THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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UBC REPORTS

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Blind to Beauty: *Researchers look at a rare condition to find out how and where we process attractiveness*

BY HILARY THOMSON

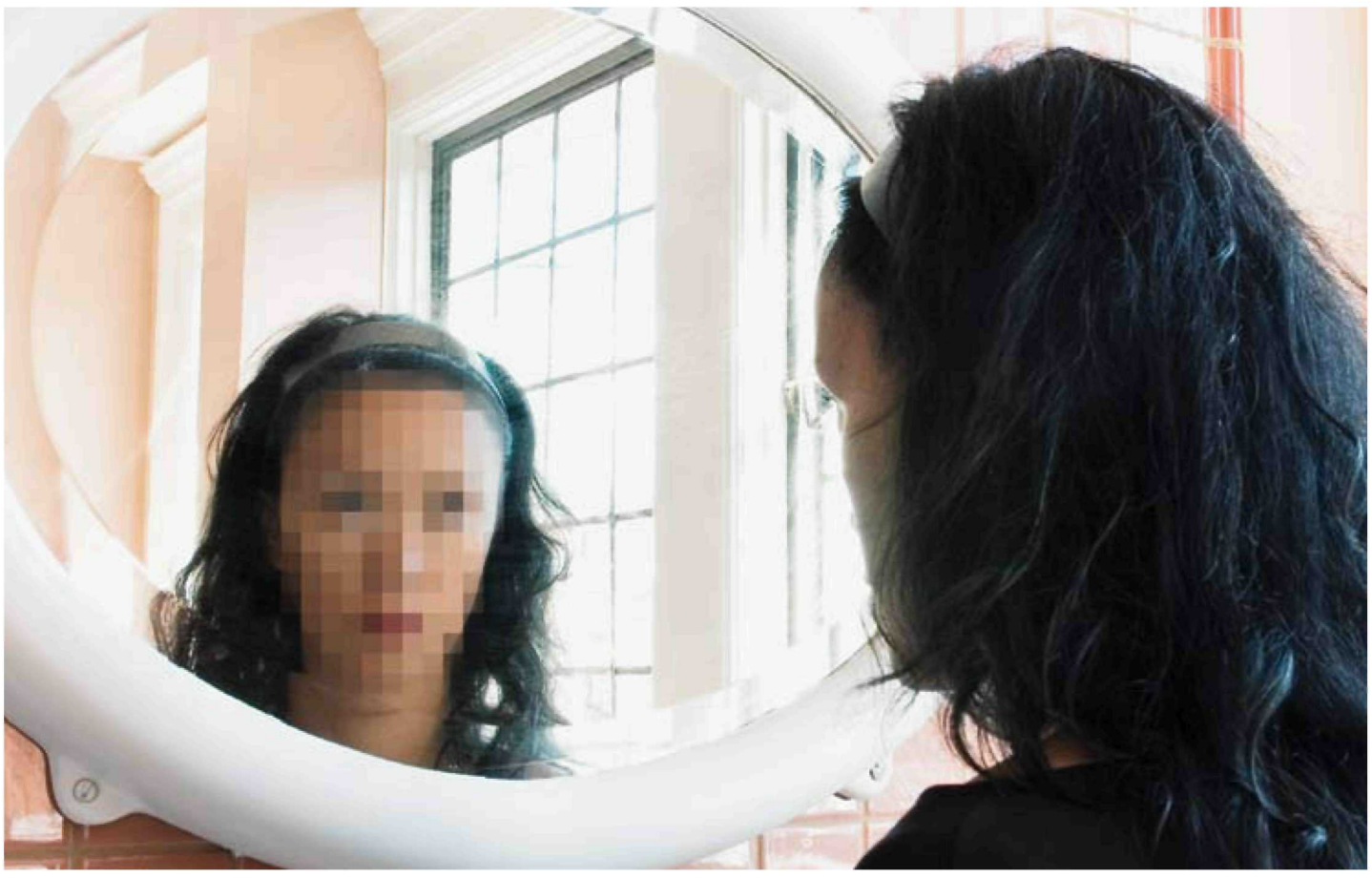

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

UBC researchers are studying brain damage that causes "face blindness" which in severe cases means individuals can't recognize their own reflection.

Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, but according to research conducted by a UBC medical student, eye candy fails to find a sweet tooth in patients with a rare disorder.

Chris Waite, a third-year med student, has studied how patients with prosopagnosia – the inability to recognize familiar faces, even family members, because of brain injury – perceive facial attractiveness. The findings may provide another assessment tool to help clinicians localize areas of brain damage.

"We don't know a tenth of what goes on the brain," says the 26-year-old. "Face perception is a highly complex visual skill. Exploring how the brain processes judgments about facial beauty help us identify the role of various regions of the brain."

Waite worked with UBC prof Jason Barton, Canada Research Chair in the Neuropsychology of Vision and Eye Movements, and investigators from Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The study was the first of its kind and earned Waite the American Academy of Neurology Award for best medical student essay.

The research team studied eight individuals with prosopagnosia, an impairment also known as of face-blindness. They wanted to know where the brain processes visual information that adds up to a judgment about facial attractiveness.

Individuals with prosopagnosia have trouble extracting and integrating information they see in a face and rely on other characteristics, such as hair, body shape and gait to recognize people. The condition can result from trauma to the head, illness such as encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain, stroke, coma or insufficient oxygen supply at birth. In 2006, a web survey of 1,600 people conducted jointly by a team from Harvard and University College London suggested that up to two per cent of people have some degree of face-blindness.

The damaged area of the brain for those with face-blindness is usually found in the medial side of the occipital (low back of the brain, near the spinal cord) and temporal, or side lobes. The region is called the fusiform face area. Because attractiveness depends on non-changing elements of facial structure – which in Western society include a strong jaw, big eyes and a straight nose – it was thought that attractiveness might be processed in this area.

However, because attractiveness is a social signal that helps us judge personality or mating potential, scientists believed it might be processed in a region of the brain that "reads" changing facial properties, an area called the superior temporal sulcus that is located at the tops of the temporal lobes. Although prosopagnosia patients cannot identify faces, they can judge subtle facial clues, such as a raised eyebrow or pursed lips that express emotion and convey social cues.

The investigators' wanted to determine

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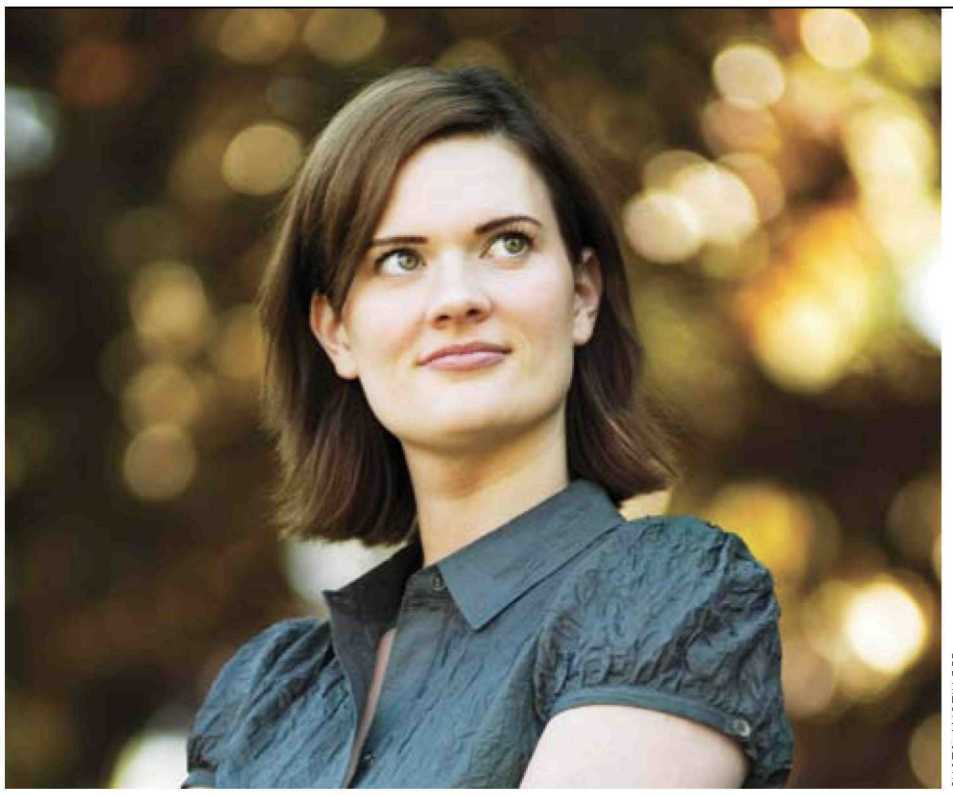

