

Education First

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA ♦ COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ♦ NEWSLETTER

Education Firsts

DesJardins and Gonzalez Write Paper Acknowledged as Best

Assistant Professor **Stephen DesJardins** and Ph.D. candidate in Educational Policy and Leadership Studies, **Julie Gonzalez** (MA '91) wrote an award winning paper titled "Artificial Neural Networks: A New Approach for Predicting College Application Behavior." It was selected as the Association for Institutional Research's (AIR) Charles F. Elton Best Paper Award. The paper will be published in the Forum Edition of *Research in Higher Education* this month.

"This is the most important award that AIR can bestow on a person for a single scholarly contribution to the field," Publications Committee Chairman Rob Toutkoushian said. "If you look at the list of past recipients [including, among others, the Mary Louise Peterson Chair in Higher Education and Professor] **Ernest T. Pascarella**, you will see that they are truly in esteemed company."

Research in Higher Education publishes scholarly works that contribute to the collective understanding of higher education, aiding faculty and administrators to make informed decisions and improve effectiveness.

The paper focuses on how predictive modeling techniques, such as artificial neural network (ANN) can be used to study college application behavior. At Iowa, it was used to predict which students were more likely to apply to a Research I institution. Detection of data trends and patterns that would normally go undiscovered are permitted through ANN. This modeling is a new and innovative approach for institutional researchers.

"I see this award as an external validation of our division's [EPLS] efforts," Gonzalez said, "and a strong indicator of the legitimacy of ANN research for solving complex problems emerging within educational institutions."

DesJardins concurred. "ANN techniques push the boundaries of predictive modeling knowledge and we are excited to be on the cutting edge of this line of research," he said.



PBS's FRONTLINE Features Qualls

The recent passage of the education reform bill that requires public school testing signals a new era in public education—one marked by federal involvement in schools and an unprecedented expansion in the role of tests say PBS FRONTLINE producers on the documentary, "Testing Our Schools." The program examined the quest for higher scores on mandated school tests that is changing teaching and learning in America and featured Associate Professor **Audrey Qualls**.

Qualls, a co-author of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and a specialist in large-scale assessment, responded to a Bush administration proposal that every student in grades 3-8 be tested in reading and math, with tests and passing grades to be decided by each state. The prospect of still more testing disturbs Qualls.

"It's an impossible task," Qualls said. "Bush's plan actually allows the district or state to choose or design any assessment of their choice. We do not have the capability [to produce] reliable, good reports in a timely manner. The resources aren't there. To someone committed to testing, it's a terrifying idea."

Producer John Tulenko said he decided to interview Qualls because she was one of the first test writers to take a public stance urging a little caution with this fixation on testing. "And she's an extremely well-respected psychometrician and was able to put all this into real English for us," he said. "It was for all those reasons we came out to The University of Iowa."

—by Stephen J. Pradarelli



Assoc. Prof. Audrey Qualls

PHOTO BY DOUG ALLAIRE

Ethnography Symposium Draws Cross-Campus Audience



Symposium coordinators Gail Boldt (L) and Cynthia Lewis (R) with Joseph Tobin (center)

PHOTO BY DOUG ALLAIRE

Advocating the credo of anthropology—"to make the exotic familiar and the familiar exotic"—this respected education and human development ethnographer encouraged participants to approach early childhood education from a cultural angle.

Coordinated by

Language, Literacy, and Culture Associate Professor **Cynthia Lewis** and Assistant Professor **Gail Boldt**, the interdisciplinary symposium drew an audience from across campus, including those from anthropology, Asian languages,

Iowa students and faculty enthusiastically received Dr. Joseph J. Tobin, the Basha Endowed Chair of Early Childhood Education at Arizona State University, as the featured speaker at the first Obermann Center/Spelman Rockefeller Symposium. His work has been read in education courses for many years.

