NEW WEB SITE OFFERS A VIRTUAL VIEW OF TODAY’S UHD

Just weeks ago, UHD completed the first phase of a major Web site redesign, creating a new, virtual home that better meets the needs of visitors and more clearly defines UHD’s identity and mission.

“Web sites play an increasingly important role in marketing universities,” said UHD President Max Castillo. “Having a modern, accurate site with content that changes frequently helps draw prospective students and keeps alumni coming back to see what’s new on campus.”

The Division of Public Affairs and Information Technology jointly coordinated the redesign effort which involved individuals from all areas of the university. While many web pages have been updated, work will continue through the fall until the site is completely converted to the new format.

The University’s Web Team hopes that you will take a few minutes and visit www.uhd.edu.

Here are some of the improvements you will find:

- Clearly delineated audience paths for prospective students, alumni, the business community and other key groups.
- New modern graphics that picture actual UHD students.
- Features about UHD’s accomplished faculty.
- Easy links to university news and events.
- A new homepage photo gallery
- A new A-Z Index.
- An improved search function.
- A blue navigation bar and header that improve site navigation
- Thousands of updated and new pages.

Web team members based improvements on internal and external research and testing that included considerations for accessibility, usability and effective communication.

If you have suggestions for features or other information that you would like to see on the Web site, email us at publicaffairs@uhd.edu.
UHD Launches Insurance, Risk Management Degree Program

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has approved a University of Houston-Downtown proposal to offer a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Insurance and Risk Management. The new degree program is designed to develop career professionals for the insurance and risk management industry, enhance the industry’s public image, and conduct research of interest for the industry and consumers, said Don Bates, Dean of UHD’s College of Business.

The new degree plan will be offered through the new UHD Insurance and Risk Management Center (“the Center”) which will be located in the new College of Business building located at 1021 North Main. The Center will be a place of collaboration between education and industry to ensure that fundamental knowledge and theories of insurance and risk management are balanced appropriately with the real world.

“We received a lot of support from a full spectrum of players in the insurance industry,” Bates said. “That support enabled us to move from the start of planning in April 2006 to approval this week – that’s warp speed by academic standards. That shows the real industry need for people who know and understand insurance and the practice of risk management.”

UHD alumnus David de Roode, Houston Chief Operating Officer of BarcorpSouth Insurance Services, approached Bates two years ago about the shortage of young, educated people pursuing a career in insurance and the growing void of talent within the $800 billion industry that offers secure, stable, well-paying jobs. Students also will be prepared for a field that offers secure, stable, well-paying jobs.

The Bates-deRoode team started discussions with insurance industry leaders to see if they had any interest in developing a regional insurance and risk management program, what the program should include and whether the industry was willing to support the program. Bates calculated the start-up costs and set $150,000 as a fund-raising goal.

“I told David, if we could raise $150,000, then I’d start moving the concept through the approval process,” Bates said. “With David’s hard work and help, we raised $180,000 in 60 days. That was the largest amount of money raised from the most donors in the shortest time in UHD’s history.”

Bates started the approval process and with de Roode’s help fund raising continued. To date, they’ve raised $340,000 in cash or pledges and are continuing the fund raising and marshalling of industry resources.

The first classes will be offered next fall and registration will begin this spring. Industry professionals will teach the classes. “We are truly building this thing from the ground up,” Bates said. Business degree students can major in insurance and risk management and non-business degree students can get a minor with six classes including an internship.

“We think the internship program will be a major source of initial employment for our students,” Bates said. The Center will offer scholarships to students with grade point averages of 2.8 or higher. The higher the student’s GPA, the larger the scholarship award.

The first students who sign up for the degree program will have opportunities to access scholarships, shape the insurance and risk management student association, impact course content and interact with industry leaders, he said. Students also will be prepared for a field that offers secure, stable, well-paying jobs.

For more information, email Bates at cobdean@uhd.edu or call his office at 713-221-8179.
HPD Assistant Chief and UHD Grad Vicki King will Speak

UHD Student Research Conference Showcases Student Research, Projects and Presentations

The eighth annual UHD Student Research Conference showcasing research, project posters and oral presentations of UHD students and recent graduates will be from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Friday, April 17, in the Wilhelmina Cullen Robertson Auditorium and Special Events Center.

The conference includes students’ work from the Colleges of Sciences and Technology, Humanities and Social Sciences, Business, and Public Service.

“The Student Research Conference was started as an activity to allow students to get the experience of presenting their undergraduate research accomplishments in a manner and environment similar to how scientists present research results at professional meetings,” said Larry Spears, professor of chemistry.