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Catherine Corrigall-Brown has returned home to teach undergraduate students, and continue her research, into social movements and activism.

Arts Initiative Targets Undergrad Teaching:

Attracts 14 highly regarded post-docs

BY JULIE-ANN BACKHOUSE

This year, UBC arts students have a chance to learn from young intellectuals and gain exposure to leading interdisciplinary research with the appointment of 14 new post-doctoral teaching fellows in the arts faculty.

The initiative, the first of its kind in Canada, has brought together 14 young, highly regarded post-doctoral fellows fresh from studies across the world in places like Barcelona, Chicago, Connecticut, Manchester, London and Sydney.

Catherine Corrigall-Brown is one of them and has returned home to Canada with a PhD from the University of California, Irving. Her research and work on social movements and activism won an outstanding teaching award in the US.

"How can individuals change the world?" asks Corrigall-Brown as she outlines her recent research. "What role do social movements play and why do people stay active in them over time?" All inspiring questions that relate to undergraduate experience and connect to the west coast as the home of peaceful protests and the birthplace of Greenpeace.

Of the inaugural 14 new appointments, Corrigall-Brown is one of nine teaching first-year classes, addressing an area of high enrolment. She is teaching in collaboration with Prof. Neil Guppy, head of the Department of Sociology.

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IN THE NEWS

Highlights of UBC Media Coverage in September 2007. COMPILED BY BASIL WAUGH

God Thoughts Influence Your Generosity: UBC Study

A UBC study has found that thoughts related to God produce cooperative behavior and generosity in people – even if they aren't religious.

In research published in the journal ***Psychological Science***, Prof. **Ara Norenzayan** and PhD graduate **Azim Shariff** from UBC's Dept. of Psychology found that playing word games with religious words increased altruism.

"It's like a supernatural policing agent," said Shariff. "The reminder that there is an idea of a God enforces this idea of moral behavior."

United Press International, ***Reuters***, ***CanWest News***, ***CTV*** and the ***Vancouver Sun*** reported on Norenzayan's and Shariff's findings.

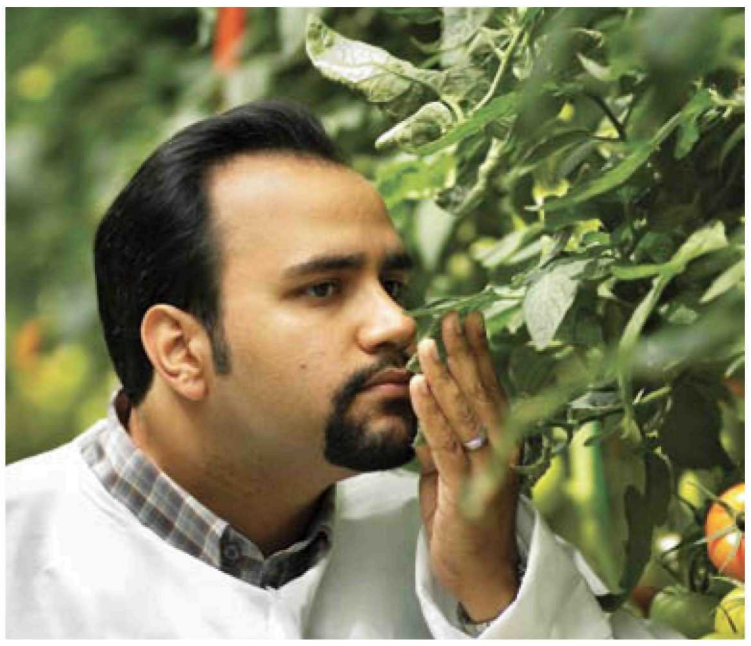

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

UBC's Saber Miresmailli has conceived a device that could read chemical S.O.S. signals from plants.

UBC to Use Text Messages to Issue Emergency Alerts

This September, UBC students were asked to volunteer their cell phone numbers to help authorities set up an emergency text-message warning system.

David Rankin, UBC Assoc. Vice President of Business Operations, said security officials have been studying ways to instruct students on how to leave campus since the Virginia Tech killings earlier this year.

The emergency system is expected to be operational by the end of the year, reported the ***Canadian Press***, ***CanWest News***, ***National Post***, ***Maclean's*** and ***CTV***.

Plant Sensor Could Tell When Your Tomatoes are Singing the Blues

Land and Food Systems PhD student **Saber Miresmailli** has discovered a new way to fight pests in vegetable crops, reported the ***National Post*** and the ***Vancouver Sun***.

As first described in ***UBC Reports***, Miresmailli is building a database of the types of chemicals that tomato, cucumber and pepper plants release when they are in distress.

Once the database is complete, he plans to build a device that can sniff out a plant's chemical warning signals using the same basic technology as airport bomb-sniffing machines. R

Space Weapons and Junk Threaten Life on Earth

Human security and technologies are more at risk than ever from anti-satellite weapons and space junk, according to the fourth annual report on space security.

Released by UBC's Simons Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Research, the report will be presented to the United Nations First Committee on international security on Oct. 22.

International news media including ***Agence France Presse***, ***Taipei Times*** and the ***Melbourne Herald Sun*** covered the report, entitled Space Security 200

KUDOS

QUARTER CENTURY CLUB GETS 31 NEW MEMBERS

A total of 31 UBC faculty members were recognized at this year's Quarter Century Club annual dinner, held Oct. 2.

Established in 1996 by then President David Strangway, the Quarter Century Club recognizes full-time faculty members and librarians with 25 years of service.

In addition to the Quarter Century Club inductees, this year's dinner also recognized 10 faculty members and librarians who have worked at UBC for 35 years. In 2003, the club began recognizing these active members, known collectively as Tempus Fugit, or "time flies," who reached the additional milestone.

For information on this year's inductees, please visit: *www.ceremonies.ubc.ca/qcc*

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Scavenger Champion:

Curious George showcases UBC advances in robotic vision

BY LORRAINE CHAN

Jim Little looks forward to the day when robots can make more decisions on their own.

Little specializes in the integration of robotics and vision systems. As the Director of UBC's Laboratory of Computational Intelligence (LCI), Little seeks to penetrate the mysteries of machine vision, comprehension and action.

"Seeing and perception seem so effortless for humans, but it involves many computational steps and problems," says Prof. Little, who teaches in the Dept. of Computer Science.

"We're attacking the whole problem of how robots move around, how they identify objects and how they decide which visual information is important."

Showing prowess in all these areas is Curious George, LCI's robot which walked away – or in this case rolled away – with first prize at an international competition this July.

