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## ECHO Engineering



First-year student Hannah Wingate demonstrates a stormwater-themed board game on Nov. 15 at the ECHO science center in Burlington. (Photo: Joshua Brown)

Below the main exhibit hall of the ECHO Science Center in downtown Burlington, halfway up the stairs on the mezzanine landing, under the baleful eyes of the long-nosed gar in a nearby fish tank, Kate McKegney tests the torque and shear strength of a wind turbine. She's five years old. Her test consists of running.

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### Doing and Understanding

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### Real Estate Risk

There is — or, perhaps, was — a popular assumption that investing in real estate is one of the best ways to make money. Kevin Chiang, associate professor of business administration, has data that challenges that notion.

November 28, 2007

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### THE WEEK IN VIEW

Nov. 30, 7:30 p.m. Concert: The Rose Ensemble, Slavic Wonders: Feasts and Saints in Early Moscow, Krakow and Prague. Pre-concert talk with artists at 6:30 p.m. UVM Recital Hall. Information: [Lane Series](#) or 656-4455.

Dec. 1-2, 10 a.m., 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. Play: UVM Theatre presents "The Toys Take Over Christmas." The holiday benefit event by Patricia Clapp celebrates its 17th season. [UVM Theatre](#) or 656-2094.

Dec. 6, 3:30 p.m. Panel Discussion: UTC hosts a discussion on critical transportation issues with Neale Lunderville, VTrans Secretary; Cindy Burbank of the Federal Highway Administration; and Tom Adler, president of the Resource Systems Group. Chittenden Room, Davis Center. Information: [University Transportation Center](#).

Dec. 11, 8:30 a.m. Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicle Conference featuring Nancy Gioia, director of sustainable mobility technologies and hybrid vehicle programs for Ford Motor Company. Davis Center. Information: [University Transportation Center](#).



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## ECHO Engineering

***Students create educational exhibits for the science center, then subject them to the ultimate test: little kids***

By Joshua Brown

Article published November 28, 2007

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First-year student Hannah Wingate demonstrates a stormwater-themed board game on Nov. 15 at the ECHO science center in Burlington. (Photo: Joshua Brown)

consists of running.

She holds up a strangely elegant device made from three blades of stiff foam-board attached to a piece of coat hanger mounted on a length of PVC pipe. Then she dashes back and forth while her grandmother and several other visitors watch.

"When you run, it spins around," she says a few moments later, "it shows you how strong the wind is."

Exactly. Erin Krug, William Lalande, Laura Galiher, Mike Venman and Max Scholl have succeeded.

They're first-year UVM students in "Introduction to Civil and Environmental Engineering" and they built these pinwheel-like turbines as a class project. They could also be onto something useful for the science center.

"We've been working with ECHO to develop ideas for new exhibits," explains Nancy Hayden, associate professor of engineering, and one of the instructors in the course. She brought the students here in October to see the science center. Then, working in small teams, Hayden gave them five weeks to develop a prototype exhibit that would be fun and educational for the public.

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“We asked them to think like a guest as they come through a museum,” says Tracy Truzansky, ECHO’s education manager, “to stimulate interest in both engineering and environmental issues — to help guests see direct application of engineering to their real world.”

Now the students are facing the very real test of an afternoon’s worth of small children playing with their products.

“Only one set of blades broke,” says Krug.

“Kids like this,” says Scholl, “it’s really interactive. They put the parts together and get to say, ‘I made this!’” And exposure to the wind-capturing form of a turbine, he thinks, is a great first step toward the larger issues of renewable energy that underlie this exhibit.

“I know a lot about wind turbines,” says Venman, “so the design wasn’t too hard. The big problem was how to do something on a small scale for cheap.”

### **Creating connections**

Welcome to engineering. Or, in other words, “our job is to solve problems, not only to understand them,” says Dom Grasso, dean of the College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences, who stopped by to see the exhibits. “If we take a narrow myopic approach to engineering we’ll not solve whole problems,” he says.