The first three Student Research Conferences were funded by a $1.75 million grant from the U.S. Office of Naval Research. Spears was principal investigator for the grant that also was used to start the College of Science and Technology’s Scholars Academy.

“Students often think scholarship is just for the classroom, but through the conference, they can see it is also for the community,” said Gene Preuss, assistant professor of history and conference co-chair with Jeong-Mi Yoon, associate professor of mathematics. “They can get a taste of real world scholarship where professional researchers share their work with colleagues and the greater community.”

Qualifying activities are projects students completed as part of internships, independent or directed study at UHD, upper-level research-oriented lab courses, senior type or graduate level projects or any other research on or off campus. UHD’s Scholars Academy sponsors the conference with funding from the Brown Foundation, National Science Foundation, U.S. Army Research Office, U.S. Department of Education and UHD. Last year’s conference drew more than 300 guests, faculty and students for eight oral presentations and 100 poster presentations.

The conference keynote speaker is Vicki King, who graduated from UHD with a bachelor of science degree and a master of science degree in criminal justice and who now is an assistant chief with the Houston Police Department.

As a MSCJ student, King conducted a qualitative study, using primarily interviews, to examine the problems with the Houston Crime Lab, said Clete Snell, UHD Criminal Justice Department chair. She presented the results of the research in the MSCJ Research Design class. The paper titled “Houston’s Crime Lab: The Challenge of Restoring Forensic Credibility” was published in the journal Law Enforcement Executive Forum in 2006.

The paper provides a detailed discussion of the problems of the Houston Crime Lab, how they evolved over time, and the transparent process of reform to restore credibility and confidence in the lab.

King’s thesis involved an ambitious study titled “Determining the Effects of Family Violence Services on Neighborhoods” which examined incident reports of family violence in neighborhoods that received services and matched neighborhoods that did not. Neighborhoods that received family violence services reported significantly fewer incidents of family violence.

King is a strong advocate of applied research and using research results to make improvements in agencies and in society in general, Snell said.

In addition to showcasing outstanding UHD student research and intensive projects, the conference provides opportunities for students to network and meet the representatives from academia and industry who typically attend.

Students find their conference experiences helpful in their transition from college to career.

Assoc. Professor of Chemistry William Holtkamp was a computer science major at UHD in his time and is now in the doctoral program in computer sciences at the University of Houston.

Holtkamp said, “For me, the SRC was a growing experience. I remember attending my freshman year and thinking the presenters were bold and perhaps a little crazy. At the time, I couldn’t imagine myself being confident enough to openly discuss a research project in front of so many people, especially when professors were in the audience.”

“Under the tutelage of the Scholars Academy, I later became one of those crazy individuals. The summer following my freshman year, I started my first research project. The introduction to the realm of research studies was fascinating, and later translated to my first poster presentation at the SRC.”
Each year thereafter, I was engaged in some sort of research project and consequently presented a poster at the SRC each of those years. Learning from mistakes and gaining confidence along the way, I gave an oral presentation in my senior year. The very activity I thought would never be able to do three years prior, I was doing all thanks to guidance provided by the SA and the experiences I had in the SRC.

“These days, I am a graduate student working on a doctoral degree in Computer Science. I give four or five presentations every semester and am typically working on two to three research projects. I think my experiences with preparing and presenting at the SRC have made this work more routine than daunting. Thanks to the SRC, professors now can’t get me to stop talking about work, and I wouldn’t want it any other way.”

By Mesias Pedroza

Currently, I am a second year graduate student. During the early years of my education, never did I imagine of one day becoming a scientist. Although I was born in America, I finished primary school in Mexico and later I returned to America to complete my high school education. During this transition, not only did I encounter a language barrier and a cultural difference, but at the same time I experienced the necessity, minority population, and low-academic performance high school education that hindered me academically. Therefore, starting and finishing a college education became a challenge that I decided to undertake the initiative and commitment in making knowledge and education a priority in spite of the numerous disadvantages.

In my second year of college at the University of Houston Downtown (UHD), I took a general biology course that completely changed my perspective towards science. This class was so compelling in portraying science not just as the study of nature but as the means for environmental sustainability, proper understanding and improvement of humanity and social environment. It was at that point when I knew that I wanted to pursue a career in the biological sciences. I wanted to build on the scientific knowledge base, and became a scientist to help solve the scientific questions that may improve the science of healthcare and ultimately the well-being of humankind. At the same time, I realized that in order to achieve my established educational goals, I would have to remain persistent in seeking financial support from various sources such as financial aid and scholarships.