The "Semantic Robot Vision Challenge" tested the mettle of each robot through a three-hour scavenger hunt. The competition was held in Vancouver at the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence conference and was sponsored by the U.S. National Foundation for Science.

UBC competed against the University of Maryland and Kansas State University. Each team received a USB memory stick containing a text file of 15 objects their robot would need to locate within a hotel room. Items included a bell pepper, a bottle of Pepsi and a DVD of *Gladiator*. While Curious George tracked down seven of the scavenger hunt items, the other two robots couldn't locate more than three.

LCI's team designed and built Curious George in just three months. Working on this project were Per-Erik Forssen, David Meger, Scott Helmer, Sancho McCann, Tristram Southey, Matthew Baumann, Kevin Lai, Bruce Dow, and Profs. Little and David Lowe. They named their intrepid robot not after the storybook monkey, but for the naval explorer George Vancouver.

Little says UBC's past advances in robotic vision helped Curious George ace this challenge. During the early 1990s, Little invented stereo-vision mapping to enhance computer vision. He discovered that robots equipped with two cameras can see with greater depth perspective and can gather more data when mapping surroundings and identifying landmarks. As well, Prof. Lowe developed an algorithm called SIFT (Scale-Invariant Feature Transform) which allows software to detect images and verify certain visual similarities when locating objects.

The LCI team wrote software for Curious George to Google the Internet, generating hundreds of relevant images for each scavenger hunt item. Using this database of images, the robot was then well poised to locate the three-dimensional object as it scooted around the room.

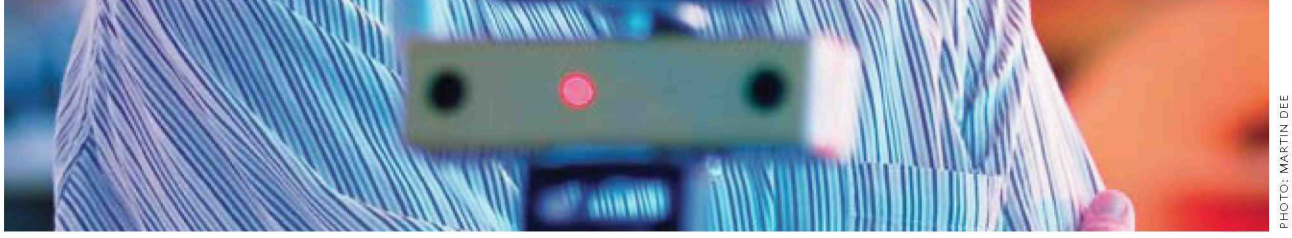

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Jim Little is collaborating with the University of Toronto to design a wheelchair that can migrate and remember appointments.

Little says he hopes to apply LCI advances to creating assistive technologies. Such devices would include wheelchairs that can navigate obstacles, or a smart house that reminds you to turn off the stove.

"These robot-human interactions will enable older people to stay in their homes and live independently as long as possible."

Little was convinced of this while observing the hardship his mother faced during the last years of her life. At 89 she broke her hip and was then confined to a wheelchair.

"She hated being dependent," says Little. "But with a robot, she would have been able to simply say, 'Help me stand up,' or 'Get me some Kleenex.'"

Little and LCI colleagues are working hard to make these scenarios a reality. They have partnered with Alex Mihailidis at the University of Toronto to design a wheelchair equipped with artificial intelligence. Asst. Prof. Mihailidis is based at the U of T's Intelligent Assistive Technology and Systems Lab in the Dept. of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy.

"In the long run, we want a wheelchair to know the daily business of the person using it, whether that's remembering an important appointment or mapping a route," says Little.

While Curious George tracked down seven of the scavenger hunt items, the other two robots couldn't locate more than three.

He adds that UBC and U of T hope to produce a working prototype within three years.

To accelerate Canada's advances in these types of projects, Little says researchers have established a national network called ICAST (Intelligent Computational Assistive Technologies). Members include UBC, the University of Toronto, York University and Sherbrooke University. Compared to many other institutions, says Little, UBC enjoys an edge because of the strong collaboration between people working on robotics and vision.

"Students come here because they'll be exposed to all of these complementary areas of reasoning, decision making, sensing and action."

For more details about Curious George, visit: *http://www.cs.ubc.ca/labs/lci/curious_george* R

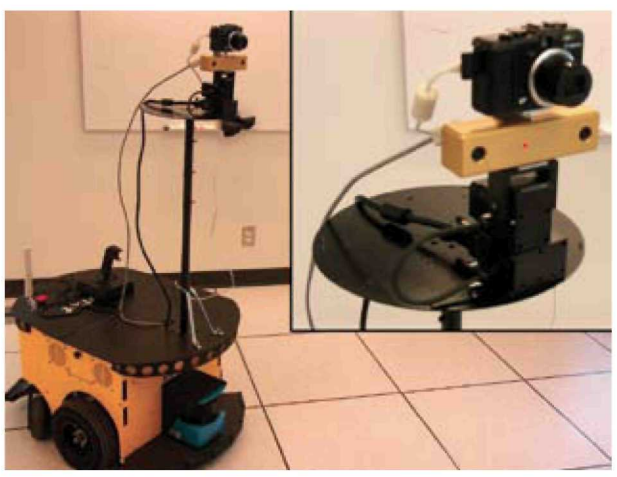

PHOTO: courtesy JIM LITTLE / PER-ERIK FORSSEN

Curious George

BLIND TO BEAUTY *continued from page 1*

if recognizing facial beauty took place in the region that supports identification (fusiform face) or the one supporting social signals (superior temporal sulcus).

The research subjects, heterosexual men and women prosopagnosics ranging in age from 20s to 60s, were shown 80 anonymous male and female faces, both average and attractive, and asked to rate their attractiveness. A second test involved viewing a series of similar images while researchers timed how long participants looked at each image. A control group of 19 provided comparison data. Prosopagnosics also looked at famous beautiful faces to further test the relationship between ability to identify familiar faces and ability to judge beauty.

Both tasks showed that the same damage that prevented them from identifying faces impaired prosopagnosics in processing facial attractiveness. They rated the attractiveness of beautiful faces only slightly higher than average faces. Also, they were much more willing than the control group to continue looking at images of average faces.

The researchers concluded that processing facial attractiveness must use the same neural pathways – those found in the fusiform region of the brain – used to process identity.

"While the beauty of a face might seem a more fitting topic for an artist, this work helps settle a debate by showing that areas that code the identity of a face also play a key role in the perception of beauty. It helps us understand the contributions of different 'modules' of the brain to human experience," says Barton, an investigator at the Brain Research Centre at UBC Hospital and a member of the Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute (VCHRI).

Although Waite feels fortunate to have conducted research with eminent neuroscientists, his heart still belongs to medicine and vision science in particular, influenced in part by his mother who is an optician.

"I think vision is the most important sense," he says. "If I could fix something to make a patient's life better, that would be a great feeling. That's what I want to do."

Once he completes his undergraduate degree in medicine, Waite is considering a residency in ophthalmology, among other options.

Funding for the study was provided by the American Academy of Neurology and the UBC Dept. of Ophthalmology Thomas Dohm Scholarship.

The Brain Research Centre at Vancouver Hospital, a partnership between VCHRI and UBC's Faculty of Medicine, has more than 200 investigators with broad, multi-disciplinary research expertise to advance knowledge of the brain and to explore new discoveries and technologies that have the potential to reduce the suffering and cost associated with disease and injuries of the brain.

