

Assessing Science Learning

Criticism of President Bush's *No Child Left Behind Act* education package remains alive and well four years after its approval by Congress, but the legislation has increased attention on assessment of science learning, an area that previously took a back seat to the Three Rs.

Until recently, science learning hasn't been at the front of our national consciousness, according to Dr. Linda Crocker, professor emeritus at the University of Florida and the William E. Coffman guest lecturer on October 6.

"Anecdotal evidence from the classroom and some concerns of chief state school officers have indicated that teachers seemed to be giving short shrift to science as they stressed the more heavily tested areas of reading, math, and writing," Crocker said.

NCLB changed that, but progress in the development of science assessment programs has been slow, she said. As recently as last year, only 21 states had fully developed testing programs in science at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels, Crocker said. By contrast, 48 states have complete testing programs for reading and 46 states have complete testing programs for mathematics.

The primary reason for the slow progress has been the complexity of science test design, which unlike the broad

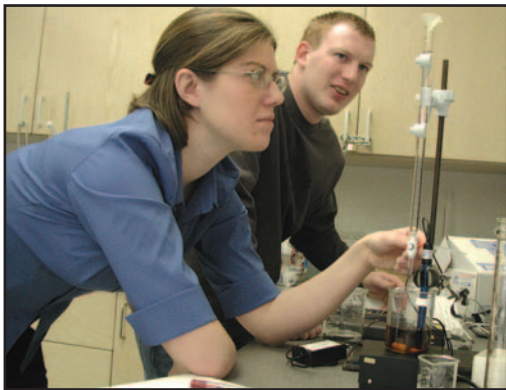
and general discipline of math encompasses the multiple disciplines of the physical, life, and earth sciences, she said.

Though some of those challenges have been solved, Crocker said, an

additional problem is that mathematics rarely generates public controversy, but science topics such as evolution versus intelligent design are in the news every day.

NCLB requires that states have fully developed testing programs in science by 2007. In 2009, student achievement in science will be among the key subject areas included in the National Assessment for Educational Progress.

—by Joe Nugent



education *firsts*

Watkins First Knighted Alum



Bryan Watkins (BA '91) has been named a knight in France's Order of Academic Palms, an honor created by Napoleon himself.

But don't expect Watkins to go around slaying dragons, rescuing fair maidens, or hanging around castles in a polished suit of armor. Instead, he plans to continue teaching French at Harry A. Burke High School in Omaha, as he has for the past 13 years.

And whatever you do, don't call him Sir Bryan.

"France abolished all titles of nobility during the French Revolution," Watkins said. "My official title actually comes after my name, 'Bryan Watkins, Knight in the Order of Academic Palms,' not before."

In notifying Watkins of the honor, Jacques Treffel, Inspector General and National President of the Association of the Members of the Order of Academic Palms, wrote: "This wonderful award honors you and attests to the perfect quality of services that you have rendered to the teaching of the French language and culture in your country."

The Academic Palms is the oldest civilian award and is second only in age to the Legion of Honor. Created in 1808 by Napoleon Bonaparte to honor university professors, the award was extended in 1866 to non-educators for their exceptional work in education. In 1955, French President René Coty created the Order of Academic Palms that is bestowed upon those who have devoted their lives to the expansion of the French language and francophone culture in the world.

Watkins credits his Southeast Polk High School French teacher, Diane Larson, as the first to inspire him to study the language.



Professor Tim Ansley

Ansley to Guide State's Curriculum

Each of Iowa's Regents institutions was asked to nominate one faculty/staff member to serve

on the Department of Education's Model Core Curriculum Project Lead Team Committee. Provost Michael Hogan selected Professor **Tim Ansley**.

"Our role is to give guidance to the groups designing a model core curriculum for Iowa high schools," Ansley said.

This activity is due to a bill passed by the Iowa Legislature last spring.

Williams' Volunteering Recognized

The Iowa Correctional Institution for Women selected Art Education Associate Professor **Rachel Williams** as the recipient of their 2005 Volunteer Award for her unwavering dedication.