In order to overcome my deficient academic background I sought after dedicated UHD faculty and mentors, who shaped and directed my academic path and goals by referring me to prestigious research internships opportunities. Another factor contributing to my career goal of becoming a scientist is that I was a member of the Scholars Academy (SA), an academically competitive program that promotes scholarship and student success. My research experience gained from the Undergraduate Research Program at UHD and the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) introduced me to the methods, procedures, and techniques used in science laboratories that equipped me with valuable skills required for applied research. As a result from these experiences, I became a research SA mentor at UHD where I trained students on how to analyze data, troubleshoot experiments, and interpret results. I was equipped to provide mentorship, assistantship, and guidance to new laboratory students.

The UHD Student Research Conference is non-competitive. Participants will receive a copy of the proceedings, a certificate of participation, a special memento and an important experience to include within their resumes.

Student Launches Award-Winning Research at SRC

Student Launches Award-Winning Research at SRC

Mesias Pedroza is an award-winning researcher. A UHD graduate, he now is in the doctoral program at the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at the University of Texas at Houston.
UHD faculty and students are using a grant totaling nearly $1 million from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to look for information that could help solve bacterial diseases in vineyards, help battle fungi in coastal prairie grasses and lead to new information about other real-world problems. The grant provides cutting-edge, interdisciplinary training for undergraduates in biology and mathematics.

The UHD Departments of Computer and Mathematical Sciences and Natural Sciences pursued the NSF grant to help broaden the undergraduate curriculum, said Steve London, a professor in the Computer and Mathematical Sciences Department. He also hopes it convinces more biology and mathematics students to consider graduate study and careers in fields that integrate the two fields.

Biological Problems

“Many biological problems now require or are far more tractable with the use of mathematical and computational tools,” said London, who was also involved in writing the NSF grant proposal. “For example, the design of many medical devices such as heart valves, artificial hearts and stents require mathematical models for design. The models are also useful in virtually testing such devices which is desirable as it is noninvasive.

Mathematical models are also useful in modeling and predicting many biological processes. For example, infectious disease models can help public health authorities to decide on the best ways to control the spread of certain infectious diseases such as AIDS or malaria, London said.

“Various biological phenomena, such as exponential growth, can be explained with mathematical equations,” said Edwin Tecarro who is principal investigator for the grant and an assistant professor in the Computer and Mathematical Sciences Department.

Research Projects

Five research projects are under way. One math instructor and one biology instructor lead each project. Students commit to working 10 hours each week for two semesters and 40 hours a week for 10 weeks during the summer. Each student receives a stipend of $8,750 for the research and related educational activities during the year. This year, 10 students were grant funded and 6 were funded from other sources.

The grant enables instructors to pursue research in areas of interest, and students can participate in instructor-driven research projects as opposed to classroom assignments, London said. The projects and the coordinating instructors are:

Fungal Population Dynamics in Coastal Tallgrass Prairie Systems – Associate Professor Phil Lyons and Professor Shishen Xie. This project focuses on the ecology of the coastal prairie and how soil microbial communities, particularly fungi, are affected by farming and restoration.

Stress Analysis of Bacterial Biofilms – Associate Professor Poonam Gulati (NS) and Assistant Professor Youn-Sha Chan (CMS). This project investigates the mechanism of biofilm formation and tries to answer questions related to the effects of shear stress on cell growth. A biofilm is a community of microbes that is growing attached to a surface and is encased in polymers that these microbes have synthesized and secreted.

Mathematical Modeling of Interacting Signaling Pathways During Neural Development in Vertebrates – Associate Professor Akl Uzman (NS) and Tecarro (CMS). Initial development of the central nervous system in vertebrate embryos (called neural induction) arises from an interaction between two signaling pathways. This project explores quantitative mathematical models to provide key testable insights into which key parameters control this developmental decision.

The projects are in various levels of completion.

“We are starting to see the impact of the work,” Tecarro said.

Student Presentations

Students have made research presentations at national meetings in New York and Toronto. One student was scheduled to present his research in Florida at the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students, and four to five students presented posters at the Joint Mathematics Meetings in Washington, D.C. in January. Instructors are also working on course development in tandem with the research projects. The first biology-calculus course was planned for the spring semester.

“With the grant, we wanted to have an impact on courses and ultimately change the culture,” Tecarro said. “The interdisciplinary approach is starting to infuse into other things. We are starting to see math students looking at problems in biology and biology students considering problems from a math viewpoint.”