VCHRI is the research body of Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. In academic partnership with UBC, the institute advances health research and innovation across B.C., Canada, and beyond. R

Bridging Communities: *Downtown Eastside residents connect with immigrants at the UBC Learning Exchange*

BY JULIE-ANN BACKHOUSE

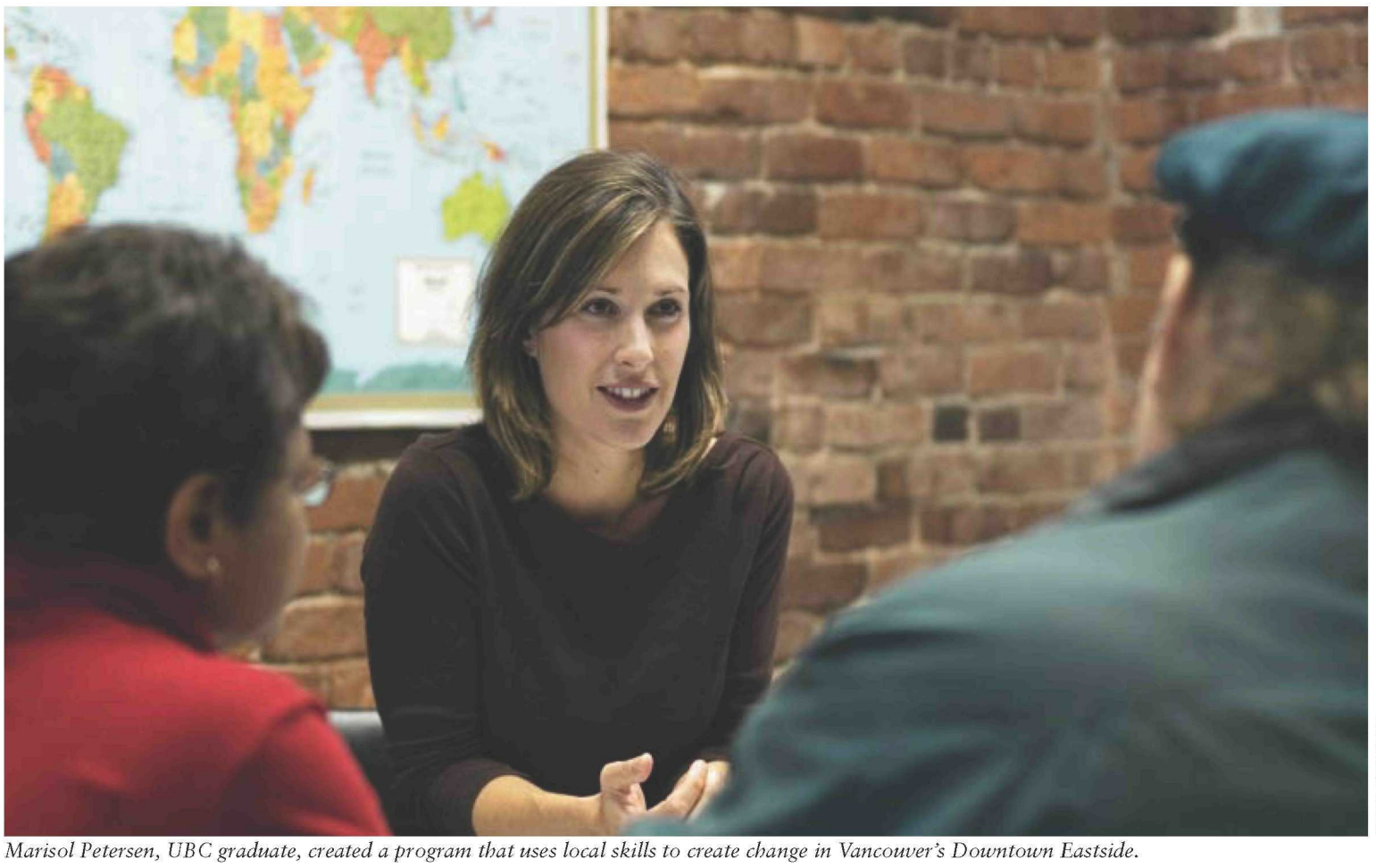

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Marisol Petersen, UBC graduate, created a program that uses local skills to create change in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

Vancouver's Downtown Eastside receives a lot of media attention as home to people who are destitute and disadvantaged. Yet, it's also a community where people share the best of what they have to give.

At the UBC Learning Exchange storefront on Main Street, residents are volunteering to help immigrants practice their conversational English skills. Called 'ESL facilitators,' these residents encourage immigrants to speak confidently and explain the use of Canadian idioms like "What's up?" and "Take it easy."

For some newcomers, these weekly conversation groups are so prized that many English-learners will travel from as far as Richmond and Surrey to attend. As Judy Chen, an immigrant from Hong Kong explains, "It helps immigrants step out from their homes, make new friends, share experiences, exchange resources, and improve English."

This ESL program has produced some strong results by tapping into this community's best resource – its people.

"There are many residents here who have a wealth of knowledge and the time and willingness to share with others," says Program Coordinator Marisol Petersen, a UBC graduate from the School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP). "Having this kind of leadership role is great for self-esteem and it builds confidence in people who, for various reasons, are marginalized."

"Having this kind of leadership role is great for self-esteem and it builds confidence in people who, for various reasons, are marginalized."

More than just providing English language skills, the program is generating mutual understanding – between immigrants and local residents alike.

"What is unique is that people are seeing each other's differences in age, class, ethnicity, and culture as learning opportunities rather than as barriers," says Petersen.

Like others in this community, Eva Eder has not had it easy in life and yet a year ago she found the courage to volunteer as an ESL facilitator. Remarkably English is not her first language, nor is it her second, third or fourth language – it's her fifth.

"I found that I have infinite patience because English is my fifth language and I understand people's confusion, especially older people," says Eder who lives around the corner from the Learning Exchange and taught herself English via crossword puzzles. "I get so much back from my students and when I'm teaching I forget my troubles."

Eder starts her classes with a song and likes to use humour to teach the nuances of English and to keep things light. She notes that people often break into song when they see her on the street but she says the biggest reward is the recognition on a person's face when they comprehend a phrase, sentence or joke.

This ESL program is so successful that no recruitment is necessary. It continues to grow, attracting people simply by word of mouth. Over the past three years 80 facilitators from the community have led some 2,000 conversation group sessions for more than 450 immigrants.

The idea to strengthen the social fabric of the Downtown Eastside by connecting local skills with local needs grew from Petersen's studies at SCARP. She was invited by the Learning Exchange to create an inventory of skills and a pilot program that could build upon those skills. The pilot was a success, HSBC Bank Canada contributed ongoing funding and the UBC English Language Institute (ELI) came on-board to deliver training.

The ELI conducts training once a week for 10 weeks for all ESL facilitators. Academic Director Andrew Scales and teacher Trish Fodor developed a specific syllabus after sitting in on the conversation classes. As Scales noted it was important to train the facilitators with practical tools, not theory, to get the immigrants speaking confidently.

Next year the Learning Exchange hopes to expand this program into East Vancouver schools where immigrant parents and guardians will have the chance to practice their English with ESL facilitators. The program will take place in schools and will include child minding services.

For more info: www.learningexchange.ubc.ca R

65 Downtown Eastside residents trained by UBC ELI

Earlier this year the UBC English Language Institute received an award for excellence for their work with the UBC Learning Exchange ESL Program from the Canadian Association for University Continuing Education, garnering praise for having a 'commendable vision to strengthen civil society.' To date the UBC ELI has trained 65 Downtown Eastside residents. The ELI opened in 1969, and welcomes thousands of international students through its doors every year.