Hayden insists that her students tackle whole problems. “In this course, and in our programs, we’re exploring the connections between engineering and the environment, and many other connections too, about policy and society. We’re considering real problems at several scales,” says Hayden.

So, at one scale these students are exploring the intersection of design, materials and cost. At another, they’re getting a sense that working with clients — and communicating effectively with various audiences — underlies any successful application of engineering design. And at another, they’re considering not just how to design something, but what designs are important.

Just up the stairs from the wind turbine, another group of first-year students have built an exhibit that demonstrates this point.

Behind a classically shaped balsawood model of a suspension bridge, matchbox cars included, neon-colored construction paper declares, “Bridge Versus Ferry.” Information panels along each side describe the benefits and downsides of the ferries that cross Lake Champlian, comparing them against a hypothetical new bridge to New York State. Clearly, if getting across the lake quickly is the goal, a bridge wins. But what about larger costs?

“Sure, we can make a shorter, easier commute,” says Hayden, “but what about suburban sprawl? We don’t want students to just make bridges, we want them to make connections. Connections: that’s what this is all about.”

And a bit of fun. Nearby, five dudes in hats and ski goggles man a snow making exhibit. And on the other side, students have constructed a huge scale that weighs personal carbon emissions. That car ride? Thirty-six pounds — versus the bus trip at six. Back on the ground floor, student Hannah Wingate demonstrates a board game that seems like the marriage of Chutes and Ladders and a stormwater management manual.

But despite the slightly bubbly atmosphere, talking with Hayden, Grasso and other faculty on hand reveals an urgent undercurrent. “We’re serious about systems,” says Hayden, since a quickly warming climate system is not the only seemingly intractable problem that may require a new era of enlightened engineers.

As for five-year-old Kate McKegney, what does she know of such matters? Speaking more wisely than she realizes, she reflects on what a wind turbine might be good for. “I could use it for a hot day,” she says.



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## Doing and Understanding

### *Engineering professor's classes meld technical material with service*

By Elizabeth Wilkins

Article published November 26, 2007



Mandar Dewoolkar, assistant professor of engineering, is a winner of the Kroepsch–Maurice Teaching Award. (Photo: Sally McCay)

Mandar Dewoolkar's teaching is not dramatic — drama is hard to come by when elucidating the complex engineering analysis of earth materials — it's just effective. "It is hard to motivate students while teaching difficult material. It is hard to be creative," he says.

So while the assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering and winner of a 2007 Kroepsch–Maurice Award for Teaching Excellence's classroom style is short on gimmicks, it is rich in the kind of attentiveness and responsiveness that inspires students to respond to him in kind.

During a recent session of his undergraduate "Geotechnical Design" course, Dewoolkar glides smoothly from podium to projection screen to student desk. He elicits classroom discussion with gentle persistence and subtle humor, drawing out and then deftly handling questions, comments and "ingenious ideas" from even the most reluctant students. The subject at hand is a technical discussion of a method of limiting equilibrium of slope stability, hardly cocktail party fodder, but the give and take is lively.

When things get a little *too* lively and chatter breaks out among the students, Dewoolkar pauses and calmly says, "O.K., now everyone is talking at once. It must be time for a break."

"We're having a discussion to exercise our young minds," one student responds.

Another student asks, "Can we talk about our feelings now?"

Dewoolkar doesn't miss a beat: "You can talk about what you did for Halloween, tell a joke, or talk about your feelings," he says. The respite is short but effective; Dewoolkar soon returns to work.

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Later, when students joke again about sharing their feelings, Dewoolkar segues into a discussion of their service-learning projects by saying that “critical reflection” is an important part of learning.

### **Engineering answers**

Reflection and service are also crucial parts of Dewoolkar's teaching. He values rigor and theory, but he also wants his students — even undergraduates — to apply their knowledge to practical problems. He sees doing as a path to knowing. Or, as a Chinese proverb Dewoolkar quotes in a recent paper puts it, “I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.”