Building a Diatom Succession Model for a Fresh Water Marsh – Assistant Professor Brad Hoge (NS) and Professor Ron Barnes (CMS). Project Description: Data exists for diatom assemblages in the Anahuac wetlands. Some of this data gives assemblages of diatoms as a function of time. This project looks at the time sequence of this data to see if there is some standard progression that wetlands follow as they mature. This model could be used to study the state of developing wetlands.

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UHD’s Sustainability Effort Includes Community Garden

UHD received approval Feb. 19 from the City of Houston for its state-of-the-art community garden that will be located on property between UHD and the Buffalo Bayou. The signed contract means gardeners should be able to start planting this spring.

The garden’s future location is in clear view from UHD’s south deck and is one of the first outdoor projects the University has launched as part of sustainability efforts on campus. Faculty, staff and students can help by donating supplies or they can volunteer to help plant and tend the 25-by-30 foot plot. “We encourage everyone to get involved,” said Penny Cureton, who is overseeing the effort. She hopes the garden will serve as a model for other sustainable gardens in Houston.

UHD will donate the vegetables to Urban Harvest, a local charitable organization. As planned, UHD will build raised bed plots with areas for composting and natural habitat to attract hummingbirds, bees and bats.

Cureton also would like to add a small picnic shelter over an existing concrete slab and picnic table. The shelter will shield the table from sun and rain. Gutters and downspouts on the shelter will let UHD’s gardeners collect rain to water the garden.

Cureton hopes to have some type of celebration on Earth Day, Wednesday, April 22.

Anyone interested in helping with the garden can contact Cureton at curetonp@uhd.edu.

Carnegie Foundation recognizes UHD’s Community Engagement

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recently announced the University of Houston-Downtown has been awarded a foundation classification in Community Engagement for its Outreach and Partnerships.

UHD is one of six institutions in the country to pursue and receive the voluntary classification. Classifications also were awarded to three universities for Curricular Engagement, as well as 110 for institutional commitments in both categories.

“UHD staff members have made responding to the community’s need for education and research programs a key consideration in developing and implementing our programs,” said Max Castillo, UHD president. “We serve a very diverse community, and we have to be engaged at many different levels. Reaching out to the community and building partnerships with the city’s various cultural, ethnically and racially diverse groups fits well with our mission as an urban university. This is an important step as UHD continues to forge its unique identity and works to increase its level of recognition and respect within the community.”

The university participated in an extensive application process completed last summer. To be selected, institutions had to provide descriptions and examples of institutionalized practices of community engagement that showed alignment among mission, culture, leadership, resources and practices.

“We hope that by acknowledging the commitment and accomplishment of these engaged institutions, the Foundation will encourage other colleges and universities to move in this direction. Doing so brings benefits to the community and to the institution,” said Carnegie President Anthony S. Bryk. The Carnegie staff and advisors were heartened by the exemplary institutionalized practices of community engagement of the selected institutions, said Carnegie Consulting Scholar Amy Driscoll, who directs the Community Engagement Classification process for the Foundation. “We noted strong alignment between institutional mission and budgetary support, infrastructure, leadership, marketing, and faculty hiring, orientation, and development. . . .” Driscoll said.

According to Carnegie classification information, Outreach addresses the application and provision of institutional resources for community use with benefits to both campus and community. Partnerships focuses on collaborative interactions with community and related scholarship for the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of knowledge, information, and resources.

“This important designation is in recognition of the outstanding work UHD has done in partnership with and outreach to the community,” Castillo said. “UHD highlighted a number of projects, some of which have been in place for years, that more than adequately demonstrate our commitment to community engagement.” Featured projects included the House of Tiny Treasures, Center for Public Deliberation, Science and Engineering Fair, stories from Casa Juan Diego, and the Bordeaux Jazz Exchange.

“I want to applaud the faculty and staff who contribute regularly and creatively to UHD’s engagement with the community. It is because of you that we are able to make service a true priority,” Castillo said.

UH Board of Regents member Carroll Robertson Ray said, “This is indeed great news! And well-deserved recognition. My heartfelt congratulations to all of our dedicated administrations that are making such a difference in Houston and its surrounding communities.”

Founded by Andrew Carnegie in 1905 and chartered in 1906 by an act of Congress, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is an independent policy and research center with the primary mission “to do and perform all things necessary to encourage, uphold, and dignify the profession of the teacher.” The improvement of teaching and learning is central to all of the Foundation’s work. The Foundation is located in Stanford, Calif. More information may be found on the Web site at www.carnegiefoundation.org.
Islam has also won all three of UHD’s faculty excellence awards — awards that recognize outstanding teaching, service and scholarly and professional activity.