For more info: www.eli.ubc.ca R

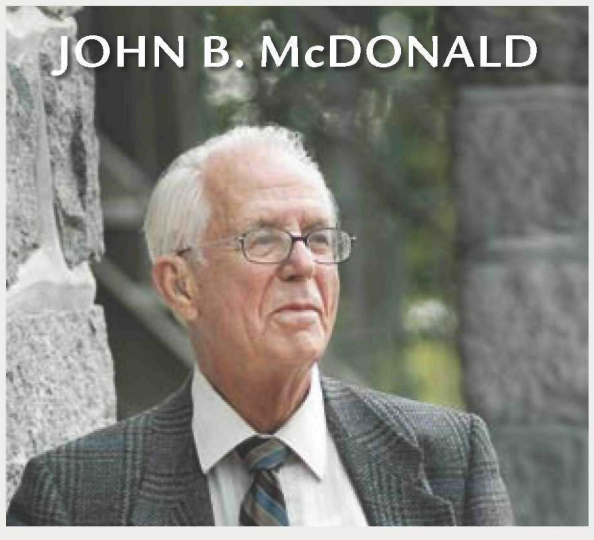

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

John B. McDonald, *UBC's fourth president, visited campus recently. During his 1962-1967 tenure, Macdonald influenced the development of UBC and higher education throughout the province with his seminal 1962 report, Higher Education in British Columbia and a Plan for the Future.*

UBC Reports asked McDonald about the impact of his report, which helped make UBC a centre for research and graduate education in B.C. and laid the foundation for the development of Simon Fraser University and the University of Victoria.

"UBC was facing a virtually impossible proposition," said McDonald, who presided over UBC as baby boomers began flooding Canadian universities. "They were going to have to meet the huge demand for post-secondary university education. They didn't have the faculty and the faculty were not available in Canada."

"What we needed to be doing was building a strong graduate school to help the country develop the academics that were going to be needed at UBC and right across the country."

"Almost as big an objective was to ensure that we opened up post-secondary education for a large number of students for whom the idea of going to university was a non-starter." R

PHOTO: courtesy UBC PHOTO ARCHIVES

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Stop the Presses! *Ordinary citizens are re-writing how news is reported in a new media culture*

By Alfred Hermida

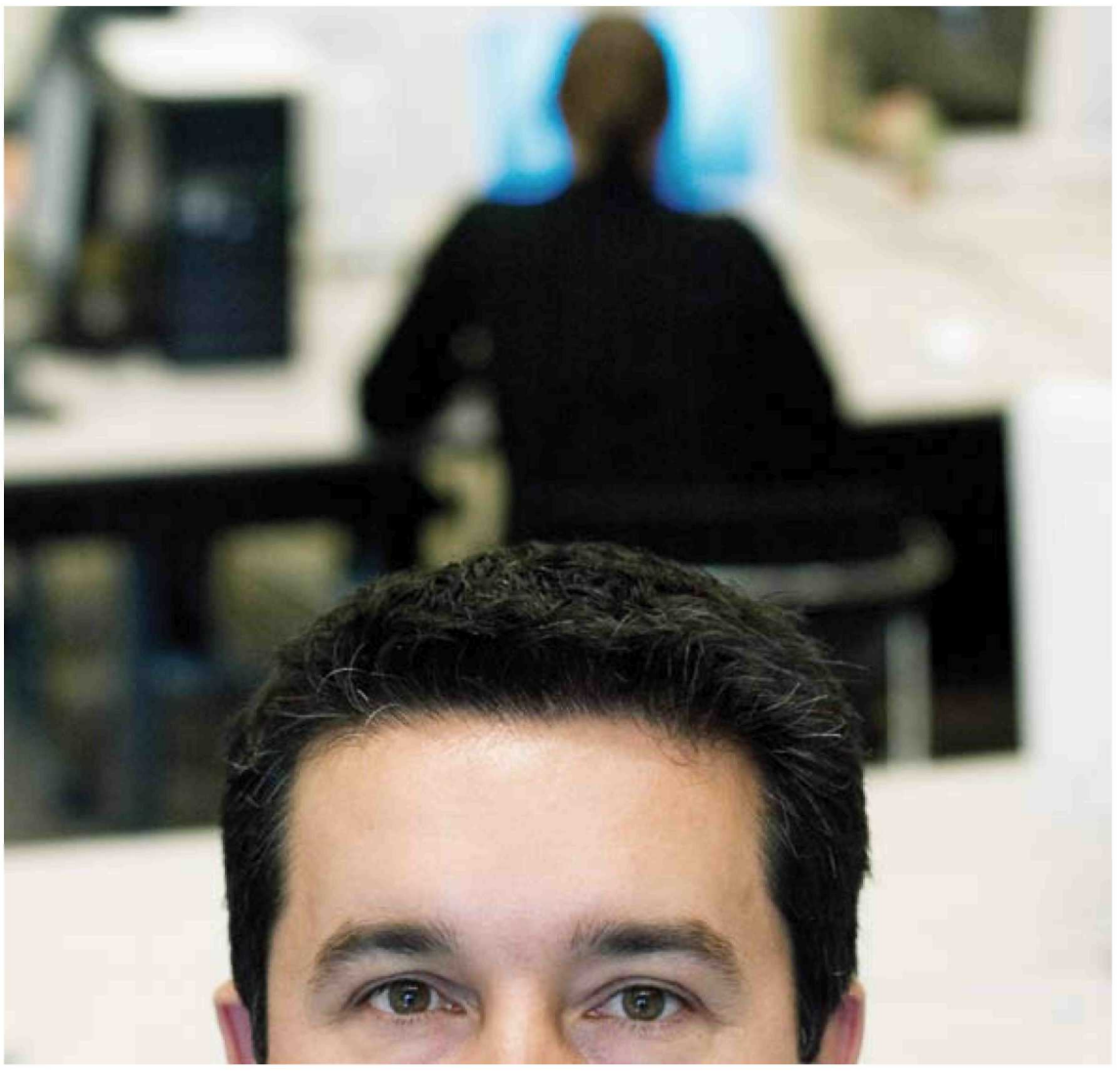

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Assist. Prof. Alfred Hermida, an expert in journalism and new media, writes that with a new media culture it is everyday citizens, rather than reporters, who are writing the first draft of history.

Those shaky, slightly blurred few seconds of video, taken by a citizen on a cell phone, capturing a news event as it happened, have become a familiar sight on the TV news. It seems that there is always someone there to record when news breaks, be it a shooting at a US university or a terror attack in Scotland.

The start of this century has seen the advent of citizen media. Technologies such as the Internet and cell phones have empowered the people formerly known as the audience to share their perspective on the world, through blogs, comments, photos and video. In this new media culture, the public is no longer a passive consumer of media, but an active producer of media.

The emergence of what is clumsily described as user-generated content challenges the traditional role of a journalist as the principal conveyor of information. It used to be said that journalists wrote the first draft of history. Now, it is often ordinary citizens who are providing this first draft. It is commonplace to find reports, images and video captured by those on the ground on major news outlets like CBC, CNN or the BBC.

But the mainstream media has only recently embraced citizen media. In the UK, it took the London bombings of July 2005 to make news outlets take note. The tragic events were captured in words, photos and video by people caught up in the event. The iconic images of that day came from the public, not from professional photographers.

The BBC alone received 22,000 e-mails and text messages on the day, as well as 300 amateur photos and several video sequences. The dramatic stills and video of the chaos inside the underground tunnels led BBC TV newscasts that evening. This was the first time such material had been considered more newsworthy than professional content. The images recorded on low-resolution cell phone cameras helped to shed light on the attacks in a way that would not have been possible before.

