



Signs & Symbols

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Newsletter of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Notes from the chair

by Fred H. Smith, professor of anthropology and department chair

Change is a constant in life, as all of you know. Sometimes change is both positive and negative depending on one's perspective. For our department, change this year means losing the services of our long-term office manager, Mickey McCombs.



Mickey McCombs

Mickey suffered a serious health scare in February and needed an extended period to recuperate. All of us were very happy when she returned to work, fully recovered, and we are both happy (for Mickey) and sad (for us) that she decided to retire on June 30. Her many years of service to Illinois

State and her desire to have more time for her family combined to make this the right time for Mickey to make the retirement move.

Mickey has been a pillar of the department since she came to her current position 17 years ago. Prior to that, she served the College of Arts and Sciences and the now-defunct (unfortunately) University Museum. Overall, Mickey has 35 years of outstanding service to Illinois State, but nowhere has her impact been more fundamental than in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. I'm the third chair to benefit from Mickey's contributions; she started under Bob Walsh, and worked with Nick Maroules for his entire tenure as chair. I'm sure both of these guys will agree with all I'm about to say—and probably are even more knowledgeable than me where Mickey is concerned—but I'll do my best!

Our department has benefitted in numerous ways from Mickey's conscientious approach to everything—budgets, personnel issues, student hiring, textbook ordering, and all sorts of departmental functions. Let me give just a few examples. Our budget is always in the black at year's end, and that is because of Mickey's attention to detail and tenacious defense of our dollars. For the past several years, faculty members have received extra travel money at fiscal year's end directly as a result of her efforts. Our student honors luncheon is a wonderful event, praised by students, their families, and Illinois State administrators. Again, this success is largely due to Mickey's careful planning and organization of the event! Mickey has tackled all the challenges of human resource situations with the same "can do" approach that characterizes all she does. Anthropological field schools cause enough headaches to put Bayer out of business, but Mickey always finds a way to make things work. Finally, students have had no better ally at the University than Mickey, whose patience, dedicated approach to helping them with whatever problems students encounter, and ability to just listen to them has been a tremendous asset.

From my perspective, Mickey's encyclopedic knowledge of the University and how to get things done has been the primary reason for the efficient running of the department over the years. I stopped looking online or in the directory when I'm not sure who to call about some issue as soon as I realized that Mickey was a far better source. She always knows the right person or office to call.

The department, and all of us, simply would not be what and where we all are today without Mickey's professionalism, her untiring efforts, and her dedication to everything associated with the department. I know all of you join me in expressing our heartfelt gratitude to Mickey for all she has done for us. We will miss her greatly, and we wish her the best possible retirement under the sun.

Sociology and Anthropology Donor Roll

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Jim Skibo named Distinguished Professor

by Fred H. Smith

In 2012, Professor of Anthropology Jim Skibo became the fourth member of our department to be named a Distinguished Professor. He joins Charles Orser, Richard Stivers, and Susan Sprecher as



recipients of the highest distinction Illinois State University can award a faculty member. Distinguished Professors are recognized for their outstanding scholarly achievement and their academic reputation in their disciplines. Skibo has built a national and international reputation for his

research in ceramic analysis, archaeological theory, and ethnoarchaeology, having published eight books and more than 40 scholarly journal articles and book chapters. His research focuses on the American Upper Midwest, the American Southwest, and the Philippines; and he has directed the Grand Island archaeological project for more than a decade. Skibo has received numerous awards and grants to support his research, and he has done an outstanding job of involving students in that research. He regularly directs an archaeological field school at Grand Island and supervises numerous students in his laboratory. Also known as an excellent teacher, Skibo teaches courses in archaeological analysis, archaeological method and theory, and North American prehistory. He also regularly teaches a senior thesis class, directing anthropology seniors on their capstone research projects. In addition, he is editor of the fourth most-sited journal in archaeology, *The Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* and a book series published by the University of Utah Press. College of Arts and Sciences Dean Greg Simpson notes that Skibo's work "...has not only led us to a greater understanding of historic cultures through their artifacts, most specifically pottery, but he has provided his colleagues in the discipline with guidance on the process of linking artifacts and culture." Simpson also noted how a nonscholarly book Skibo wrote, *Ants for Breakfast*, contributes to the ideals of education. "His regard for education is also reflected in this book, written to inform a wider audience of the work of archaeologists and its meaning to the world today."

Advising notes

By Teri Farr-Behnke, assistant to the chair for undergraduate studies

Schroeder Hall 344 continues to be a busy location. This past year, in addition to working with students to ensure they are making good academic progress toward graduation, and helping them to establish and fine tune their goals after graduation, I have been busy working on my own professional development. I was very much honored to be elected National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Illinois Region V representative. With that honor, I was able to help establish the Illinois Academic Advising Association. Our inaugural conference was held May 28 at the University of St. Francis in Joliet, and almost 200 academic advisors from all over Illinois attended. Charlie Nutt, executive director of NACADA, provided our keynote address and reminded us of the integral role that advisors play on college campuses, and with shaping the future and educational goals of our students.

Another major initiative in the advising office was hosting a College Student Personnel Administration Graduate student, Amy Stringwell '09. While conducting her practicum, Stringwell developed and administered a career development workshop for anthropology majors. The program was met with success, and Stringwell copresented with me and Mark Vegter, Department of English, at the NACADA Region V conference in Akron, Ohio, on the topic "Integrating Career Exploration into Advising Practices." In addition, Amy has written an article for the online NACADA journal *Academic Advising Today* and her program will be featured as a Sparkler in the September issue. Congratulations to Amy on a successful practicum and her graduation this summer!

In the meantime, continue to stay in touch with the department. We love to hear from alums, and if you are ever on campus or are planning a trip to Normal be sure to let us know!

Undergraduate anthropology program notes: the year in review

By Jim Stanlaw, professor and undergraduate anthropology program coordinator

Bonfire Initiation

Once more, the anthropology program began the school year in September with its annual Initiation Bonfire held in the dark woods behind the house of former Professor Linda Giles. As usual a majority of anthropology majors turned out not only for the food and drink, but also to receive their special new name from the tribal elders (the anthro faculty).

It is the students' job to find out more about their namesake, and be ready to answer questions on their new moniker come graduation time in spring at Rites of Passage.

Dean's List

This year there were six anthropology undergraduates on the Dean's List for 2011–2012. These included Emily Blankenberger, Caitlin Kopp, Jessica Meado, Deborah Neidich, Jeffrey Painter, and Catherine Wheeler.