Erik Hodgess, UHD associate professor of mathematical sciences, will participate in the Faculty and Student Teams (FaST) Program at the Argonne National Laboratory near Chicago. Two UHD students, LaToya Green and Melina Chin, will join Hodgess in the research program. They will use grid computers and statistical software to analyze bioinformatics. FaST is a cooperative effort between the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science and the National Science Foundation (NSF).

Business Dean Named to Houston Karachi Sister City Association Board

Don Bates, dean of UHD’s College of Business, is a founding member of the Houston Karachi Sister City Association’s Board of Directors. Bates was on hand for the ceremony at city hall. It is Houston’s 17th sister-city relationship under Sister City International, an organization founded by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956 that aims to build long-term partnerships and exchanges through people-to-people exchanges.

Leaders at the Paris International Model United Nations (PIMUN) Conference recognized University of Houston-Downtown students Eduardo Landaeza (international business) and Omar Vargas (criminal justice) at the gathering in Paris, France. More than 250 delegates at the conference came from universities in Russia, Great Britain, Lebanon, India, and Germany. Landaeza and Vargas are members of the UHD Model United Nations, a group sponsored by the UHD College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

UHD Students Win at the American Society of Microbiology Meeting

Students and faculty from UHD’s Department of Natural Sciences attended the Texas Branch of the American Society of Microbiology’s spring conference in New Braunfels March 5–7. Assistant Professor Catherine Shaffer and Associate Professor Poonam Guliati organized the conference, and Associate Professor Lisa Morano gave a presentation on her research. Nguyen Lam, a senior working in Morano’s lab, won first place in Undergraduate Oral Presentations. Claudia Jimenez-Lopez, a December 2008 UHD graduate and now a graduate student at UT Houston Health Sciences Center, won second place in the Undergraduate Oral Presentations, and Jeeba Kuria-kose, a 2005 UHD graduate and now a graduate student at UTMB, won first place in the Graduate Student category with her poster. Other UHD students also presented posters. UHD’s student Science Jeopardy team came in second behind graduate students from UT Tyler.

Alumni

Jon R. Johnson completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice and graduated Alpha Phi Sigma in 2000. He went on to teach middle school students for five years before changing career paths into land work on the oil and gas field.

“One accomplishment was that I did all the land work on the mall built on the corner of Highways 288 & 518 in Pearland, a project valued at $225 million,” Johnson said. “I’m proud of that accomplishment, just like I’m proud of my degree.”

Champion Fight

Former three-time lightweight champion and UHD student Juan “The Baby Bull” Diaz talks with students from the ring. Diaz and his opponent, Mexican icon Juan Manuel Marquez, were on campus to film an HBO promotional spot for their Feb. 28 world title bout at Toyota Center. The fighters talked with the media and signed autographs for students. Diaz lost the Saturday night fight, but was back in class Monday morning to continue work toward his degree. Diaz plans to continue his pursuit of the title.
Sarah Crawford: 'Alumni represent a formidable resource for the university'

The university offers many opportunities to engage alumni through the arts, entertainment, fitness center, library, and colleges, and alumni can add great value to the university experience for today's students, said Sarah Crawford, UHD's new Director of Alumni Relations.

“These are exciting times to be involved with the university and that is especially true for alumni,” Crawford said. “The university is pursuing a new name, expanded degree programs, and additional facilities. During these difficult economic times, the university can be a great resource for alumni and the combined knowledge and experience of our alumni represent a formidable resource for the university.”

Crawford is UHD’s first alumni relations director, and she joined the staff in December. She has a bachelor’s degree in special education from Texas Woman’s University and a master’s degree from Bowling Green State University in college student personnel. She has spent 25 years in higher education including positions at Texas Woman’s University, Rice University and Austin College. She is completing a term as a member of the National Board for TWU’s Former Student Association.

“We’re still formulating what will be right for this university. I see so many things we could do to engage our alumni,” she said. “I want to work on good communications, building relationships with alumni and creating collaborative situations where students, alumni, staff and faculty can benefit from the interaction.”

For information on alumni activities, contact Crawford at 713-226-5519 or email her at crawfords@uhd.edu.

UHD Class of ’89 Graduate Amy Buck Receives Wells Fargo Honor

University of Houston-Downtown class of 1989 graduate Amy Buck was recently honored by Wells Fargo for ranking No.1 in profits among all 86 Wells Fargo business development officers (BDOs) in the country last year.