Prof. Rachel Williams

"Rachel provides female offenders an opportunity they wouldn't otherwise receive," Sheryl Baney, deputy warden, said. "She works hand in hand with the prison staff and is a positive female role model to the population we serve."

DiPardo's Article Named Best

The Conference on English Leadership, a subgroup of the National Council of Teachers of English, recognized English Education



Prof. Anne DiPardo

Professor **Anne DiPardo** with their 2005 *English Leadership Quarterly*

Best Article Award. Her winning article, "Learning for Our Lives: Sustaining the Wise Child in an Era of High-Stakes Testing," appeared in the February 2004 issue of *English Leadership Quarterly*.

Belin-Blank Center Named Outstanding

The Iowa Community Education Association honored the Belin Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development with their Outstanding Organization award.

"The center is the country's only one to offer online AP courses to all students in the state, no matter what the economic condition, location, or size of the school," said Science Teacher Barbara Reilly, who nominated the Center for the award. "Their educational leadership has led the way to improve the quality of coursework receive by Iowa high school students."

Benson's Research Recognized

Sheila Benson, a doctoral candidate in Language, Literacy, and Culture, is exploring a theory that if you use pop culture and different media materials in language arts class, students access a different kind of thinking. Through her research, she's extending what has already been found successful in elementary classrooms to instruction in the secondary level.



Sheila Benson

"Language arts teachers who use this theory teach more than just reading, they help their students become lifelong learners," Benson said.

The International Reading Association was so impressed with her ideas, they awarded her with the 2005 Helen M. Robinson Grant. Benson's dissertation, *Engaging Students in Literacy: A Multiliteracies Orientation to Literacy Instruction*, examines language arts instruction in secondary level classrooms.

Benson says theory isn't useful unless it translates into practice. "I want to find ways to help students succeed," she said.

Student Affairs Graduate Students Acknowledged as Outstanding

Everywhere you looked at the 2005 Iowa Student Personnel Association conference, you saw UI students and alumni.

"The participants were moved by the quality of presentation skills, depth of understanding, and level of creativity," Student Affairs Administration Professor **Elizabeth Whitt** said. "Our students and alumni were engaged, curious, interested, and interesting."



Rising Star Bill Huff

UI graduate students won several top awards. **Bill Huff** was the inaugural winner of the ISPA Graduate Student Rising Star award, **Erica Geers** and **Kayla Haptonstall** won the Master's Case Study competition, and **Kathleen Goodman** and **Kenneth Wheeler** were recognized as ISPA scholars.

UI Student Development Coordinator Kate Sojka said Huff is an ambitious and insightful individual. "Bill demonstrates the qualities of a bright, shining star," she said. "He is a genuine, hard-working, and creative individual."

Sarah Hansen (BA '90/MA '92), associate director of the UI Student Health Service, agreed. "Bill exhibits a great combination of skill, empathy, and humor in his work with students."

Renee Romano, vice president for Educational and Student Services at UNI, said, "Geers and Haptonstall won because they showed knowledge of both theory and practice in their approach."



Erica Geers and Kayla Haptonstall win ISPA Master's Case Study Competition.

Colvin Wins Catalyst Award

The UI Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity selected Associate Dean **Carolyn Colvin** as the 2005 recipient of its Catalyst Award, honoring her outstanding contributions that have enhanced the University's commitment to achieving excellence through diversity.

"Carolyn's leadership arises from her deep personal commitment to diversity, which she has demonstrated in concrete and influential ways throughout her tenure at Iowa," said Provost Michael Hogan in his nomination letter.



Prof. Carolyn Colvin changes lives through her literacy project.

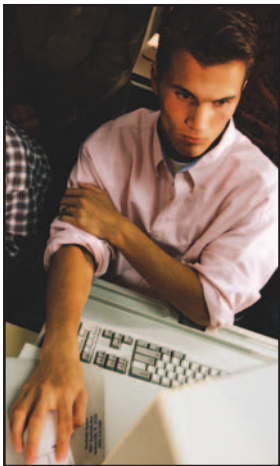
Colvin's work across campus as the University Diversity Committee's leader, and in the College of Education with the Holmes Scholars Program and directing the Adult and Family Literacy Project in West Liberty for more than a decade, has improved diversity in ways that have had ripple effects throughout the community.

