learned through this experience and that can be academic, civic, professional or personal. When you get outside the classroom you can't ignore learning about your personal and civic identity and what you want to do with the rest of your life."

But Williams is emphatic about UVM's commitment to focusing on the real needs of the community, not just the existential needs of students. To that end, CUPS just launched the community partner research program, working with the United Way to assess priorities and examine what factors make for good partnerships. They also have a new AmeriCorps*VISTA community liaison who aims to increase both the quantity and quality of partnerships.

The goal eventually is to increase the number of service-learning courses so that any student in any academic department can find a course of interest. Because whether you're a sociologist or an engineer, the intellectual and emotional impact of real-life work that serves a social goal can be profound.

"They take it a gazillion times more seriously when they know what they're doing matters," says Nancy Hayden, the assistant civil engineering professor who teaches that waste management class.

"It's not just doing a good job for the company — this isn't a consulting job. If we can prevent pollution, and show that it's economically viable so a company wants to do it, then students take it more seriously because they know their projects will get implemented.

"Engineers have always been pretty good at trying to give back to the community, doing pro bono work," Hayden continues, "but this is different. This is a bigger idea… This is looking at how engineers can make a difference in social issues and that's pretty new."

The CUPS office offers many services for faculty pursuing service-learning projects. They include events like the Sept. 26-27 visit of consultant Patti Clayton, who will offer three workshops open to students, faculty and staff (participants should register by Sept. 23). The office also puts on intensive five-day training sessions for faculty that help effectively integrate service into an existing course. Forty-seven faculty have completed the training to date. Finally, CUPS can help place service-learning teaching assistants with faculty, sometimes with financial support.

Information, registration: Office of Community-University Partnerships or 656-0095

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Medical Professor Drawn into Katrina Service

By Jennifer Nachbur
Article published Sep 20, 2005

Hurricane Katrina wound her way into Dr. Benjamin Littenberg's life via e-mail.

Littenberg, Henry and Carleen Tufo professor of medicine, had submitted an inquiry during a general internal medicine listserv discussion about Katrina relief efforts. After receiving the number for the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals from a colleague at Tulane's medical school, he made a call. The response came the next day, while Littenberg was hiking in Waterbury's Little River State Park. At 5:30 a.m the following morning, Sept. 4, he was bound for Baton Rouge.

Most of the passengers on the last leg of Littenberg's flight were relief volunteers. When they arrived at the Baton Rouge airport, cell phones weren't working, but they eventually stumbled upon a van marked Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals and were taken to an abandoned K-Mart in Baton Rouge without running water. In just 48 hours, the barren space was transformed into a 250-bed field hospital featuring nursing care, doctors, electricity, hot food, glucose monitoring, oxygen, a full-service pharmacy, and the capacity for kidney dialysis, IVs, minor surgery and obstetrics.

"Most of the patients had chronic conditions that were badly exacerbated by the evacuation before the storm or the trauma of three to six days in New Orleans," said Littenberg. "Many had no medication, no idea of what they were usually taking and no place to go."

Within 72 hours, Littenberg and his fellow medical relief workers discharged hundreds of patients from the K-Mart field hospital to shelters, nursing homes and relatives. A miracle, given the "confused and disorganized" atmosphere he witnessed in Louisiana, but a necessity given the sanitary risks of not having access to running water. With his first three days behind him, Littenberg's admiration for the evacuees and his teammates was overwhelming. "The patients are needy, sad, grateful, inspiring and getting some of the best care I have ever seen in twenty years of doctoring," Littenberg wrote in an email to his Vermont colleagues.

He then joined a quickly assembled medical team that included another internal medicine physician from Telluride, Colo.; a Tulane medical student; four nurses from Mountain Home, Ark.; a nurse from South Haven, Ill.; and a pharmacist from Baton Rouge. A volunteer bus driver from Columbus, Ohio, drove the group and three days' worth of food, water, medications and supplies to Houma, a town on the Bayou about 60 miles southwest of New Orleans. Houma had escaped the full-scale devastation of Katrina, and was hosting thousands of evacuees from New Orleans and the gulf coast.

In Houma, the civic center gymnasium was housing up to 1,000 evacuees on cots and air mattresses. Littenberg, who found sleeping quarters in a local surgical center in the area, handled only a few cases of diarrhea and again found himself busy with treating chronic conditions — diabetes, hypertension, depression and the like — that had spun out of control. His group also went down along the gulf coast to provide vaccines and deliver supplies.

"I suspect the need for volunteer health professionals of all types will continue for months and months," Littenberg wrote on his final night in Louisiana. "However, the patients are wonderful, entertaining, grateful and inspiring. They are appreciative, intelligent and very rewarding to deal with."

On Sept. 12, Littenberg returned to Vermont and UVM.

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EVENTS

Select a result page (15 articles per page): 1 2 3 > »

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Sep 21, 2005

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Sep 19, 2005

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Sep 19, 2005

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The event, sponsored by the School of Business Administration, features panelists with undergraduate degrees in a variety of fields including archeology, English, engineering and business administration. The morning panel sessions start at 10 a.m. and include the following topics: industrial real estate; residential real estate and appraisals; and real estate company ownership and management. Afternoon sessions begin at 1:45 p.m. and include investments and finance; commercial development; and real estate redevelopment.

Panelists will also discuss how they built their careers; how their experience at UVM helped prepare them for working in real estate; and entry-level opportunities for graduates.

Information: 656-4015

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Long thought to be a molecule whose sole function is to convey genetic information, RNA is now known to possess a wider range of biological functions than either of its macromolecular counterparts, DNA and protein. RNA catalyzes ubiquitous biochemical reactions, including ribosomal protein synthesis and tRNA biogenesis. In addition, RNA mediates a wide range of RNA processing reactions that are critical for gene expression and the replication of viruses.