The July bombings were a watershed moment for citizen media and its acceptance by the mainstream media in Britain. The BBC News website had in fact been soliciting comments from its audience since its inception in 1997, expanding this to photos and eyewitness accounts a few years later. But 2005 was the year that editors at the BBC, and at other major news outlets, woke up to the full potential of user-generated content. In the months that followed the July bombings, virtually every major UK newspaper started to engage in greater interaction with their readers.

The London bombings also played a role in taking citizen media out of the hands of the early adopters and putting it in those of the masses. The acres of analysis and explanation in newspapers, TV and radio helped to educate the public for their new role as citizen reporters.

When, just two weeks after the first attacks, there was a series of attempted bombings in London, it was almost as if people knew what was expected of them. Since then, every time news breaks, the British public has been on hand to provide first-hand reports.

Just as the July 2005 bombings were a seminal moment for participatory journalism in the UK, the shootings at Virginia Tech in April this year may well have been that moment for the US. A student, Jamal Albaughouti, took the most striking material on his cell phone.

The Virginia Tech shootings were widely heralded as one of those cornerstone events in participatory journalism in the US.

The low quality video showed a campus devoid of students. But the sound he recorded of gunshots echoing across the campus brought home the horror of the shootings. By the end of the day, it was broadcast to an audience of millions on the main US news stations.

The Virginia Tech shootings were widely heralded as one of those cornerstone events in participatory journalism in the US. In August, when the Minneapolis I-35W bridge collapsed, citizen media jumped into action immediately, writing blog entries, uploading images and video to sharing sites like Flickr and YouTube, working alongside, as well as together with, the mainstream media.

When news breaks, reports, images and video captured by those on the ground help to create a mosaic of amateur and professional news coverage. Just about every news organization now turns to readers and viewers for their help in covering the news.

The mainstream media has accepted that having a public engaged in the newsgathering process can enhance its reporting - but it still wields editorial control. Professional editors vet images and information from viewers and listeners. Almost all of the mainstream media treat citizens as a resource for reporters, rather than treating as equals who can tell stories themselves.

But the torrent of material from the public is helping to shape the coverage of major news stories. In some cases, decisions on where to send reporters are being driven by the personal stories of those caught up in the news. During the summer floods in Britain, the torrent of information from the public has helped form the BBC's coverage, influencing where reporters and camera crews were dispatched. Technology is irrevocably changing the way news is reported, how it is reported and who is reporting it.

Alfred Hermida is an assistant professor at the UBC School of Journalism and a former founding member of BBCNews.com. R

PASSIONATE *continued from page 1*

"Having a mentor gives you both constructive feedback and a positive role model," she notes.

The new post-doctoral fellows will be teaching undergraduate classes on subjects that range from the microscopic to the monumental: from the effects of emotional states on social behavior to why people join social movements; from glacial geomorphology to the history of science; from sustainable societies to how civil conflict can transform economies of war into economies of peace.

"There are many ways to learn and I love to teach in the outdoors where it is a complete experience, where students have direct, physical access to the concepts they are learning about the environment and can get their hands dirty," says Michele Koppes who will be running part of the *Physicial Geography Field Course* for geography students.

Koppes studied the impact of climate and ice dynamics on glacial erosion rates at the University of Washington, worked as a science advisor in Washington DC and also developed an experientially-based course on glacial geomorphology for women aged 14-19 called the *Girls on Ice* program.

Last year UBC President, Stephen Toope made a commitment to improve undergraduate teaching and learning. His idea – to match existing UBC scholars with new post-doctoral teachers in undergraduate classrooms – was backed by an allocation of $3million.

With two-year appointments, these 14 post-doctoral fellows are the first of 30 recruits over the next three years. Already over 40 new courses have been created within the UBC Arts Faculty and could expand to include other faculties.

Their work, in collaboration with established professors, represents the convergence of art and science, mixes traditional and intuitive models of learning, and is a major shift within the faculty.

"The interdisciplinary nature of what is happening here is really significant," says Kathryn Brown, a Rhodes Scholar from Australia with a PhD from Oxford University. Brown will bring a breadth of experience to undergraduates in the area of nineteenth century visual culture in Europe after spending the past 15 years as a scholar and teacher in the UK.

"UBC is hitting the ball out of the park in three areas: in teaching, in research and in research-led-teaching," says Brown, who finds that research-led teaching stimulates students to come to the table with fresh ideas. "They're [the university] fostering a new ethos within the arts faculty, between teachers and students."

Peter Dauvergne, Associate Dean, UBC Arts Faculty says "For the students, the benefit is smaller classes, bringing mentoring profs into the classroom, and exposing students to cutting-edge recent grad research that may not even be published yet."

At the same time, UBC is giving the post-doctoral fellows exposure to great mentors who provide feedback on what works and what doesn't and regular training in techniques to engage, evaluate and listen to students.

"We teach [the Fellows] how to teach – how to become better teachers, more comfortable in the classroom – that's the benefit for them," explains Dauvergne.

The 14 post-doctoral fellows are: Claire Ashton-James, Dawn Biehler, Darren Bradley, Kathryn Brown, Catherine Corrigall-Brown, Brian Hepburn, Tsvetanka Karagyozova, Michele Koppes, Jenny Peterson, Alessandra Santos, Torrey Shanks, Adam Shapiro, Scott Sinnett and William Troost. R

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Okanagan Experience May Dispel Aging Time-Bomb Myth

PHOTOS: ©iStockphoto/kusma

UBC Okanagan researcher Mary Ann Murphy is looking at how communities can improve the longevity and healthy lifestyles of an aging population.

BY BUD MORTENSON

How will Canadians cope with a rapidly aging population? We may do just fine, predicts Mary Ann Murphy, Assoc. Prof. of Sociology and Social Work at UBC Okanagan. For inspiration, she says, just look at British Columbia's Okanagan Valley – despite having Canada's oldest populations, communities there are doing quite well.

"We are living to a longer old age and reaching it in better health than ever before," she says. "This should be seen as a demographic triumph. Fears that health-care costs are a demographic time-bomb waiting to go off are greatly exaggerated."

Aging – as opposed to factors such as inflation, population growth, technology, pharmaceuticals and the cost of dying – may represent only a modest fraction of the growth in health care spending, Murphy notes.

"The common story about Canada's aging population is that we are a demographic time-bomb but the hidden story could explode that myth," she says. "The Okanagan is the bellwether for Canada's aging. If we are able to demonstrate to the rest of the country how the active, healthy lifestyle of many older adults in the Okanagan improves quality of life and longevity, and conserves health care resources.

"What the Okanagan can teach us is that communities can and do respond to both the challenges and the opportunities of an aging population," Murphy says. "But, we will need to grapple with prevailing myths, plan ahead and make some important policy decisions."

Statistics Canada's July 2007 report on aging, *A Portrait of Seniors in Canada: Age and Sex*, confirms that the Okanagan has a senior population that the rest of Canada will not experience for another 20 years. The region's largest city, Kelowna, has a senior population of 19 per cent – the highest of all Canadian metropolitan areas with populations over 100,000. And, some of the smaller Okanagan towns and cities are already at 25 per cent of older adults, with median ages dramatically higher than the national figures.

Murphy works with an interdisciplinary team of UBC Okanagan gerontology, social work, nursing and geography researchers collaborating with the community to investigate the future of seniors' health and housing in the District of Peachland, a municipality south of Kelowna. Twenty-five per cent of Peachland residents are over 65 years of age, and 41 per cent are over 55 years of age.