His philosophy fits nicely with new priorities within his school. The civil and environmental engineering program received a grant from the National Science Foundation to support curricular changes that prepare students to adopt systems approaches to define and solve complex engineering problems. Service-learning is at the core of this effort.

Dewoolkar's geotechnical design students work on semester-long service-learning projects in groups of four or five students, using historic structures in Vermont to analyze various engineering problems. They collaborate with community partners from site visits to final presentations, which range beyond engineering to take in historic preservation, societal needs and economic factors.

Students have worked on structures with issues related to foundations, retaining structures and slope stability. This year, one group tackled the deteriorating walls at the formal gardens at Shelburne Farms. They found that the walls have suffered due to great lateral earth pressure and almost a century of weather, buckling and breaking apart by turns. As part of the analysis, students collected soil samples using hand augers and analyzed them in the laboratory. The group is now preparing a detailed report for Shelburne Farms that will include design recommendations to solve the problem along with cost estimates.

This semester's other project sites are the Old Dairy Barn at Shelburne Farms; Addison Town Hall; and the monitor barn in Richmond.

### **Engaging outcomes**

Students appear to enjoy the work. Dewoolkar said that last year many students volunteered during formal course evaluations that they liked the service-learning aspects of the course best. Dewoolkar adds that undergraduates often find that these hands-on projects introduce them to the complex nature of engineering problems. The results of their efforts don't languish, either. Community partners have adopted some of the low-cost recommendations made by the students. They also use the reports as a basis for planning.

“Last year students worked on the Grand Isle Lake House. I believe that report is being used towards planning purposes by the Preservation Trust of Vermont,” Dewoolkar says. “Also, a student

group came up with a surface drainage plan to improve deteriorating retaining walls in the farmhouse at Shelburne Farms. They implemented the student recommendations last year.”

Dewoolkar ends this session of his class by asking the students about their service-learning projects. The students, swamped by work on their upcoming presentations, seem a bit apprehensive. Then their professor jumps in with a tried-and-true tool for student motivation: “I will bring some food.”

One student says, “Great, a party!”

Another says, “This is sounding better all the time.”



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## Real Estate Risk

By Jon Reidel

Article published November 27, 2007

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UVM HOMEPAGE



Kevin Chiang, associate professor of business administration, is an expert in portfolio theory, alternative assets and real estate. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

There is — or, perhaps, was — a popular assumption that investing in real estate is one of the best ways to make money.

And indeed, property has often proven lucrative for professionals and homeowners alike. But there are downsides: Real estate can be hard to

sell, especially in bad times; roofs, boilers and tenants act up; and the returns over time aren't quite as golden compared to other investments as your local mortgage broker might say.

An analysis by Kevin Chiang, an associate professor of business administration who specializes in finance and real estate, shows that despite housing booms creating the perception that real estate has been tops over the past quarter century, real estate returns, in and of themselves, are no better than most other investment classes.

But buying real estate, especially a home, is still enormously appealing for most people. So Chiang, whose finance work often analyzes how different blends of different assets affect the performance and risk of investment portfolios, started looking at some important questions: How can prospective homeowners protect their purchasing power as they slowly save for a down payment? How might an investor capture the returns of real estate without actually having to own properties?

Chiang's answer in a word (no, not plastics) is REIT.

The acronym stands for real estate investment trust. Congress created special tax advantages and rules to allow investors to invest in real estate in a mutual-fund-like fashion. REITs, though popular, are considered "alternative assets," and Chiang is interested in their management, comparative returns over time and potential for managing risk.

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**Portfolio power**

In his working paper "Chasing Housing Prices," written with Allen Atkins and Ming-Long Lee, Chiang wanted to see which asset classes (various types of stocks, bonds, REITS and short-term instruments like T-bills) were the best vehicles for saving for a future real estate purchase. A good investment would match real estate's gains and be unlikely to lose ground relative to property. The group generated huge numbers of simulated results based on historical returns (from 1972-2005) and applied other statistical tests to draw their conclusions.