Lambda Alpha inductees

This year 16 students were tapped to be members of Lambda Alpha, the national anthropology scholarly honorary society. The inductees were Robert Brown, Jessica Dorsz, Lindsay Frey, Jessica Haglund, Katherine Hall, Valerie Hall, Lindsey Helms, Tracee Hobbs, Reilly Jaeger, Whitney Karriger, Steven Kuhn, Jessica Meado, Caitlin Meyer, Cecilia Montesdeoca, Megan Waiflein, and David Watt.

Martin Nickels Endowed Scholarship for Field School

The 2011–2012 Martin Nickels Endowed Scholarship Award for Field School went to Reilly Jaeger. This scholarship, named for the beloved—and certainly missed—long-time faculty member Martin Nickels, supports a worthy student for expenses for travel and living during a summer field trip or field school. This summer, Jaeger will join James Skibo and other students at his archaeological dig at Grand Island, Michigan.



Professor Jim Stanlaw presents the 2012 Nickels Scholarship to Reilly Jaeger

Senior thesis

This past semester 26 students completed their senior theses and defended them publicly over the course of two evenings. The thesis and its defense is a graduation requirement for all anthropology majors, and this year both the oral presentations and written work were of exceptional quality. Two projects were given the Anthropology Senior Thesis of the Year Award for 2012: Caitlin Kopp's "Residents' Attitudes Towards Hispanic Immigration in a Central Illinois Community," and Jeffrey Painter's "Mysteries in the Mud: The Art of Mud Glyph Cave." These are both fine, original pieces of research, and possible publication is encouraged.

Sociology undergraduate program

By Virginia T. Gill, professor of sociology

Sociology Club

A new Sociology Club was formed this year, an effort that was led by an enthusiastic group of undergraduate and graduate sociology students. This spring, the club was granted official registered student organization status at the University and elected its first officers: Kim Forst, president; Nikki Cihlar, vice president; Amy Bytof, secretary; Patrick Boylan, treasurer; and Chris Jones, recruiter/promoter. Chris Wellin and Virginia Gill are the faculty coadvisors for 2012–2013.

The new Sociology Club brings sociology students and faculty members together for a variety of activities, including social events, field trips, films, discussions about social issues, and programs on graduate school and careers. The club held a successful coffee sale during finals week, and several more fundraisers are planned for the coming year. Proceeds will be used to support student travel to professional conferences. If you would like to make a donation to Sociology Club, please contact Wellin at cwellin@IllinoisState.edu or Gill at vtgill@IllinoisState.edu. All sociology students are welcome to join Sociology Club! For more information on club activities, visit www.facebook.com/groups/100165376781512.

Alpha Kappa Delta

Alpha Kappa Delta is an international sociology honor society founded in 1920 to promote scholarship and fellowship in sociology. Our chapter at Illinois State was founded in 1980 and is one of more than 500 local chapters around the world. Our local chapter is advised by Professors Maria Schmeckle and Richard Sullivan. This year Illinois State University Alpha Kappa Delta welcomes eight new members: Alex Amsalem, Patrick Boylan, Reuban Dominguez, Charles Enger II, Tyler Flockhart, Mia Gilliam, Corine Jackson, and Kelley Jazdzewski.



2012 Alpha Kappa Delta initiates pictured with Professor Maria Schmeckle (far left) and Richard Sullivan (far right).



2012 Lambda Alpha inductees

Ed Jelks Outstanding Senior of the Year

Each year we select one senior to be anthropology student of the year. Named after the founder of the anthropology program, it is the most prestigious award we can convey upon one of our students. Our Senior of the Year for 2011–2012 was Deborah Neidich. This is always an exceptionally hard decision for the anthropology faculty because generally there are so many excellent candidates to choose from. This year was no exception. However, in terms of overall scholastic achievement, service, leadership, and experience, Neidich led this year's class very well. She has a top grade point overall average, and has made the Dean's List several times. She is a member of the Illinois State University Honors program, and this year she completed her senior thesis with honors. She attended field school and worked with several faculty members on outside-of-class field research projects. Neidich has been an undergraduate teaching assistant for several semesters, a position only given to our best students who demonstrate substantial leadership skills and personal integrity. She was also a very active SOSA Anthropology Club member and officer, and was one of the factors for its continued success this past year.



Deb Neidich receives the Ed Jelks Award from Professor Jim Stanlaw.

Rites of Passage

On May 10, we held our 34th annual Rites of Passage Ceremony for our graduating seniors. About 60 people attended. Lucca Grill was filled with good food and excitement as Master of Ceremonies Fred Smith guided candidates through the process of trying to become one of us, the "Tribal Elders." Neophytes were asked about some of their high-points in their undergraduate careers, and it was a last chance for students, faculty, friends, and family to all meet for the last time as a group, in an informal setting. Best of luck to all of our graduating seniors, but in the immortal words of Martin Nickels: "Remember, it's a jungle out there!"

News from the sociology graduate program

By Joan Brehm, associate professor and sociology graduate program coordinator

It is hard to believe that my first year as sociology graduate program coordinator is coming to a close. It has been a whirlwind of a year with a great deal of activity among our students and a significant learning curve for me as I learn to navigate all the bureaucracy that comes with this position. But I could not be happier in my new role, and I immensely enjoy working so closely with our amazing graduate students. This fall we will be welcoming eight new students into our program. Nicole Brandts has been accepted into the Applied Community and Economic Development Fellows program and comes to us from Monmouth College, where she received a B.A. in history. Emily Healy has been accepted as a Peace Corps Fellow. She served two years in Mongolia as part of the Peace Corps and has a B.S. in sociology from Illinois State University. Josie Maggio was accepted into the sociology master's program and has a B.A. in sociology from Illinois State University. John McNair was accepted into the master's international program and has a B.A. in anthropology and Latin American studies from Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi. Ronald Pikes was accepted into the sociology master's program and has a B.S. in marketing and a minor in sociology from Grambling State University in Grambling, Louisiana. Sarah Smathers was accepted into the sociology master's program and has a B.S. in sociology from Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, North Carolina. Jacob Smith has been accepted into the sociology master's program and has a B.S. in sociology from Southern Indiana University in Evansville, Indiana. These students represent an outstanding cohort with tremendous diversity. The program continues to draw some of the best and brightest students from outstanding schools across the country, and we are very excited for this new cohort to join us this fall.