"It's a community with a wealth of social capital and commitment to building community capacity for healthy aging," says Murphy. "The Okanagan is well situated to disprove the time-bomb and other aging myths that depict growing older as a time of inevitable frailty, decline, and lost productivity, with seniors devoid of the ability to learn anything new or demonstrate competence."

"As one Peachland senior told me," Murphy says, "if experts really wanted to understand the secrets to a long and healthy life, they would look carefully at how Okanagan seniors are actually living and what they do with their time."

Seniors in the Okanagan are among the most active, healthy and longest-lived seniors in Canada, Murphy points out. Supporting this health and vitality are a variety of recreation and cultural programs running in seniors' centers, and active lifelong-learning organizations such as the Society for Learning in Retirement.

There's also KickStart Kelowna, a five-year program established in 2005 focused on increasing levels of physical activity by 20 per cent by 2010. For those who are frail, Kelowna also has one of just two 24-hour palliative care outreach teams in Canada, and the region has some nationally innovative programs in areas such as falls prevention, integrated chronic disease management, and a planned Aboriginal primary health care clinic.

"This is not to say that we will not have health challenges," she says. "Among these are the rising obesity rates for pockets of seniors which make disability rates hard to predict, a shortage of geriatricians, the prospective retirement of large proportions of nurses, major cuts to home support and home care that have not been cost-effective, waitlists, and issues with long-term-care bed supply and shifting burdens of care. The true looming issues are the policy choices and debates we need to have about how to focus spending in prevention and integrated services." R

"If experts really wanted to understand the secrets to a long and healthy life, they would look carefully at how Okanagan seniors are actually living and what they do with their time."

UBC's Other United Way Contribution: Research

BY BASIL WAUGH

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Household income is a major factor in how much time kids spend alone or watching TV, says Kimberly Schonert-Reichl (pictured with her son Gray).

It's 4 p.m., do you know where your child is?

It turns out, the answer can depend on how much money you make.

That is a new finding by Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, a UBC expert on the social and emotional development of children and adolescents, whose research is being funded by the United Way of the Lower Mainland (UWLM)

Her 2006 survey of more than 1,200 Greater Vancouver children was among the first in Canada to explore the psychological and social world of kids aged 9-12, a period known as middle childhood.

She found that kids this age have, on average, 67 hours of free time each week. Troublingly, most spend this time alone, in front of a TV or on a computer.

The findings merit concern for several reasons, says Schonert-Reichl. "Middle childhood is a critical development period. They should be developing social skills and life experiences," she says.

"Besides, one in two of the kids who play video games and watch TV said they would rather be doing physical social activities with friends and adult companions," says the associate professor of educational and counselling psychology and special education.

Schonert-Reichl recently dug deeper into her 2006 findings, looking at differences between children according to vulnerability, as measured by a made-at-UBC tool for assessing school readiness – the Early Development Instrument (ECI). While many factors can cause a kid to become vulnerability to development problems, she says household income is a primary factor.

Compared with "low vulnerability" households, so-called "high vulnerability" children watched 20 per cent more TV – 36 per cent compared to 16 per cent – and played 10 per cent more computer games – 41 per cent compared to 31 – she says.

They are also more likely to be home alone – 15 per cent versus 12 per cent – and less likely to attend after school programs – 5 per cent versus 8 per cent.

"Parents said the biggest barriers to putting children in after school programs are cost, time, and transportation," says Schonert-Reichl. "So while kids are telling us they want programs – which we know are critically important to their development – parents face all these constraints. This is the gap that United Way programs are really helping to fill."

According to Michael McKnight, President and CEO of the UWLM, UBC researchers are helping to identify pressing social needs in B.C. and determining how the organization prioritizes its efforts. UWLM supports a network of more than 400 programs and services helping people in 24 communities throughout the region.

In addition to Schonert-Reichl research of children aged 6-12, UWLM is funding research by UBC's Clyde Hertzman, who is researching how socio-economic environments contribute to development outcomes for children aged 0-6.

"To strengthen our community, research tells us that we need to focus extra resources on some critical social areas," says McKnight. "United Way is committed to helping more school-age children to be healthy, happy and resilient, so they can succeed in their teen years and beyond."

Examples of United Way-funded initiatives that address priorities outlined by UBC research include: mobile child care services in Surrey, after school programs at East Vancouver's Kivan Boys and Girls Club and a parent empowerment program at Frog Hollow Neighborhood House, also in East Vancouver.

For more information on Schonert-Reichl's work, visit: http://www.ecps.educ.ubc.ca/faculty/K-schonertreichl.htm R

United Way donation pledge forms will be mailed to all UBC employees in early October. Pledges will be accepted until the end of the tax year, Dec. 31, but please note that only those received before Nov. 30 will be eligible for the grand prize draw of two Air Canada tickets to anywhere in North America, plus other great prizes.

To book a presentation or volunteer, contact Allison Brownlee, UBC United Way Campaign Coordinator at 604.822.8929, e-mail *united.way@ubc.ca*. For information on UBC Okanagan's campaign, contact Elizabeth Kershaw at 250.807.8565 or *elizabeth.kershaw@ubc.ca*.

UBC'S UNITED WAY CAMPAIGN KICKS OFF

BY BASIL WAUGH

Research contributions are only one facet of UBC's relationship with the United Way (UW). For over 30 years, faculty, staff and students have donated time and money through UBC's workplace campaign for the UWLM.

This year's campaign kicks off Oct. 1, with a target of $415,000, to be raised through pledged donations and fundraising events.

"UBC's relationship with United Way reflects our Trek 2010 commitment to global citizenship and building a sustainable and civil society," says John Metras, Director of Plant Operations and 2007 UBC United Way Campaign Chair.

"Everyone likely knows someone who needs a United Way service at one time – whether it's parenting education, after school programs, grief counseling or support for new immigrants or aging parents," Metras says. "Eighty-nine cents of every dollar raised goes directly to local programs."

Last year, the campaign raised $391,000, producing more donations in excess of $500 than any other workplace campaign in the Lower Mainland. In its second campaign, UBC Okanagan raised nearly $37,000 for the UW of Central and South Kelowna.

A variety of campaign volunteer opportunities give people at UBC the chance to make a positive impact while developing important skills, including fundraising, event planning and public speaking.

Each year, UBC staff members can apply to become UW "loaned representatives," giving a boost to UW campaigns at workplaces around the Lower Mainland.

One of the responsibilities of 2007 loaned representative Tracy Chang, from UBC's International Collaboration on Repair Discoveries (ICORD), is to help raise awareness of the campaign among UBC's 15,000 staff and faculty through presentations.

"One of the best ways for units to support the campaign is to invite us to do a short presentation about the United Way and all it does," says Chang. "This campaign is already one of the largest in the Lower Mainland, but our potential for growth is really exciting."

UBC staff also participate in Days of Caring, where small teams leave work for a day to help out at a local program in need. On Sept. 24, a team of UBC volunteers spruced up Berwick Memorial Centre – the Point Grey home of an UWLW-funded infant development program – with yard work, a new shed, earthquake kits and some paint.

Previous UBC Days of Caring projects include work at Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society and the Vancouver's Crossroads Treatment Centre.

For more information, visit: www.unitedway.ubc.ca. R

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Vancouver Senate Activities 2006/2007

Introduction

The Vancouver Senate conducted a review of its activities during the 2004/2005 academic year. In its May 2005 report, the ad hoc Senate Committee that undertook the review observed a need to raise awareness of the Senate's role and activities within the University. To help address this need, the Senate Secretariat and the Senate Agenda Committee were asked to compile an annual report on the activities of the Vancouver Senate for the information of the University community. This is the second such annual report.