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April 2002

Excellence and Distinction

Rehabilitation Counseling Student Represents Nation

For the past year, an Iowa graduate student was appointed to represent the nation's graduate students for two divisions of the American Counseling Association.



Nicole Pizzini

PHOTO BY DOUG ALLAIRE

professional organizations, and conferences. "My experiences at Iowa have prepared me well for the new challenges I will face following graduate school," she said.

Throughout her doctoral studies, Pizzini has worked for the Prairielands Addiction Technology Transfer Center. As a graduate research assistant, she has co-developed three psycho-educational group curricula for the treatment of incarcerated female offenders who have co-occurring mental health and substance-related disorders. Since January 2000, these curricula have been implemented at the Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility, Women's Special Needs Unit.

Pizzini co-facilitated these psycho-educational groups along with master's students in the Substance Abuse Counseling program. She also worked on co-developing a CD-ROM for primary health care providers. The CD-ROM focuses on training primary health care providers about assessment, treatment, and referral of substance-related disorder.

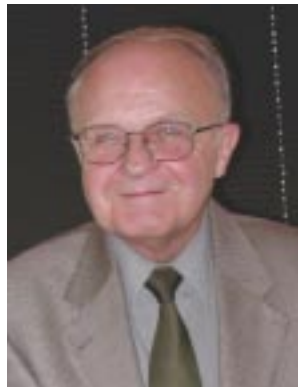
Yager Receives Award for Technology Leadership

Epsilon Pi Tau, an International Honorary for Professions in Technology, named Science Education Professor **Robert Yager** the 2002 recipient of its Prestigious Distinguished Service Prospectus. Yager is the 50th recipient of the award, recognizing technology leaders.

Yager said it is a challenge to rejoin science and technology and even more difficult to think of science as a human activity aside from the usual thought of physics, chemistry, biology, and earth/space science.

"Science today is almost wholly dependent on technology," Yager said. "Understanding the natural world more completely depends on technological advances. In terms of education, technology (i.e., the human-made world) is far more interesting and useful than the natural world. When science in schools is stripped of technology, most students do not find science interesting nor something that affects their daily living or the way that they act in society at large."

Yager's career has focused on keeping science interesting by incorporating technology. His research interests include science, technology and society; student motivation; and attitudes towards science. He currently serves as director of education for the proposed \$230 million Iowa Environment Project of the Iowa Child Institute, a project designed to be a world-class environmental attraction and learning facility in Coralville.



Professor Robert Yager

PHOTO BY JILL FISHBAUGH

Interdisciplinary Symposium

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communication studies, psychology, and pediatrics.

"Participants found the way he brought complicated issues in qualitative research into focus gave us new ways to think about our own work," Boldt said.

Tobin showed clips of the videos that precipitated *Pre-School in Three Cultures*, the book that made his career, asking audience members to react to footage of a typical pre-school day in Japan, China, and the United States. "Our reactions tell us who we are," Tobin said, explaining that defining one's perspectives in light of "the other" encourages critical thinking about educational assumptions and institutions. Tobin has shown these "typical day" videos to teachers, administrators, experts, parents, and citizens in Japan, China and the United States, stimulating national and international discussion on the cultural assumptions implicit in early childhood notions of "best practices."

After leading a thought-provoking workshop on dealing with transcripts in qualitative research, Tobin commented how intellectually exhilarating he found his time with the Iowa participants. "I am tremendously impressed with the quality of Iowa's LLC graduate students," he said.

Jay Semel, director of the Oberman Center for Advanced Studies, said he hopes the series will encourage a sense of community across disciplines. "I like the idea of students and scholars coming together in earnest discussion of educational issues," he said.

—by Elyse Fields

Education First is produced monthly by The University of Iowa College of Education Office of External Relations, Jill Fishbaugh, director. Send items of interest to her at The University of Iowa/ College of Education/452 Lindquist Center N/Iowa City, IA 52242-1529 or by e-mail to educationatiowa@uiowa.edu.

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