

WELCOME

Fellow alumni,

I'm writing this note just before spring break for UIC students. That means we're halfway through the spring term, inching toward the end of another school year.

This year is different than any other, though, because this year we're celebrating 30 years as a college. Some people might wonder what's so important about 30 years, especially since some of our individual programs (biomedical visualization, occupational therapy, nutrition, health information management/health informatics) can trace their University of Illinois roots back more than 30 years.

Well, the importance is this: collecting our programs into a free-standing college meant recognizing that they were not second-class curricula in the realm of health education—that they were vitally important to creating a comprehensive healthcare workforce in the U.S. It put us on the same plane as medicine, dentistry, nursing and the other health professions that the University of Illinois was becoming renowned for producing. It gave us a dean—a voice—at the highest table in the university.

We think that's worth celebrating, and we hope you do to. If you'd like to help plan an alumni event, please contact me at ahsalum@uic.edu.

— Art Slowinski, MVSC '94
President, AHS Alumni Leadership Board

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS**Kinesiology professor wins grant to help older women escape devastating falls**

Volunteers needed to bring the study to life

AHS' Mark Grabiner, PhD, professor of kinesiology, thinks that with just a couple of weeks of conditioning to re-learn ways to recover balance, many older people could avoid serious falls. Grabiner has been awarded a three-year, \$900,000 CDC grant to recruit 300 women aged 65 and older to test this hypothesis.

An internationally-recognized expert in his field, Grabiner has studied the biomechanics of human falls for two decades. At UIC, he and his staff have developed an intervention using older adult volunteers, who—secured in safety harnesses—stand or walk on a special platform that looks like a treadmill but can cause them to lose their balance.

"These disturbances are very similar to [those] the body experiences when a person actually trips over something," Grabiner says.

The volunteers do not fall because they are secured in a comfortable harness. But Grabiner discovered the experience helps their nervous and muscular systems remember how to perform the complicated recovery motions so easily performed by younger adults.

The training reinforces specific motions that are needed to avoid falling. "The results of our first study showed that two weeks of training is clearly effective, and that the effects are retained after the training ends."

To validate the findings, the CDC asked Grabiner to recruit a larger sample group, with half the volunteers getting the two-week intervention training and the control half getting a treadmill-walking program.

All volunteers will be monitored twice a month for one year after the training ends for incidence and circumstances of falls. Grabiner expects the volunteers who have the intervention to suffer fewer falls and injuries than those in the control group.

Older women have a higher incidence of falls than men. While this study will only use female volunteers, Grabiner said complementary studies by his lab are studying if men benefit equally from the intervention training. Earlier studies have helped his research group identify those at higher risk of falling.

Positive results from the study would provide for more widespread use of the method as a fall prevention intervention.

If you're a woman age 65 or older who is interested in volunteering for the study, contact Noah Rosenblatt at (312) 996-2747 or nrosenbl@uic.edu. Information about the program can also be found at [the Biomechanics Research Laboratories](#).

AHS applauds...

It's time again for the annual University of Illinois Alumni Association Awards, and as usual, AHS has much to be proud of. Mary Lou Bareither, clinical associate professor in kinesiology, was one of only two UIC faculty members to receive the UIC Flame Award for Teaching Excellence. She was chosen because of the lasting impression she has made on the intellectual growth of her students.

Also, eight AHS students won coveted UIAA Student Leadership Awards. As was true last year, our students won a percentage of awards that well exceeds their percentage of the UIC student body (this year winning 30 percent of the awards, while representing only 5 percent of the student body). Congrats to these AHS student award winners:

- Julie Cain
- Samantha Gagni
- Sarah Hegmann
- Elise Kasper
- Shamim Patel
- Jessica Pinter
- Juleen Rodakowski
- Ashley Williams

Outside UIC, second-year students in the biomedical visualization program Evelyn Maizels and Meenakshi Malhotra have both been awarded the 2009 Vesalius Trust Scholarship from the Association of Medical Illustrators. Maizels also won the 2009 Alan Cole Scholarship, the top student-research award in the profession. Some 37 graduate students from the U.S. and Canada applied for the award. Congratulations, Evelyn and Meena!