The answer was surprising: small-value stocks worked best, especially if held for eight or more years. Large caps and REITS were also likely to be effective hedges. T-bills were the least effective investment vehicle for hedging against price increases in housing and commercial property.

The paper offers insight into an interesting practical problem and also offers an accessible introduction to one aspect of Chiang's approach to finance. He says his academic writing often strives to look at REITs and other alternative securities like emerging market bonds from a "portfolio's perspective."

"That is," he says, "when an average investor holds a large number of stocks, bonds (usually via mutual funds), and probably a house, how these alternative securities add value to this average portfolio? Do they reduce the portfolio's overall risk? In addition, relative to this average portfolio, how should we price these alternative securities?"

Although nationwide declines in property values probably mean that REITs will receive less popular attention in the near future, Chiang is glad for his ongoing academic interest.

"The research was still new when I became interested in it and I felt like a lot of questions had not yet been addressed," he says. "This area of investing is still new, but close to a revolution."

**Back on the block**

Although the topic doesn't directly engage his research, *the view* couldn't help asking Chiang about the accelerating *declines* in home prices nationwide and how individuals might try to manage the risks of a jumpy real estate market.

Chiang doesn't offer financial advice, of course, but he notes that pessimistic and aggressive owners of valuable properties could possibly short-sell REITs or futures and call options of housing indexes to try to hedge against future real estate declines. People who don't own homes might continue renting and wait.

But the wait might last a while. Chiang's reading and writing leads him to believe that the current declines will be slow to turn around. "The cycle for RE is usually quite long; about 10 years," he says.

When asked about the causes for the downswing, Chiang doesn't discuss overbuilding, careless lenders and speculative consumers.

Instead, he focuses on the result of these and other factors: "Compared with an average investor's real income, the price was too high," he says. "In addition, rent is relatively attractive."

Because rent increases never matched the rise in home values, renters can save thousands, even tens of thousands, annually over purchasing, even when tax advantages are factored in. (This assumes home prices are stagnant or declining.) Chiang says the picture will change when the disparity between rent and prices decreases, when investors start to anticipate renewed price appreciation or both.

It's therefore sobering, but no surprise, that the expert in real estate finance is currently renting.



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## Harry Belafonte to speak at Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration

By University Communications

*Article published November 28, 2007*

Harry Belafonte, internationally acclaimed artist and humanitarian, will speak on the subjects of social justice and equity at the university's Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration on Jan. 22 at 4 p.m. in Ira Allen Chapel.

Belafonte, who has dedicated much of his life to supporting the worldwide human rights struggle, has also excelled in every area of the entertainment world as a recording artist, concert performer, movie star, Broadway actor, and television star and producer. The awards he has received are reflective of these passions and include the Albert Einstein Award; UNICEF's Danny Kaye Award; the Martin Luther King Peace Prize; and the Kennedy Center Honors for excellence in the performing arts.

Belafonte, who was the first recipient of the Nelson Mandela Courage Award, has been honored by the American Jewish Congress; the NAACP; The Urban League; the National Conference of Black Mayors; the Anti-Defamation League of B'Nai B'rith; the ACLU; and the U.S. State Department and the Peace Corps. Belafonte has said that his work for human rights and his artistic pursuits have provided him with the basis for a productive and balanced life.

Tickets to this year's event, which focuses on the themes of social justice and equity, are free and distributed on a first come first serve basis at the Hoffman Information Desk on the first floor of the Dudley H. Davis Student Center from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Faculty, staff and students can pick up tickets Jan. 14-17 (one ticket per UVM ID). Tickets will be available to the general public Jan. 18-22.

Information: Leslie Logan, 656-1266 or [Leslie.Logan@uvm.edu](mailto:Leslie.Logan@uvm.edu).