Hogan said Iowa's Holmes Scholars program is recognized as one of the best in the nation, chiefly because of Colvin's efforts. "She has worked to create an environment of support and encouragement in the College, and the mentoring program she pioneered is one of the hallmarks of Iowa's program," he said.

"Carolyn Colvin has been and continues to be a strong, unwavering, dedicated force for change at the University," he added. "Thanks in large part to her inspiration and direction, the University Diversity Committee was able to effect change that reached far across this campus."

grants awards

Promoting Advanced Placement Among Low-Income Students



A three-year federal grant totaling almost \$800,000 will allow the Iowa Department of Education and the **Connie Belin and Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development** to promote Advanced Placement courses and testing among low-income high school students in Iowa.

AP programs give high school students the opportunity to take college-level courses and earn college credit while still in high school.

Funding for the grant comes from the *No Child Left Behind Act's* AP program, which is designed to increase access to advanced courses for low-income students and increase the achievement of students already enrolled in such programs. Iowa's portion will be used for the Enhancing AP Opportunities for Low-Income Students in Iowa Project, which is led by the Iowa Department of Education and the Belin-Blank Center.

This project will serve teachers and low-income students in 62 of Iowa's 364 public school districts. Low-income districts are defined as those with 40 percent or more students enrolled in the free/reduced lunch program. Program administrators hope to meet two goals by September 2008: to increase the number of low-income students in grades 9-12 across Iowa who participate and succeed in AP courses through on-site and online programs; and to increase the number of low-income stu-

dents in grades 6-8 across Iowa who participate and succeed in effective pre-AP courses in their schools.

"This project will allow the Department of Education and the Belin-Blank Center to significantly expand their support of low-income students across Iowa," Belin-Blank Director **Nicholas Colangelo** said. "Our efforts will increase the participation of low-income students in AP and pre-AP activities so that low socioeconomic status is minimized as a barrier to opportunities for academic excellence. Low-income students will ultimately move on to

institutions of higher education and will be better prepared to succeed at the college level."

According to research gathered by the U.S. Department of Education, 40 percent of the nation's high schools do not offer AP courses, and many of these schools serve low-income and minority students.

Additionally, research shows that students who take rigorous courses stand a far greater chance of succeeding in college. Low-income students in particular who take AP courses are much more likely to enroll and be successful in college than their non-participating peers.

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/459 Lindquist Center North/Iowa City, IA 52242-1529 or by e-mail to educationatiowa@uiowa.edu.

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Education Student Named UI Homecoming Queen

The University of Iowa named Elementary Education student **Holly Ann Lopez** as its 2005 Homecoming Queen.

"I can not think of a better representative for the College of Education or the University," said Dr. **Mitch Kelly**, Lopez's Educational Psychology professor. "Holly is a delightful human being. When I saw her with the crown, I thought to myself, 'Perfect.'"

Perfect is a hard word to live up to, but not for Lopez.

"Think of the kindest, most glowing comment you can come up with, and it would apply to Holly," Assistant Director of Academic Advising **Brian Corkery** said. "She is an all around good person—uses good judgment, has good instincts, and is solid through and through."

Lopez says her success can be credited to her early enrollment in the Teacher Education program. "I have been able to take advantage of many leadership, scholarship, and service opportunities," she said. Her extracurricular and academic experience include being in the

"It is rewarding for me to watch children grow as learners," said Holly Lopez, UI Homecoming Queen

Honors Opportunity and Big Brothers Big Sisters School Buddies programs, and serving as an America Reads head tutor working with children and other tutors, where she says, "I have been able to practice different teaching strategies while assessing my students and myself as a tutor. It is really rewarding for me to watch children grow as learners."

Lopez's work has also been recognized with a UI Student Employee of the Year award for her work with America Reads. It was through this work that her decision to be a teacher became concrete.

"Holly combines hard work with caring for others," Corkery added. "I'd be happy to have her teach my children as an elementary school teacher and I am confident they'd have a great experience with her."



Holly Ann Lopez is stellar role model as teacher and Homecoming Queen.