Several of our current students are about to embark on new and exciting transitions. Three of our master's international students will be leaving for their Peace Corps service later this summer. Robyn Savacool will serve in Moldova, Kate Slisz will serve in Botswana, Katie Saunders will serve in the Dominican Republic, and Ashley Conrad will serve in the Philippines. We wish these students all the best as they undertake this exciting new challenge. As our most recent ACED Fellow, Luke Tervola will be starting his professional practice with College of Lake County, Illinois in the fall of 2012. The following students continue to work in their professional practice placements since last summer: Dana Bulba (an ACED student work-

ing with Credit Builders Alliance in Washington, D.C.); Katie Mitchell (a Peace Corps Fellow working with ASPIRA in Chicago); and Julie Ornée (a Peace Corps Fellow working with United Way of McLean County in Bloomington). Meanwhile, Dustin Stoltz continues his Peace Corps service in Azerbaijan, Trang-Thu Vu (Mimi) Duong continues her Peace Corps service in Morocco, Sasha Miranda continues her Peace Corps service in the Dominican Republic, and Tyler Curtis continues his Peace Corps service in Togo.

Our students have been exceptionally productive in sharing their research at a variety of professional venues this year. The following students have presented their work at a professional meeting or other professional forum:

Ashley Conrad

- “Empowering Children Living in Street Situations through Participatory Action Research: A Cost-Benefit Analysis” presented at the Midwest Sociological Society Meetings.

Tyler Flockhart

- “Evangelical Masculinities: The Negotiation of a Godly Identity” presented at the Illinois Sociological Association Annual Meeting.
- “The Construction and Maintenance of Masculinity among ‘Godly Men:’ An Analysis of Gender Negotiation among College-Age Evangelical Men” presented at the Midwest Sociological Society Meetings.
- “Conflict and Consciousness: A Narrative of Identity Negotiation and the Development of a Feminist Consciousness” presented at the Women’s and Gender Studies Research Symposium.
- “The Construction and Maintenance of Masculinity among ‘Godly Men’” presented at the Illinois State University Graduate Research Symposium.

Katie Saunders

- “Visual Representations of Homelessness” presented at the Midwest Sociological Society Meetings.

Aaron Tester

- “Property, Stewardship, and the Social Construction of Nature” presented at the Midwest Sociological Society Meetings.

Ashley Conrad, Kate Slisz, Katie Saunders, Andrew Smolski, Jenna Williams, Luke Tervola, and Robyn Savacool

- “Reducing our Waste in Bloomington-Normal, IL: A Community Recycling Program Assessment” presented at the Illinois State University Graduate Research Symposium.

Annie Munch

- “An Analysis of Coping Strategies Used by Stigmatized Obese Males” presented at the Midwest Sociological Society Meetings.

Julie Ornée

- “Great Expectations: Exploring the Experiences of Mothers of Children with Special Needs” presented at the Illinois State University Graduate Research Symposium.

Allie Ziegler

- “How Rosy is the Transition to Parenthood for Biological, Heterosexual Couples Compared to Adoptive or Lesbian Couples? A College-Student Perspective” presented at the Midwest Sociological Society Meetings.



The 2011–2012 cohort of sociology graduate students.
Top: Aaron Tester and Katie Saunders
Bottom: Jenna Williams, Kate Slisz, Ashley Conrad, Luke Tervola, and Andrew Smolski

We also have some exciting graduation announcements to share. Master’s international student Eric Porter (Peace Corps Service in Micronesia) successfully defended his thesis, “Closure and Consolidation: Schools, Farms and Population Decline in Rural Illinois” this spring. Porter deserves special mention, as this was not his originally-proposed thesis topic. Due to circumstances beyond his control, his thesis topic could not be seen to completion in Micronesia. Upon return to the states, Porter began an assistantship with the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission in Peoria in fall 2011 and at the same time prepared a completely new thesis proposal from scratch. He successfully proposed his thesis and defended the final product in just one year while working at his assistantship. He deserves special kudos for his commitment and perseverance to successfully finish the program in such a timely manner, and with an outstanding thesis!

Annie Munch is preparing to graduate this summer with her thesis, “An Analysis of Coping Strategies Used by Stigmatized Obese Males.” Several other students are preparing for an August graduation: Katie Mitchell is finalizing her thesis, “A Child’s First Teachers: A Historical

Sociology of Professional Discourse on Parents and Education;” Julie Ornée is finalizing her thesis, “Great Expectations: Exploring the Experiences of Mothers of Children with Special Needs,” and Allie Ziegler is finalizing her thesis “Exploring Adoptive Fatherhood: How Married, Heterosexual Fathers Experience the Adoptive Process.” Congratulations to all of our graduates!

This year’s graduate student award winners include first-year student Aaron Tester, who won the Department Charger Graduate Student Excellence Award, which is given annually to a student who demonstrates the most academic promise for success in the program. Julie Ornée was the recipient of the American Sociological Association/Illinois State University Distinguished Sociology Graduate Student Award, which is given annually to the graduate student who has most distinguished himself/herself over the course of the master’s degree program.



Aaron Tester with Professor Chris Wellin



Julie Ornée with Professor Chris Wellin

Finally, we should all be exceptionally proud of the caliber and accomplishments of our graduate students. The applicant pool is more and more competitive each year, and we continue to draw some of the best students from outstanding programs across the country. Our program has certainly been enhanced by the diversity of strong students that fill our classes and interact with us on their research pursuits. I could not be more proud of our students and the faculty that support them, and hope you all will join me in sharing in this celebration of their varied accomplishments.

Archaeology graduate program news

By James Skibo, Distinguished Professor and Archaeology Program Coordinator

We welcome 10 new students to this program fall 2012. They are listed with their area of specialization and undergraduate school (in parentheses): Sarah Boncal: bio-archaeology (University of Georgia); Sarah Caldwell: bio-archaeology (University of Northern Iowa); Scott Drapalik: historical archaeology (Illinois State University); Ian Fricker: prehistoric archaeology (University of Illinois); Allison Hodges: historical archaeology (University of Tennessee); Katherine Lacy: bio-archaeology (University of Michigan); Andrew Mallo: prehistoric archaeology (Northern Michigan University); Deborah Neidich: bio-archaeology (Illinois State University); Jeff Painter: prehistoric archaeology (Illinois State University); and Cori Rich: historical archaeology (Adams State College) For more information visit SociologyAnthropology.IllinoisState.edu/Graduate/Archeology.