More to come in AHS' 30th anniversary year

The College of Applied Health Sciences kicked off our 30th anniversary year with a bang on March 4 when we brought neuro-anatomist and bestselling author Jill Bolte Taylor, PhD, to campus to keynote the annual Ruth M. French Distinguished Lecture in Health. All seats for the free luncheon and lecture were reserved within just a few hours of opening registration to the college and campus.

Check out www.ahs.uic.edu to see a slideshow of Dr. Taylor's appearance and to get details about upcoming events to continue the anniversary celebration.

Also as part of our anniversary year, we're reincarnating *AHS Magazine*. In the issue that will arrive in

the next few weeks, you'll find stories about four OT students studying abroad, our DHD department's partnership with the Breast Cancer 3-Day walk to make it accessible to all, and lots more news and notes.

Stroke survivors improve balance with tai chi

Stroke can impair balance, heightening the risk of a debilitating fall. But an AHS researcher has found that stroke survivors can improve their balance by practicing the Chinese martial art of tai chi.

Christina Hui-Chan, PhD, professor and head of physical therapy, has studied and used tai chi as a way to improve balance and minimize falls among healthy older adults. Now she and a colleague have seen similar results in a group of stroke survivors.

The study used 136 subjects in Hong Kong who had suffered a stroke more than six months earlier. Participants were randomly assigned to a tai chi group or a control group that practiced breathing, stretching and other exercises that involved sitting, walking, memorizing and reasoning.

Tai chi consists of constant coordinated movement of the head, trunk and limbs requiring tremendous concentration and balance control. Participants learned a simplified form that had been shown to be beneficial to arthritis patients.

Physical therapists trained patients in small groups during a weekly class. Patients then practiced at home three days a week for one hour. They received 12 weeks of training but were able to learn the technique in as little as eight. The goal was to make the patients as independent in their treatment as possible, Hui-Chan said.

They were then tested for their ability to maintain balance while shifting weight, leaning in different directions, and standing on moving surfaces to simulate a crowded bus. In these tests the tai chi group out-performed the control exercise group. The two groups performed about the same on another test, which was not focused solely on balance but involved sitting, standing, walking and returning to sit down.

"The tai chi group did particularly better in conditions that required them to use their balance control," Hui-Chan said. "In only six weeks, we saw significant improvements. The ability to shift your weight is very important because all reaching tasks require it."

While learning tai chi is not easy, Hui-Chan has found that most people can learn the art if taught by a trained instructor. Many Chinese people practice tai chi in morning group exercises, and Hui-Chan thinks the experience can work for Americans and other western nationalities.

"It can be taught at community centers, YWCAs or YMCAs, or in parks in the summer," she said.

Hui-Chan said that benefits of tai chi include improved strength and cardio fitness. Group classes also provide a healthy social gathering for isolated seniors at a fraction the cost of physiotherapy or personal training.

Hui-Chan conducted the research with former doctoral student Stephanie Au-Yeung while at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The findings will appear in a forthcoming issue of the journal *Neurorehabilitation and Neural Repair*.

MAKE A GIFT

Your support of the AHS Annual Fund makes a real difference

The AHS Annual Fund provides the college with current-use funds that are put towards immediate program enhancements.

Your gift of any size from \$25 to \$5,000 will help AHS to:

- upgrade instructional technology in classrooms
- enrich scholarship funds and award programs
- send students to professional conferences
- improve student learning and living spaces
- support many more vital endeavors in the college

To give, please call Jon Santanni at (312) 413-9180, or visit us online at [Support AHS](#). Thank you for your generosity!

New address? New job? Promotion? Professional award?

We'd like to hear from you! We may include your news in future alumni publications. Please send news and photos to Elizabeth Harmon at eharmon@uic.edu.

[AHS Home](#) | [Giving](#) | [Alumni Association](#)
[Tell Us Your News](#) | [Update Your Info](#) | [Contact Us](#)

(i1), The AHS Alumni E-Newsletter is sent to college alumni and friends on a quarterly basis. Questions or comments? Send an email to advanceahs@uic.edu.

Office of the Dean | UIC College of Applied Health Sciences | 808 South Wood Street, 169 CMET (MC 518) | Chicago, Illinois 60621 | (312) 996-6695