Background

The Vancouver Senate is established and vested with responsibilities related to the academic governance of the University under the University Act, R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 468. The Vancouver Senate is responsible for matters relating to the Vancouver campus, while the Okanagan Senate is responsible for UBC Okanagan and the Council of Senates considers matters relevant to the broader UBC system.

The Vancouver Senate has 90 members, including faculty members, student senators, convocation senators, a representative of the professional librarians, representatives of affiliated theological colleges, and senior administrators of the University, including the President as Chair of the Senate, the Chancellor, the Vice-President Academic, the University Librarian, 12 Deans and two Principals. The Senate has 12 standing committees that perform much of the Senate's work. Committees deliver reports for information, discussion and/or approval. Some of these reports are annual reports on committee activities, some present routine matters for the approval of Senate, while others address more ad hoc matters for particular consideration or decision.

The Senate schedules nine meetings per academic year. During 2006/2007, the Senate met seven times from September 2006 through May 2007. Meetings of the Senate are generally open to the public, with a few matters being considered in closed session. The 2006/2007 year was the second year of a three-year Senate electoral term.

Regular Activities of Senate

Matters considered by the Vancouver Senate during the 2006/2007 year included the following:

The Curriculum Committee and/or Admissions Committees brought forward matters relating to admissions policy and over 950 curriculum changes, including new and revised degree and diploma programs and their related courses. New degrees included:

» Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy in Cell and Developmental Biology;
» Master of Nursing;
» Master of Laws in Common Law; and
» Master of Digital Media -- offered at the Great Northern Way Campus in collaboration with UBC, Simon Fraser University, The Emily Carr Institute for Art + Design and the British Columbia Institute of Technology (see also under "Great Northern Way Campus" below).

In February 2006, the Admissions Committee presented for approval the enrolment targets by Faculty and program for the 2007/2008 academic year.

The Academic Building Needs Committee expressed the intent to expand its role to include an increased influence on project-specific development approvals as well as greater involvement in considering the impact of building projects on the academic enterprise.

The Student Awards Committee recommended for approval 132 new scholarships, bursaries, prizes, and awards representing over $450,000 annually in support of UBC students. In addition to the above-mentioned awards, the Senate approved the establishment of the Pacific Graduate Century Scholarships, funded by the Province of British Columbia.

The Nominating Committee recommended appointments to Senate committees and to the Council of Senates. The Committee also undertook its annual review of the terms of reference of Senate committees and recommended several adjustments.

Based on recommendations from the Vice-President Academic & Provost, the Senate:
i. Approved and recommended for approval by the Board of Governors the establishment of one new centre and one new institute, and received information about one other new centre.
ii. Approved and recommended for approval by the Board of Governors the establishment of six Chairs.

At the November and May meetings, the Associate Vice-President, Enrolment Services & Registrar presented for approval lists of candidates for degrees and diplomas. The Vancouver Senate granted a total of over 9,200 degrees and diplomas. The Associate Vice-President Enrolment Services & Registrar also submitted for information dates relating to the 2007/2008 Academic Year (January meeting).

In closed session, the Tributes Committee recommended a list of candidates for honorary degrees, which the Senate discussed and approved. The Tributes Committee also recommended 84 individuals for emeritus status, recommended approval of regalia colours for a new degree program, and prepared a short tribute known as a "memorial minute" for a former Senator who had recently passed away.

Under authority delegated by the Senate, the Committee on Appeals on Academic Standing and the Committee on Student Appeals on Academic Discipline heard 14 and four student appeals, respectively. The observations of the Committee on Appeals on Academic Standing led to the creation of an ad hoc committee to consider issues related to advising and cultural diversity (see also under "Establishment of Ad Hoc Committees" below).

The Senate received information about planned enhancements to communication and interaction between the Senate and the Board of Governors.

Annual reports were presented by the Committee on Student Appeals on Academic Discipline, the Committee on Appeals on Academic Standing, the Council of Senates Budget Committee, the University Librarian, and the Institute for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning. At the October meeting, the Associate Vice-President, Finance presented for information the University's financial statements for the 2005/2006 fiscal year.

UBC Okanagan and the Vancouver Senate

With the Okanagan Senate and the Council of Senates well established and operational, the Vancouver Senate undertook less activity related to UBC Okanagan in comparison to the two previous years. A few transitional themes remain.

At the September meeting, the Senate accepted a joint Okanagan/Vancouver recommendation to increase each Senate's representation on the Council of Senates from eight members to 13, while remaining consistent with the University Act.

College for Interdisciplinary Studies

Beginning at the September meeting, the Senate and its Academic Policy Committee participated in several discussions about the future of interdisciplinarity and the Faculty of Graduate Studies. These discussions culminated in a recommendation to establish and assign powers to a College for Interdisciplinary Studies. The College was established effective January 1, 2007. The Senate enlarged its membership to include the following representatives for the College: the College Principal, two elected faculty members, and one elected student member. As well, a twelfth Convocation Senator was added to the Senate at its February 2007 meeting.

Great Northern Way Campus

The Academic Policy Committee, the Curriculum Committee, and the Admissions Committee were all engaged in discussions about the emerging academic program at the Great Northern Way Campus, which is a collaborative effort between four BC post-secondary institutions. The Senate ultimately approved a model for academic governance and the administration of degree programs, as well as the first new program: the Master of Digital Media (MDM). These approvals are particularly notable because they coincided with approvals by the three other partner institutions – Simon Fraser University, the British Columbia Institute of Technology, and the Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design – in time for the MDM program to accept its first intake in September 2007.

Participation in U21 Global

The ad hoc Committee for the Review of U21 Global delivered its report at the January meeting. U21Global is a joint venture between Thomson Learning (a division of the Thomson Corporation) and 19 of the 20 universities in the international consortium known as Universitas 21.The Senate endorsed recommendations that the University make no further investments in U21 Global and withdraw its participation from this venture. The Senate forwarded these recommendations to the Board of Governors.

Academic Policy Development and Revision

Upon recommendation of the Academic Policy Committee, the Senate approved revised policies on Membership in the Faculty of Graduate Studies, Viewing Marked Examinations, and Academic Concession. Further recommendations to revise the policy on Academic Concession are expected during the 2007/2008 academic year. At the November meeting, the Academic Policy Committee presented a new policy on Procedures for the Review of Administrative Units. The Senate requested changes to this draft policy prior to consideration for approval and discussion is expected to continue during the 2007/2008 academic year.

At the May meeting, the Teaching and Learning Committee presented for approval a new Policy on Student Evaluation of Teaching, following an extended period of consultation. The Senate approved this comprehensive policy, which includes guiding principles, a model for implementation, stipulations about access to and dissemination of results, and assignment of various responsibilities.

Term Modification for the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games

Upon recommendation of the Academic Policy Committee at the May meeting, the Senate modified the 2009/2010 Academic Year to extend the February 2010 midterm break for the period of the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

Establishment of Ad Hoc Committees

The Senate established two ad hoc Committees with reporting deadlines as follows:

i. Ad Hoc Committee on Writing and Communication Skills (report due December 2007); and
ii. Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Advising Issues Relating to a Culturally-Diverse Student Body (report due April 2008).

Concluding Remarks

Overall, the Vancouver Senate had an active year, dealing with both routine and ad hoc business. The 2007/2008 academic year will be the last of a three-year Senate term, with the next Senate term beginning on September 1, 2008.

This report was prepared by Dr. Michael Isaacson, Chair, Senate Agenda Committee and Ms. Lisa Collins, Assistant Registrar, Senate & Cirriculum Services, Enrolment Services. Questions or comments may be directed to Ms. Collins at 604.822.2951 or lisa.collins@ubc.ca.