Buck, Wells Fargo vice president and business development officer, garnered $1.8 million in profit revenue and introduced 52 new client relationships for the company in 2008.

“I owe my success to my motivation—but also to my finance degree from UHD and to Wells Fargo,” said Buck. “It wasn’t easy but I will never regret working full-time to pay for my education at the same time that I was juggling my studies. My life is much richer because I am a UHD graduate.”

Buck, who has held various positions within Wells Fargo’s Regional Banking, Commercial Banking and Business Banking groups since 1985, ranked No. 6 among the company’s business development officers in 2007.

“The fact that Amy earned the No. 1 spot last year is a tremendous feat,” said Mark Massey, Business Banking manager. “She beat out colleagues in California who have much larger markets and more opportunities than we do here in Houston.”

Buck’s priority is to find new business for Wells Fargo and connect business owners with her partners within Wells Fargo to provide solutions such as payroll, insurance, treasury management or loans to make their businesses run more efficiently.

“This recognition demonstrates how effective Amy is in helping her customers succeed financially,” added Massey. “She’s a great asset to us and to her clients.”
Achieving the Dream Project Encourages Use of Data to Help Students Succeed

UHD’s statistics course has proven to be a tough class for many students, but UHD faculty members have taken proactive steps to help students succeed in statistics as well as other “gatekeeper” courses.

“Across the board, faculty members are concerned about student success and what we can do individually to encourage student success,” said Gene Preuss, assistant history professor, who is chair of the Achieving the Dream committee. Gary Greer, assistant dean of University College, chairs the Achieving the Dream Data Team.

Statistics is a required course in seven UHD degree programs, Preuss said. With a lower passage rate than other upper level courses, statistics has proven to be a challenge to student success in completing their degrees.

“Student success is an important topic for any institution of higher learning,” Preuss said. “It’s not just a question of providing students with a supportive infrastructure, concerned administration, interesting courses and qualified faculty; it is also how these elements work together.”

Achieving the Dream is a national program involving 83 universities and community colleges that have large enrollments of low income, minority or historically underrepresented groups. The program has several funders including the Lumina Foundation, nationally, and the Houston Endowment, locally, which urged UHD to participate. UHD received a $50,000 planning grant three years ago and is in the second year of a four-year grant that provides $100,000 each year for efforts geared toward helping students succeed.

The goal is to increase the percentage of students who successfully complete the courses they take, who advance from remedial to credit courses, who enroll in and successfully complete gatekeeper courses, who enroll from one semester to the next and who earn degrees and/or certificates.

Achieving the Dream also is pursuing outcomes in terms of institutional change, public policy, public engagement and new knowledge. “Some higher education decisions didn’t seem tied to any data,” Preuss said. “We want to encourage more data-driven decision making.”

At UHD, the committee plans to track some 30 demographic and academic variables involving first-time-in-college students to find out where they are having problems, Preuss said. Based on data studies, UHD has expanded the College Success Program sections for new students, launched tutoring to help students succeed at statistics and supported faculty development for instructors.

UHD has always offered instruction designed to bring student skills to the level needed for college credit work. Through Achieving the Dream, UHD now is providing voluntary instruction in how to succeed at college with the goal of getting students to re-enroll until they graduate. Volunteer tutoring sessions in statistics through the Learning Center are full and the percentage of students receiving C grades or better is higher than before tutoring started.

The committee also has launched some faculty development initiatives, Preuss said. UHD is a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) as well as a Minority-Serving Institution and the data suggests that minority and low-income students face greater obstacles than traditional students. Achieving the Dream fosters staff development and encourages faculty participation in training conferences to help instructors expand their classroom skills. The committee has started a series of discussion sessions to examine issues and developments in higher education.

“Many of our students are dealing with jobs, financial issues, family considerations, a lack of family support, and they may be the first person from their families to attend college,” he said. “It is important for faculty members to understand the special demands placed on our students. We are a really good institution, faculty members are truly special demands placed on our students. We are a really good institution, faculty members are truly concerned about students and we want them to do well and succeed.”

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Shades - Drawing the Space

Through April 23

Delicate paper sculptures, biological forms artistically recreated and collages that evoke the imagination are part of an exhibit called Shades — Drawing the Space in the O’Kane Gallery, March 26-April 23.

Contemporary artists Jessica McCambly, assistant professor of art at Crafton Hills College in Calif., Sara Schneckloth, assistant professor of drawing at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, and Danielle Riede, assistant professor of contemporary art in the O’Kane Gallery, March 26-April 23.