Master’s degrees in archaeology in the 2011–2012 academic year were granted to:

- Jessica Griffin: “In the Shadow of Old Main: Campus Life, Consumer Choice and Foodways at Illinois State University 1860–1932”
- Susan Kooiman: “Old Pots, New Approaches: A Functional Analysis of Woodland Pottery from Lake Superior’s South Shore”
- Micca Metz: “The Mortality Patterns of Pioneer Cemeteries on the Fort Campbell, Kentucky, Military Reservation”
- Whitney Karriger: “Dental Microwear Texture Analysis of the Vindija and Krapina Neandertal Molars”
- Lindsey Helms: “Health and Disease at Leford Island: A Study of Late-Mississippian Human Remains”
- Valerie Hall: “These Pots Do Talk: Seventeenth-Century Indigenous Women’s Influence on Transculturation in the Chesapeake Region”
- Shanta Hoard: “The Role of the African American Church in the Community: Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church, Bloomington, Illinois”
- Stephanie Owens: “Regional Health Comparisons of East Tennessee Dallas Phase Sites”
- Elizabeth Kizior: “Colonial Ethnic Identity, Urban Organization, and Ceramic Variability at Caluco, El Salvador”

East Tennessee Bioarchaeology Field School

The third Bioarchaeology Field School was held at McClung Museum on the campus of the University of Tennessee in July 2011. Four students participated in the analysis of various skeletal samples from the Tennessee River valley system, under the direction of Professor Maria O. Smith. Analysis focused on health status of the Ledford Island site, occurrence of external auditory exostoses or “surfer’s ear” in various samples, and the incidence of a specific spinal column pathology known as DISH. Three students presented studies based on this research at the Midwest Bioarchaeology and Forensic Anthropology Association meeting held at Illinois State University in October.



Bioarchaeology Field School Participants (from left): Maria O. Smith, Jessie Dorsz, Micca Metz, Nicole Gasperini, and Lindsey Jo Helms.

Notes on the gerontology program

By *Chris Wellin*, assistant professor and gerontology minor program coordinator

Over the past year, we have strengthened the study of gerontology at Illinois State University—both in the classroom, and through vibrant connections and collaborations across campus, in McLean County, and even statewide. The number of gerontology minors, around 25, continues to grow slowly and steadily, and even in a challenging economy and labor market, these students find expanding opportunities upon graduation. This continues to be true not only in the allied health and social service professions, but also in fields such as education, marketing, and architecture/interior design. Indeed, it would be difficult to identify a professional field today that is not affected in some way by the demographic changes in the U.S., one-fifth of whose population will be “old” (age 65 or above) within a decade.

Most minors are exposed and recruited to the field through SOC 211: Social Gerontology, which is offered each and every semester. Given the public debates about entitlement programs (especially Social Security and Medicare), students are especially aware of how central societal aging and dis-

Illinois State Paleoanthropology in Croatia

Since 2009, Illinois State has participated in Paleolithic cave excavations conducted in cooperation with the Department of Archaeology at the University of Zagreb, the Anthropological Research Institute in Zagreb, and the University of Wyoming at various locations in Croatia. From 2009–2011, excavations centered on the caves of Zala and Bukovac Pećina. Zala has provided excellent information on late Upper Paleolithic adaptation, and Bukovac has yielded indications of the early Upper Paleolithic in this part of Europe. In 2012, excavations will switch from Zala to another early Upper Paleolithic site, Velika Pećina in Krievica. The early Upper Paleolithic is important for understanding the emergence of modern humans in Europe, as well as the fate of the Neandertals, and is the main focus of the Croatian project. Illinois State students who have participated in these excavations are Caitlin Kopp, Whitney Karriger, Miranda Utzinger, and Arika Ward. Karriger, Utzinger and Ward also studied the Vindija and Krapina Neandertal fossils in Zagreb for their master’s or senior thesis research.



Excavations at Bukovac Pećina (Cave), 2010.



ISU’s Whitney Karriger molding Neandertal teeth from Krapina in the Croatian National History Museum in Zagreb (2011).

ability have become to vital national policy choices. In this course, students are required to write extensively, from first-person essays on the meanings and transitions of aging, to more macro-level, analytic arguments.

I have also been gratified by the experience of teaching the upper-level seminar (SOC 311/411) in gerontology, of which the current focus is the “Changing Terrain of Work and Retirement in the U.S.” A combination of longer educational careers for many young people; less stable employment conditions, which has been exacerbated by the recession; and the tendency for older people to work beyond traditional retirement age (whether by choice or necessity) has cast into question a life course “timetable” that has been taken for granted since the post WWII period. In our seminar, which is open to graduate students as well as advanced undergraduates, we explore the changing meaning(s) and timetables of work-lives and, in turn, of retirement experiences.

In addition to our focus on late life and older workers, student-members also use the seminar to study how work and occupations are changing in response to societal aging. This sociology of work perspective has long been present in the department, and in our seminar we combine and integrate this subfield with that of aging. For example, new occupational roles are emerging to respond to the needs of older and/or disabled people, and many of our students are preparing to enter such fields; as such, their interests are both intellectual and personal/career-oriented. Examples of such dynamic occupations are grief counseling, therapeutic recreation, and the child-life specialty. Preparation for these fields is provided in many strong, kindred programs at Illinois State. For example, the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences offers a master’s degree with a specialty in child life. As they explain on their website, “A child life specialist is a professional who is specially trained to help children and their families understand and manage challenging life events and stressful healthcare experiences. Child life specialists are skilled in providing developmental, educational, and therapeutic interventions for children and their families under stress.” Students with such interests also gain invaluable insight from other courses, such as the SOC 212: Sociology of Death and SOC 310: Medical Sociology, which are gerontology electives.

In concluding these notes, I briefly describe exciting collaborations that are enhancing gerontology programs at Illinois State, and celebrate students who have completed the graduate certificate in social aspects of aging.

First, with Caroline Mallory (professor in the Mennonite College of Nursing) I have continued to

nurture a campus-wide Network on Aging, Health, and Disability. As mentioned in the 2011 issue of this newsletter, the network’s purpose is to enhance teaching, research, and service related to gerontology, not only for the benefit of our students, but for the broader community. We discussed and reflected on this effort in a presentation at the annual Symposium on Teaching, sponsored by the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology (CTLT) in January, and are preparing a grant for a regional conference to support this effort.