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## Med Students Focus on Health Care for LGBTQ Youth

By Jennifer Nachbur

Article published November 28, 2007

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) individuals are less likely to get health care and have an increased risk for certain cancers, poor nutrition and mental health issues. Among LGBTQ adolescents, there is a reported six times greater rate of suicide than the overall teen rate. In fact, statistics from the 2005 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey show an increase in risky behaviors for LGBTQ youth, despite the fact that there was a decline in these behaviors in adolescents overall.

Taking better care of this often ignored at-risk population is at the root of a 2007 Albert Schweitzer Fellowship project led by second-year medical students David Longstroth and Greta Spottswood. Spottswood and Longstroth were two of seven UVM medical students chosen as 2007-08 Schweitzer Fellows to work with a community agency on a health-related community service project of at least 200 hours.

"The LGBTQ community is an underserved population that tends to avoid routine healthcare," said Spottswood. "When they do access care, studies show they are less satisfied with the care received than other patients."

Some barriers to care include standard screening questions and intake forms, which prevent medical care providers from accurately capturing critical information from this population. Spottswood and Longstroth are working to develop new guidelines on LGBTQ patient care for training healthcare providers and medical students in an effort to remove as many obstacles as possible through their research and collaboration with area agencies such as RU12?, Outright Vermont and University Pediatrics at Fletcher Allen Health Care.

As part of their Schweitzer Fellowship, Spottswood and Longstroth will host a colloquium for medical students, advisors, faculty and administrators on Nov. 29 to address the health care needs of LGBTQ patients. Panelists will include Kara DeLeonardis, executive director of R.U.1.2.?.; Dr. Michael Upton, UVM clinical associate professor of psychiatry; Dr. Kym Boyman, UVM clinical instructor of obstetrics and gynecology; Dr. Jon Porter, medical director, UVM Center for Health and Wellbeing; and Dr. Ruth Uphold, UVM professor of surgery emerita and Fletcher Allen emergency medicine specialist. Based on discussion at the colloquium, Spottswood and Longstroth hope to build upon elements already in

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place in the College of Medicine's Vermont Integrated Curriculum to enhance patient-centered care for LGBTQ patients of all ages.

One of only seven such programs in the U.S., the NH/VT Schweitzer Fellows Program annually selects a group of health-science and legal students to carry out health-related service projects that address the needs of underserved members of their communities.

Information: [NH/VT Schweitzer Fellows Program](#).



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## Transportation Sessions Will Cover Critical Issues, Plug-In Hybrids

By The View Staff

Article published November 27, 2007

The University Transportation Center is holding two events in December.

On Thursday, Dec. 6 at 3:30 p.m. in the Chittenden Room, Davis Center, the UTC is sponsoring a panel discussion on critical transportation issues.

The panelists are VTrans Secretary Neale Lunderville; Cindy Burbank of the Federal Highway Administration; and Tom Adler, president of the Resource Systems Group. UTC Director Lisa Aultman-Hall will moderate the discussion. The forum is sponsored by the UTC through a graduate student class.

On Tuesday, Dec. 11, the center is sponsoring a Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicle Conference featuring Nancy Gioia, director of sustainable mobility technologies and hybrid vehicle programs for Ford Motor Company. Registration begins at 8:30 for the half-day event at the Davis Center.

The conference will also include presentation of a Vermont-focused analysis of plug-in hybrids and a roundtable discussion featuring Richard Watts, a UTC researcher; Steven Letendre, associate professor at Green Mountain College; and Bruce Bentley of the Central Vermont Public Service corporation.

Information: [University Transportation Center](#).

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FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

## Pie the Provost

By The View Staff

Article published November 27, 2007

A fundraiser for the Alternative Winter Break program, which organizes service trips for students, will offer an unusual opportunity: A chance to hurl a pie at the provost, a UVM police officer, at least one professor, and other campus luminaries.

The event is Friday, Nov. 30 at noon outside the Dudley H. Davis Center. A pie attempt is \$1; a save is \$2.