A guest judge chooses top winners for cash awards and all participating artists receive cash awards from the Houston area. Organizers expect high school students to submit more than 100 pieces of art. About 20 area schools participate in the event.

Anila Quayyum Agha assistant professor of drawing at The Herron School of Art and Design in Indianapolis, are the featured artists.

Agha Quayyum Agha assistant professor of drawing at The Herron School of Art and Design will curate the exhibit. Previously, Agha was an artist-in-residence at the Center for Contemporary Craft in Houston and a UHD adjunct professor.

UHD Student Art Show

April 30–May 7

UHD student works will be on exhibit at the annual UHD Student Art Show, April 30-May 7 in the O’Kane Gallery. UHD art professors select the best pieces created in studio art classes for submission. The show is juried by a guest judge and cash prizes are awarded.

11th Annual High Art Show

May 9–16

The 11th annual High Art Show features works by talented high school students from the Houston area. Organizers expect high school students to submit more than 100 pieces of art. About 20 area schools participate in the event.

A guest judge chooses top winners for cash awards and all participating artists benefit from the experience of exhibiting in a university gallery.

For more information on any of these events, contact Mark Cervenka or Brad Thomason at UHD’s O’Kane Gallery at 713-221-8042. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. The gallery closes for university holidays.

The UHD O’Kane Gallery is on the third floor of the One Main Building, 1 Main Street. Guests may park in visitor or metered parking at Travis and Girard Streets or ride Houston’s METRORail to the University’s front door.
Spring Executive Speaker’s Series Highlights Retailing and Risk Management

The College of Business Executive Speaker Series recently hosted representatives from the Houston Citizen’s Chamber of Commerce, from left, DeAndre Sam, Ron Jemison, Betty Dean, Margaret Loggins, Willie B. Williams and COB Dean Don Bates.

The College of Business’s Executive Speaker Series this spring features presentations on retailing as well as insurance and risk management.

“The series is a mixture of profiles on business success or failure, along with straight talk on how to plan and start a career,” said Don Bates, dean of the College of Business at UHD. “Equally important, we ask speakers to convey personal values and words of wisdom related to success in life.”

The speaker series is designed to enrich student learning experiences and provide them with executive role models. Upcoming presentations from leading executives who will discuss their roles and their industries include: Brandon Stucki, Divisional Learning and Development Manager, Wal-Mart, who discussed retailing Thursday, March 12.

David de Roode, Chief Operating Officer-Houston, Bancorp South Insurance, and a UHD alumnus, will discuss insurance and risk management at 2:30 p.m. Thursday, April 9, in the Wilhelmina Robertson Auditorium, the One Main Building.

Speaker content and outcomes include current business trends and challenges, the speaker’s success story in business, personal values and ethics, executive role modeling for students and career and life skills. Past speakers’ presentations are available for review at: http://www.uhd.edu/computing/ttlc/multimedia/uhdtv//schedule/program-library.html

For information about the Executive Speaker Series, call Steve Sucher, director of development, 713-221-8288, or visit the Web site at http://www.uhd.edu/academic/colleges/business/executiveseriesbios.htm.

UHD’s Safety & Fire Engineering Program Receives National Accreditation

UHD’s Department of Engineering Technology recently received accreditation for its Safety & Fire Engineering Technology Option in Engineering Technology Program.” This four-year Bachelor of Science degree is the only degree program of its kind in Texas.

What is Fire Protection Engineering?

“Safety & Fire Engineering is a unique profession that builds upon the basic tools of several other engineering disciplines… Safety & Fire engineers deal with the problems of fire from and engineering and scientific viewpoint. They apply their knowledge to situations, usually before the fact, in order to prevent the outbreak of fire or to stop fire in its earlier, more manageable stages… A Safety & Fire engineer is able to apply these principles to structures, processes, materials and systems to protect people and their environment… A fire protection engineer fulfills a broad range of duties, all in some way related to fire. This can range from designing fire protection for a space station, to protecting treasures such as the U.S. Constitution, to ensuring that the occupants of a high-rise building are safe from fire. Safety & Fire engineering engineers have always been in great demand by corporations, educational institutions, consulting firms and government bodies around the world.”

UHD’s SAFETY & FIRE ENGINEERING Technology option in Engineering Technology Program is currently accepting applications for spring and fall semesters. For information about UHD’s SAFETY & FIRE ENGINEERING Technology option in Engineering Technology program, call 713-221-8089 or visit the website, www.uhd.edu/sfta.