In addition, I was pleased to join the Community Health Advisory Committee (CHAC) of the McLean County Department of Health. This will be a vehicle for learning more about the specific public health needs—and proposed interventions—in the local community. The CHAC is completing work for a new five-year Community Health Plan and Needs Assessment, as mandated by the “Healthy People 2020” project of the federal government. Inasmuch as the community health perspective is essential in social gerontology, this connection will be invaluable. This spring I was invited to take part in the Aging and Disability Resource Center Network Advisory Council for East Central Illinois. This is an excellent opportunity for collaboration among advocates for older adults and persons with disabilities across the life span. Under the leadership of Michael O’Donnell, executive director of the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging (ECI-AAA), and with support from the Center for Health, Aging and Disability, University of Illinois, this Council is working to enhance coordination of services and programs for older people and those with disabilities—two groups with distinct, but often overlapping and complementary, needs and aspirations.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge students who have special achievements to claim in the field of gerontology. Morgan Buechele, an undergraduate majoring in therapeutic recreation, won this year’s gerontology scholarship award. In addition to her academic excellence, Buechele also developed professionally and enhanced many lives through her internship at the Sugar Creek Alzheimer’s Special Care Center in Normal. In this, she and I thank Teri Farr-Behnke, the undergraduate advisor and internship coordinator, for helping make this such a valuable experience.

Gerontology at Illinois State is also thriving at the graduate level. The certificate program in social aspects of aging is instrumental in enhancing both the training of students and professionals in various fields, and also the classroom experience for all concerned. One of the fields that is central to research and practice in gerontology is social work. With the leadership of the chair, Diane Zosky, the School

of Social Work has developed their graduate concentration in gerontology practice. Students who pursue this concentration in the M.S.W. program also qualify for the gerontology certificate from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Some of the coursework, including electives, draw from a cross-disciplinary curriculum. In addition to coursework that is specific to gerontology, students will complete their advanced practicum in an agency setting with older adults.

Two students who have completed this program are Angela Dunk and Jennifer Pemberton. They exemplify the potential of the certificate program and the essential connections between our program and others on campus. Both have also become valued colleagues and resources for me and many other affiliated faculty members in aging.

Angela Dunk, reflecting on her experience with certificate program, reports that, “I just completed a yearlong M.S.W. internship in conjunction with my degree at Sugar Creek Alzheimer’s Special Care Center and also with the Alzheimer’s Association. Both practicum placements allowed me to apply my knowledge of the aging population in different ways. At Sugar Creek, I practiced on a micro level, providing direct services to residents and families. At the association, I worked on a community level, educating people about Alzheimer’s disease, legislation, and policy that impacts the aging population, and advocating for those with the disease. I am currently pursuing my professional social work license, with an ultimate professional goal of becoming an administrator at a long-term care facility for the elderly population.”

Jennifer Pemberton reports that, “The specific topics I have focused on include aging in place and dying in a preferred setting with the assistance of trained in-home caregivers. Although I have worked within several long-term care facilities, my passion lies with keeping people independent in the community for as long as possible. With this comes the need to train and coach qualified and caring caregivers to provide in-home assistance, which I have done for the past three years at the McLean County YWCA. In late June I will start my new job at the ECI-AAA as a planning and program specialist/healthy aging specialist. I will be overseeing programs throughout 16 counties in Illinois to ensure they are in compliance to receive grant funding from the AAA.”

Whether working to implement innovative approaches to dementia care or programs for helping older and disabled people maintain independent lives in the community, these and other students reflect the exciting horizons in the field of aging, and are a source of great pride for the program and the University.

Applied Community and Economic Development Fellow Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development

Dana Bulba, a Stevenson Center Applied Community and Economic Development (ACED) fellow in sociology, is enjoying her professional practice in Washington, D.C., with the Credit Builders Alliance (CBA). The Stevenson Center administers an interdisciplinary graduate sequence for students pursuing careers in community and economic development. Through coursework and an 11-month paid internship, ACED fellows earn a master’s degree in applied economics, political science, or sociology. Within each degree program, the applied community/economic development sequence covers a range of topics, including project design and management, grant writing, and other subjects in administration and planning. Additionally, each student drives an individual research agenda in areas like sustainable development, food systems, microfinance, and housing.

Bulba is helping implement and develop CBA’s communications strategies. She is also collaborating on projects pertaining to CBA’s training and knowledge sharing. Bulba reports:

“It’s been really amazing working at CBA and having an opportunity to work and discuss with organizations across the country. CBA has in its membership more than 300 organizations including, but not limited to, Habitat for Humanity affiliates, community development financial institutions, credit unions, and microlenders. I’ve communicated with dozens of individuals from the various groups on a wide variety of topics; from learning more about small business lending practices, to understanding the impact of financial coaching, I’ve been able to gain valuable insight on the powerful impact of these organizations.

One of my first projects at CBA was taking the lead in developing a cohosted individual development accounts and credit building webinar. This was an amazing opportunity for me to learn more about and coordinate with two amazing community development organizations—Kentucky Domestic Violence Association and LISC/Chicago. We had more than 90 credit and asset building practitioners from across the country register.”

Bulba graduated from the University of Maine in 2008 with a B.A. in journalism with minors in public relations and sociology. Upon graduation, she joined Teach For America as a 2008 charter corps member in Jacksonville, Florida, where she taught the second grade. Bulba plans to continue working in Washington, D.C., after completing her master’s degree.



Society of Student Anthropologists

By *Jessie Dorsz, copresident*

The Society of Student Anthropologists (SOSA) began the 2011–2012 academic year off strong with our first-ever booth at Festival ISU. Students of all ages, majors, and backgrounds were able to learn about what SOSA, as well as the discipline

of anthropology, had to offer. This boosted our club's participation to approximately 35 members, making this year the largest club in SOSA history. Under the direction of Deb Neidich, copresident; Jessie Dorsz, copresident; Lindsey Frey, secretary; Elizabeth Wilk, treasurer; and Chris Jaegle, underclass liaison, these new members were initiated at the residence of former Illinois State Professor Linda Giles. These students

enjoyed good food, dancing around the bonfire, and fun while getting their faces painted by veteran members.

Last October, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology hosted the annual Midwest Bioarchaeology and Forensic Anthropology Association conference. SOSA provided a valuable helping hand by setting up, tearing down, and making sure that everything in between ran smoothly.