The intrepid volunteers include Professor Larry Forcier; Sue Roberts, a UVM police officer; Provost John Hughes; Pat Brown, director of student life; John Abbott, director of outdoor programs; and Tom Oliver of Sodexo. Some bonus faculty and staff will likely line up for pummeling-by-pastry.

November 28, 2007

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## Holiday Bazaar Will Showcase Wares From UVM Staff

By The View Staff  
*Article published November 28, 2007*

Staff Council is celebrating the beginning of the holiday season with a festive sale of wares from 30 UVM crafters, artists and bakers. The annual holiday bazaar will take place Thursday, Dec. 6 from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. in the Fireplace Lounge and Livak Rooms (4th floor), Dudley H. Davis Center.

The event provides funding for the council's recreation committee to subsidize events and trips for staff and retired staff. Donations of baked goods or crafts are welcome; nonperishable items may be dropped off at the council office in 305 Waterman on Dec. 5. Fresh food may be brought directly to the Davis Center on Dec. 6.

Information: 656-4493.

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#### [ECHO Engineering](#)

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## Fundraiser Supports African AIDS Patients

By The View Staff

*Article published November 28, 2007*

An African dinner and dance party on Friday, Nov. 30 at 6 p.m. in the Hoehl Gallery, Health Sciences Research Facility will raise funds for New Seed International Ghana, a nonprofit organization that provides care and advocacy for people with HIV.

The fundraiser, sponsored in part by the College of Medicine Global Health Student Interest Group, includes dinner, an African market, live drumming and a DJ set of African music.

New Seed International Ghana was founded in 1996 by Livinus Acquah-Jackson, a Ghanaian whose original intention was to build a community center for youth. Once Acquah-Jackson realized the devastation of AIDS in his community, his passion quickly changed to caring for those infected with the deadly virus.

Advance tickets are \$20 for nonstudents and \$10 for students. Door tickets are \$25 for nonstudents and \$15 for students. Children 12 and under are free.

Information: 578-1849 or [agallant@uvm.edu](mailto:agallant@uvm.edu).

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**Awards and Honors**

Department of Social work faculty members **Martha Dewees**, emerita associate professor, and **Fiona Patterson**, associate professor, and staff member **Lisa Lax** were recognized at the annual meeting of the National Association of Social Workers (Vermont chapter) with exemplary service awards for their work on behalf of the chapter.

Nov. 14, 2007

**Publications and Presentations**

A study co-authored by **Kathleen Trybus** and **Susan Lowey**, professors of molecular physiology and biophysics, titled "The R403Q Myosin Mutation Implicated in Familial Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Causes Disorder at the Actomyosin Interface" appeared in the Nov. 12 issue of *PLoS ONE*, an international, peer-reviewed, open-access, online publication published by the Public Library of Science (PLoS), a nonprofit organization.

**Garrison Nelson**, professor of political science, gave a lecture on "Presidential Selection and the New Hampshire Primary" at the University of New Hampshire on Oct. 31. An op-ed article written by Nelson titled "Border Wars in Fight for the Presidency" appeared in the *Boston Globe* on Nov. 3. Nelson also gave two presentations at the Northeastern Political Science Association Annual Meeting in Philadelphia on Nov. 17, including a roundtable discussion on "The Presidential Selection System: Is It Broken?" and a professional paper titled "Middlemen No More: Emergent Patterns in Congressional Leadership Selection." A shorter version will be published in 2008 in *P.S.: Political Science and Politics*, a journal of the American Political Science Association.

**Dennis Clougherty**, professor of physics, gave an invited lecture at Harvard University's Institute for Theoretical Atomic, Molecular and Optical Physics. The lecture, "Fluctuation-induced Quantum Reflection," was part of an international workshop on the phenomenon of quantum reflection. Quantum reflection is a classically counterintuitive phenomenon whereby the motion of particles is reverted "against the force" acting on them. This effect is manifested in the wave nature of particles and influences collisions of ultra-cold atoms with solid surfaces, a topic of increasing importance in the emerging field of quantum information processing.

**David Kerr**, associate professor in the Department of Animal

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