*Accredited by the Technology Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc. (111 Market Place, Suite 1050, Baltimore, MD 21202-4012; 410-347-7700; www.abet.org)
Library Expansion Boosts Resources Available for Students

UDH staff members unveiled the new $1.8 million W. L. Dykes Library expansion project on the north fourth floor of the One Main Building last fall and it has been packed ever since.

Students occupy the computer work stations from morning until night. Students and staff packed the Special Project Room to watch the Presidential Inauguration live on television. The Special Project Room also has been the site for discussions. “Our staff did a terrific job with this project and much of the construction was done in house which enabled the university to make maximum use of available funds to benefit students,” said Max Castillo, UHD President.

The project added 26,000 square feet to the library which also occupies 60,000 square feet on the building’s fifth floor. Under construction for over a year, the library expansion provides space for 84 computer workstations including two for disabled individuals. The area has two presentation practice rooms equipped with projectors, VCRs and DVD players where teams can record their projects to digital media. The space has an event room for visiting lecturers and readings. A large reading room on the northeast side has comfortable chairs outfitted with swing-out laptop tables.

“We’ve needed more space for a long time,” said Pat Ensor, executive director of UHD Library Services. “The expansion has enabled us to provide more useable space for students including an area for students to gather and study. Many of our students work very hard and overcome a lot of obstacles to be here so we are delighted to provide them with these additional tools and resources.

“Computers and wireless technology have dramatically changed the way college students study and how they work in groups. We created state-of-the-art collaborative learning spaces that will prepare them for a changing world,” she said.

The project planning process started with a survey of UHD students to determine the greatest needs and challenges they saw for the library. Ensor and Chris McCall, assistant vice president of Facilities Management, studied learning spaces at other institutions and developed a design tailored to meet the needs of current and future UHD students.

Ensor created a blog on the library web site to generate discussion and to update readers about construction progress. Planners took the student surveys and blog comments into account when designing library improvements.

The fifth floor is scheduled for a $1.7 million facelift which will begin in the next few months. Books and other printed items will still be housed on the fifth floor, but the stacks will be rearranged to provide more floor and aisle space. Graduate study carrels will be built-in to provide long-term loan arrangements. Construction plans include an Internet Café similar to commercial bookstore reading spaces.

The library’s Rockwell Room will be updated to accommodate educational and informal gatherings for faculty, staff and special visitors. The Rockwell Fund Inc. is providing a $500,000 gift distributed over five years to help pay for library expansion and renovation projects. Ensor and Michele Sabino, UHD’s executive director of University Advancement, say the University is very appreciative of the gift. The Rockwell Room was named for an earlier Rockwell Fund gift.

Additional funding sources for the library expansion and renovation include the George and Cynthia Mitchell Foundation, The Ray C. Fish Foundation, and individual donors.

UHD President Max Castillo congratulated staff members for doing a ‘terrific job’ with the library renovation project. Much of the work was done in house which enabled the university to maximize use of available funds to benefit students. Students make extensive use of the library’s new computer workstations and presentation rooms.

Search Committee Meets to Review Nominees to be UHD’s Next President

The UHD Presidential Search Committee has met three times and David Bell, UH System assistant vice chancellor for Academic Affairs and staff officer for the search committee reports that nominations should be forwarded to any member of the committee.

“Our hope is to identify a group of finalists and bring them to campus for interviews before the end of the spring semester,” Bell said. That would allow for a new president to be on the job by the beginning of fall semester at the latest, Bell said.

Members of the UHD community will be kept up to date about the search via periodic announcements from the committee and through the presidential search link on the home page of UHD’s Web site.

William A. Staples, president of UH-Clear Lake, chairs the search committee.

UHD Members are: Karen Alfaro, director, Advance-ment Services and Operations, and president, UHD Staff Council; David Bradley, vice president for Administration and Finance; Viola Garcia, associate professor, College of Public Service; Alberto Gomez-Rivas, professor, College of Science and Technology; Michelle Moosally, associate professor, Department of English, and president, UHD Faculty Senate; Beth Pelz, dean, College of Public Service; David Ryden, associate professor, College of Humanities and Social Sciences; Jaime Puente, UHD student and treasurer of UHD’s student government; and Marvin Williams, professor, College of Business

Also serving are Harry Gee, Jr., principal, Law Office of Harry Gee, Jr. and Associates and Thomas Harper III, vice chairman, Wellogix, Inc., both members of the President’s Advisory Committee.