This year's field trips included both of SOSA's favorite hotspots: the Chicago Field Museum and Cahokia. At the Field Museum, the club members entered into the underground collections facility of the anthropology department, led by the museum curator, Christopher Philipp. For the rest of the day, SOSA explored the public areas of the museum.

On the morning of the Cahokia trip, a raging rainstorm sprawled across most of the Midwest, but our club members were enthusiastic about going to the Native American Metropolis. And so we all drove three hours in a thunderstorm to meet blue skies and muddy Cahokian fields. A great day was had by all.

SOSA held many events filled with ideas both new and old. Participants discovered the hiccups of archaeology through an entertaining garbology lab (determining that the population of Illinois State consists of squirrel-worshippers) and held the club's very first potlatch.

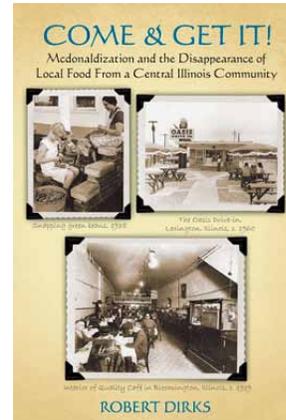
In mid-November, SOSA celebrated our second Non-Traditional Thanksgiving, where members brought a cornucopia of food items that would not be found at the typical Thanksgiving table. "Bad Anthro Movie Nights" were held once each month, where members enjoyed some really entertaining, but not anthropologically accurate, films.



SOSA members on the Cahokia trip.

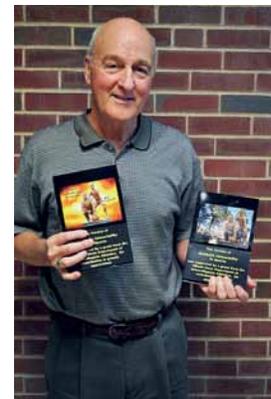
Individuals who will be serving as SOSA's executive board for the 2012–2013 academic years will be the president trifecta: Christine Jaegle, Brianna Andrews, and Joshua Justin Travis; secretary: Reilly Jaeger; treasurer: Sarah Anderson; and undergraduate liaison: Sam Wolf. We hope SOSA will continue to grow and work closely with the campus community in the future. Most importantly, we want to continue to connect people who love anthropology and provide access to ways with which to experience it.

Faculty authors



Robert Dirks, professor emeritus of anthropology, has authored an ethnohistory of food and drink in the Bloomington-Normal area. The book, *Come & Get It! McDonaldization and the Disappearance of Local Food From a Central Illinois Community*,

chronicles changes in eating and drinking from pioneer days through the final years of the 20th century. The book is published by the McLean County Historical Society. Dirks began his study of local food and drink as guest curator of the McLean County Museum of History's popular Come & Get It! exhibit. The exhibit opened in 2009 and continued through January 2012.



Wilbert (Wib) Leonard, sociology professor, has published a book detailing the complex issue of "immortality" as a sports legend. *Symbolic Immortality in Sports* features Illinois State University sports legends Will Robinson and Doug Collins on the book's

cover, which was designed by Doris Jennings. Leonard takes both a sociological and media-based perspective on the social world of sport. Leonard argues that sports facilitate symbolic immortality by providing specific occasions, settings, mechanisms, and processes through which its participants can be remembered and eulogized.

Undergraduate student recognition

The department's twelfth annual Student Awards Ceremony and Luncheon was held on April 20, 2012 at the Alumni Center. More than 125 students, their family members and friends, and current and retired departmental faculty enjoyed a festive meal and celebrated the accomplishments of both undergraduate and graduate students. We were also joined by the new dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Greg Simpson, who shared some words of wisdom with those attending. Several of our award winners are listed below:

Ben Keeley Scholarship

Josephine Maggio



Josephine (Josie) Maggio is presented the Keeley Scholarship by Professor Wib Leonard.

John Kinneman Scholarship

Abdelkarim (Karim) Daiya



Abdelkarim (Karim) Daiya, a 2012 John Kinneman Scholarship recipient, congratulated by Professor Richard Sullivan.

Heather Gilbert



Heather Gilbert, 2012 John Kinneman Scholarship recipient, congratulated by Professor Diane Bjorklund.

Gerontology Scholarship

Morgan Buechele (See related story on p. 7.)



CAS Dean Greg Simpson with Dean's List students from sociology and anthropology.

Dean's List, fall/spring 2011

Emily Blankenberger	Jessica Meado
Jeremy Dalessio	Deborah Neidich
Melissa Dickey	Sarah Nyquist
Peter Elias	Jeffrey Painter
Drew Jacobson	Christopher Samp
Caitlin Kopp	Curtis Smith
Travis Larivee	David Watt
Josephine Maggio	Catherine Wheeler
Joshua McLaughlin	Yang Yang

Ed Jelks Outstanding Anthropology Senior

Deb Neidich

(See related story and picture on page 4.)

Outstanding Senior Thesis

Caitlin Kopp

Jeff Painter

(See related story and picture on page 3.)

Martin Nickels Endowed Fellowship for Field School

Reilly Jaeger

(See related story and picture on page 3.)

Alpha Kappa Delta inductees

Alex Amsalem

Tyler Flockhard

Patrick Boylan

Mia Gilliam

Reuban Dominguez

Corine Jackson

Charles Enger II

Kelly Jazdzewski

(See related story and picture on page 3.)

Lambda Alpha inductees

Robert Brown

Reilly Jaeger

Jessica Dorsz

Whitney Karriger

Lindsay Frey

Steven Kuhn

Jessica Haglund

Jessica Meado

Katherine Hall

Cailin Meyer

Valerie Hall

Cecilia Montesdeoca

Lindsey Helms

Megan Waiflein

Tracee Hobbs

David Watt

(See related story and picture on page 3.)

Graduate student recognition

The following graduate students were honored and recognized at this year's annual Student Awards Ceremony and Luncheon:

American Sociological Association/Illinois State University Distinguished Graduate Student Award

Julie Ornée

(See related story and picture on page 4.)

Department Charter Graduate Student Excellence Award

Aaron Tester

(See related story and picture on page 4.)



Scott Elliott Award Recipients (left to right): Tyler Flockhart, Jessica Griffin, Valerie Hall, Lindsey Helms, Whitney Karriger, Micca Metz, and Allison Ziegler

Scott Elliott Endowment Awards

Scott Elliot, a 1985 graduate of Illinois State who minored in sociology, established an endowed fund to support the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. These funds are used for travel awards supporting student presentations at professional meetings. Recipients of this year's Scott Elliott Awards and the titles of their presentations are listed below.