Burke's research lab has focused on understanding the catalytic properties of RNA molecules. This work has led to new insights into RNA biology, particularly the structure and catalytic mechanisms of RNA enzymes (ribozymes). In addition to furthering understanding of biological molecules and their reactions, RNA research has potential for practical uses, especially the control of viral and genetic diseases.

Burke's discoveries have been reported in outstanding journals, among them *Cell, Nature, Genes and Development, EMBO Journal* and the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, in addition to which he has been invited to present at nearly 150 universities and conferences around the world. Burke's work has received significant and consistent support from the National Institutes of Health; he is currently the principal investigator on three NIH awards.

Also a sought-after research mentor, Burke is known as an outstanding teacher by undergraduate, graduate and medical students. He has graduated seven doctoral students, currently supervises five doctoral candidates, and has trained numerous post-doctoral researchers. His students and post-docs have gone on to faculty positions and top jobs in industry. Burke's professional service includes editorial boards and manuscript review for a number of journals, chairing numerous conference sessions, grant review for agencies including NIH, NSH, ACS and Research Corporation.

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The summer program has changed undergraduate science and engineering education at UVM by offering undergraduates the opportunity in the spring to apply for research stipends and suppliers. The program aims to reduce attrition among students in the sciences and help them go on to advanced degrees or technical careers.

Information: 656-5467 or HELiX

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The cast of six includes Lizzie Chazen, Chris Cohen, Tim Fairley, Kate Emmerich, Adam Yeager-Gould and Michael Rushia. The play contains mature language and content and is not recommended for children younger than 14. Show dates are Sept. 28-Oct. 1 and Oct. 6-9. Tickets range from $5- $17. UVM students can purchase up to two tickets at the Royall Tyler box office for $5 with identification

The season continues with "Hair (The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical)," which opens Nov. 9 in all of its peace-loving, socially turbulent glory. It will run Nov. 9-20. Theatre closes the season with the classic French farce "Ring Round the Moon" by Jean Anouilh. The play is directed by Sarah E. Carleton and will run March 1-4 and March 9-12.

The annual "The Toys Take Over Christmas" tradition resumes Dec. 3-4. The family friendly play always sells out, so the theatre recommends buying tickets early. They go on sale to non-subscribers on Oct. 13. Tickets are $12 for adults and $7 for children.

The theatre is proud of its accessibility programs for those with special needs. As a part of the regular season, every second Thursday performance is ASL interpreted for the deaf community (thanks to the generosity of ACCESS) and every second Friday performance is audio described for the blind and sight-impaired (thanks to the generosity of the Vermont Council of the Blind). The Royall Tyler Theatre is handicapped accessible and infrared hearing enhancers are available for all performances upon request at the box office.

Information, tickets: UVM Theatre or 656-2094

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NEWS BRIEFS
EVENTS
NOTABLES
SEARCH
PRINT THIS ISSUE
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For more about Petersen, see this article.

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NEWS BRIEFS
EVENTS
NOTABLES
SEARCH
PRINT THIS ISSUE
PRINT PAST ISSUES
FEEDBACK
UVM HOMEPAGE

NOTABLES

September 21, 2005

Awards and Honors

Connell Gallagher, director of special collections at Bailey/Howe Library, was named a fellow of the Society of American Archivists on Aug. 19 during SAA's annual meeting in New Orleans. Established in 1957 and conferred annually, the distinction of fellow is the highest honor bestowed on individuals by SAA and is awarded for outstanding contributions to the archival profession. Gallagher joins 153 current members so honored out of a membership of more than 4,200.

Larry Haugh, professor of statistics, was elected secretary-treasurer of the Statistical Consulting Section of the American Statistical Association. He'll serve in the role through 2007.

Richard "Rik" Musty, professor of psychology, received a "special award" from the International Association for Cannabis as Medicine at the association's annual meeting in Leiden, Netherlands held Sept. 9-10. The award was made "for his outstanding work on Cannabis and the Cannabinoids." Musty was cited for his ground-breaking work on cannabidiol as a potential therapeutic agent in anxiety and other disorders, such as multiple sclerosis. Presently a new drug containing cannabidiol has been introduced in Canada and is expected to be approved in other countries shortly. In addition, he was cited for his promotion of scientific research through the International Cannabinoid Research Society, of which he was a founding member in 1992 and presently serves as the society's executive director.

Gary Mawe, professor of anatomy and neurobiology, and **Kevin Foley**, assistant professor of medical laboratory and radiation sciences, received a grant from Novartis Pharmaceuticals for a project titled, "Mechanisms of Enhancing SERT Expression and Function in Intestinal Epithelial Cells." The grant will pay for supplies and a two-year post-doctoral position.

Publications and Presentations

Gale Burford, professor of social work, had a book chapter published, "Family Group Conferences in the Youth Justice and Child Welfare Systems," in *Widening the Circle: The Practice and Evaluation of Family Group Conferencing with Children, Youths and their Families* edited by J. Pennell and G. Anderson.

Sept. 14, 2005

Awards and Honors

Dr. **Donald Weaver**, associate professor of pathology, is listed in the 2005-06 edition of *Guide to America's Top Physicians*, a directory published by the Consumers' Research Council of America.

Publications and Presentations

Dr. **Edward Krawitt**, professor of medicine, is lead author of an article titled "Peginterferon alfa-2b and ribavirin for treatment-refractory chronic hepatitis C" in the August *Journal of Hepatology*. Co-authors on the study, which was funded by Schering Plough, include **Takamura Ashikaga**, director of medical biostatistics and biometry; Dr. **Nicholas Ferrentino**, associate professor of medicine; and **Mary Ann Ray**, clinical liver research coordinator at the College of Medicine.