- **Lindsey Arrasmith** attended the Illinois Sociological Association meeting in Galesburg to participate in a panel discussion of transitioning from community college to a university.
- **Tyler Flockhart** presented the paper, *Masculinity in Evangelical Men* at the Illinois Sociological Association, and another paper, *The Construction and Maintenance of Masculinity Among "Godly Men,"* at the Midwest Sociological Society in Minneapolis.
- **Jessica Griffin** made two professional presentations: *Excavations and Analysis of the*

Beginnings of Illinois at the Midwest Historical Archaeology meetings in Lansing, Michigan, and In the Shadow of Old Main: Campus Life, Consumer Choice and Foodways at Illinois State Normal University from 1860 to 1932 at the national meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology in Baltimore.

- **Jessica Haglund** attended the Midwest Archaeology Conference in La Cross, Wisconsin, to present *Preliminary Analysis of Animal Remains from Myer-Dickson Site, Fulton County, Illinois.*
- **Valerie Hall** presented *These Pots Do Talk: Seventeenth-Century Native American Women's Influence on Creolization in the Chesapeake Region* at the annual meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology in Baltimore.
- **Lindsey Jo Helms** attended the Midwest Archaeological Conference in La Cross and presented *Post-Mortem Human Bone Modification: Demographic Analysis of Mortuary Tapping in Northern Minnesota.*
- **Whitney Karriger** presented a paper, *Occlusal Microwear Analysis in Croatian Neandertals,* at the annual meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists in Portland, Oregon.
- **Susan Kooiman** presented *Old Pots, New Approaches: A Functional Analysis of Woodland Pottery and Decoration along the South Shore of Lake Superior* at this year's Midwest Archaeological Conference held in La Cross.
- **Micca Metz** attended the 2012 Current Research in Tennessee Archaeology Meeting in Nashville, Tennessee giving a paper, *The Speed of Disease: Mortuary Assessment of the Homestead Cemeteries of the Ft. Campbell Military Reservation.*
- **Cailin Meyer** presented *Identity from the Faunal Analysis of Roystrom House* at the annual meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology in Baltimore.
- **Ann Munch** participated in the Illinois Sociological Association in Galesburg as the Illinois State student representative and presented *Obese Men Coping with their Stigmatized Identity* at the Midwest Sociological Society in Minneapolis.
- **Allison Ziegler** presented *How Rosy is the Transition to Parenthood for Biological Heterosexual Couples Compared to Adoptive or Lesbian Couples?* at the Midwest Sociological Society's annual meeting in Minneapolis.

Tip of the hat

Jenna Carlson, M.A. 2011 was runner-up for the Illinois State Outstanding Graduate Thesis Award for 2011. Carlson is now a doctoral student in historical archaeology at the College of William and Mary.

Cecilia Montesdeoca has received the 2012 Redbird 5 Scholarship, announced at the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Awards Ceremony on April 4, 2012. Montesdeoca is a senior majoring in anthropology.

Kristen Gianaris received the 2012 Craig Reeser Scholarship in the Social Sciences and the 2012 Grabill-Homan Peace Prize at the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Awards Ceremony on April 4, 2012. Gianaris is a senior sociology major.

Gina Hunter, associate professor of anthropology, was awarded the inaugural Kenneth and Mary Ann Shaw Teaching Fellowship in the College of Arts and Sciences. This fellowship honors excellent teachers and mentors in the college and provides support for enhancement of teaching/mentoring efforts. Hunter will use this support for expanded student participation in the Old Main Project and for initiatives relating to her popular general education course on "Contemporary Human Problems."

Wib Leonard, professor of sociology, was selected as the College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Lecturer for fall 2012. Being named a Distinguished Lecturer is one of the highest honors the college bestows on its faculty members. Leonard is honored for his pioneer efforts in the sociology of sport, as well as his long, outstanding service to Illinois State and its students. Look for a story on Leonard's Distinguished Lecture in next year's Signs and Symbols.

Victoria (Tori) Moré '10, anthropology, received the Bill Whit Undergraduate Student Paper Award for 2011 from the association for the Study of Food and Society and published an article based on her senior thesis, "Dumpster Divers: An Ethnography of Freeganism," in the *Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography* (volume 1, pages 43–55).

Aaron Pitluck has been promoted to the rank of associate professor and awarded tenure at Illinois State. Pitluck is in Budapest where he received a competitive two-year fellowship at Central European University.

Kathryn Sampeck, assistant professor of anthropology, was awarded the 2011 College of Arts and Sciences Excellence Award for Outstanding Pre-Tenure Scholarly Activity at the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Awards Ceremony on April 4, 2012.

Jim Skibo, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, received the Society for American Archaeology's Award for Excellence in Archaeological Analysis for his lifelong contributions to the field of archaeological ceramic studies. The award was presented at the SAA's annual meeting in Memphis in April.

Maria Ostendorf Smith, associate professor of anthropology, organized the annual meeting of the Midwest Bioarchaeology and Forensic Anthropology Association which met at Illinois State in October 2012. Some 150 bioarchaeologists and forensic anthropologists attended.

Richard Sullivan, associate professor of sociology, was interviewed on NPR's Marketplace in November, 2011.

Christopher Wellin, assistant professor of sociology, was awarded the 2011 College of Arts and Sciences Excellence Award for Outstanding Pre-Tenure Teaching at the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Awards Ceremony on April 4, 2012.

Alumni news

Sociology and education—A success story

By *Alyse Lewis*

In May 2011, I graduated from Illinois State University with a bachelor's degree in sociology. During my final year at Illinois State, I was nervous about what life would be like after graduation. I reached out to my sociology professors and academic advisor for suggestions about options for the future. With their help, I looked into different types of service work. I wanted to spend time giving back to the community and helping those less fortunate. I researched the Peace Corps and various AmeriCorps programs until I finally applied to one, Teach For America (TFA).

Thanks to the support of my academic advisor, professors, family, and friends, I was accepted into the Teach For America program. TFA is an organization that places college graduates into under-resourced schools for two years to help provide a quality education to kids growing up in poverty. By doing so, we help address an issue that I became passionate about through my sociological studies: the significant achievement gap between low-income children and their higher-income peers.

I am the 9th grade algebra teacher, homeroom teacher, and cheerleading coach at ASU Preparatory Academy in Downtown Phoenix. Many of my students come from low-income and Spanish-speaking households, so school has been difficult for them. I have learned that these children are very bright and capable of great things; they just need someone to support and believe in them. I have formed strong relationships with my students and their families to help them succeed in future education. Also, I am a full-time student at Arizona State University working toward my master's degree in secondary education. I plan on continuing my work in this field well beyond my commitment with TFA.

I recognize that none of this would have been possible without the education, support, recommendations, and opportunities I received from Illinois State University. I am very grateful for all of the wonderful people I met and worked with as an undergraduate student. I hope to provide all of my students with the same strong support system that I had at Illinois State. Thank you for everything.

A tribute to Professor F. James Davis (1920–2012)

By *Barbara Heyl*, professor emerita of sociology

F. James (Jim) Davis joined the Illinois State University faculty of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work in 1971 as full professor. With this move he returned to the



Alyse Lewis (center) with her ASU Preparatory Academy cheerleading squad.

Midwest where he had been born and had earned his Ph.D. (from the University of Iowa). They also still had their parents living in Iowa. Davis had already accumulated 26 years of college teaching, two stints of serving as a department chair, and one year in Turkey as a Senior Fulbright Researcher before coming to Illinois State. Once here, he created a new course at the graduate level in the Sociology of Law. He had helped build an early foundation for this emerging subfield in sociology as senior author of *Society and the Law*, published in 1962 with three coauthors. He also taught courses in the Sociology of Deviant Behavior and the Sociology of Minority/Dominant Relations, publishing three books in these two substantive areas while at Illinois State. Davis retired from Illinois State in 1985. He published his seventh book in 1991, *Who Is Black: One Nation's Definition*. This is likely his most influential book, as it delved into the origins and social consequences of the "one-drop rule" that defines all those individuals with any known black ancestor as being black, regardless of their actual genetic heritage or personal appearance. He was called to serve on several advisory panels for the executive branch of the government, including consulting with Census Bureau staff as they considered issues of multiple-race identity on census questionnaires. In 1997 he was one of 16 speakers at the President's Cancer Panel Meeting on the impact of socially constructed racial categories on biological and medical research.

Davis died just one month shy of his 92nd birthday, and a celebration of his long and productive life was held at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington-Normal on May 26, 2012. Attending were many Illinois State faculty members, friends from Westminster Village in Bloomington where he and Lucile lived for more than 20 years, and family members from across the U.S. At the service his daughter, Sarah Davis, played audio recordings of Jim recalling his days in the U.S. Navy during World War II and also a video of him being interviewed in 1994 by Oprah Winfrey on her show that focused on the impact of the one-drop rule on families today. His eldest daughter, Elinor, and middle daughter, Miriam, were not able to attend due to health problems, but their written contributions were read during the service. Elinor noted that her father was the first in his family to go to college, and "from his modest prairie beginning, then several harrowing years in the Navy during World War II when he spent time in North Africa and Italy, followed by graduate school and travels around the U.S., he cobbled together a world view that embraced all peoples and cultures everywhere on earth as interesting and worthy of respect, understanding, and acceptance." His students and colleagues can attest

to these inclusive values and the gentle, thoughtful nature of this very well informed scholar and teacher we were fortunate enough to know. We will miss him, though the legacy of his influence on our individual lives, community, and profession will remain.

Museum director charted his future at Illinois State University

By Mary Ann Ford

When Michael Wiant graduated from University High School in 1967 and enrolled at Illinois State University, he planned to major in history and minor in geology, or maybe even physical education. A summer job changed his direction.

"I was working at Alexander Lumber Company, and by chance got an order to be delivered to 605 N. School Street," he said.

It was the home of Ed Jelks, an archaeologist and sociology and anthropology faculty member at that time.

"In idle conversation, he asked if I'd ever thought about an archeology class," Wiant said.

The conversation with Jelks had been so engaging, Wiant decided to take his advice. He signed up for Introduction to Archaeology, a class taught by Marjory Honerkamp, and then followed with Jelks' class, Prehistoric Man in North America.

"I was hooked," said Wiant, who now serves as director of Dickson Mounds Museum in Lewistown, which is a branch of the Illinois State Museum.

Wiant earned his bachelor's in social sciences education in 1971 and got a part-time job with the Northwestern University archeology program. While debating his next career step, he spent three years doing fieldwork along the lower reach of the Illinois River valley.

That convinced him to pursue not one, but two master's degrees at the same time. In 1977 he earned a master of science degree in sociology-anthropology from Illinois State, and a master of arts in anthropology from Northwestern University. In 1987 he was awarded his doctorate in anthropology from Northwestern.



ISU sociologists at the ceremony celebrating Jim Davis' life (from left to right): Shailer Thomas, Bill Tolone, Bob Walsh, Sarah Davis (Jim's daughter), Barbara Heyl, Bob Wazienski, Carolyn and Roy Treadway, Bill Rau, Kathleen McKinney, Wib Leonard, and David Eaton.

Wiant was on the staff of the Illinois State Museum from 1982–2002, serving as associate curator, head of the anthropology section, then curator of anthropology. He was named interim director of Dickson Mounds Museum in 2003 and appointed director in 2004.

In 1990 Illinois State gave him a chance to return to the classroom as a lecturer. Four years later, he became an adjunct assistant professor in sociology-anthropology. He teaches museum studies courses.

“There’s no greater joy than having a student call back and say the class had a constructive and positive impact on my life,” he said.

Jelks must feel that same joy. Wiant still visits the man who helped light the passion in his life.

“We still sit in the same living room (at 605 N. School St.) and talk about archeology,” he said. “It’s been 45 years.” Not only did the curriculum capture his attention, but Wiant remembers both Jelks and Honerkamp as “compassionate human beings.”

“They took an interest in me,” he said. “It was a pivotal point in my life that generated passion. Once that passion became a part of my life, it filled it 24/7.”

Wiant received the E. Burton Mercier Service Award from Illinois State in 1999 and was recognized in 2011 as a Distinguished Graduate by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. He is also a member of the University High School Hall of Fame.

“The high school award gave me the opportunity to talk about the extraordinary lab school/university relationship,” he said of the honor received in 2006. “My passion grew out of the wonderful academic environment provided by the wonderful school and university.”

Alum’s career built on Illinois State sociology studies

By *Mary Ann Ford*

Marlon James was born and raised in a single-parent home in Chicago’s inner city, where he gained first-hand knowledge of the struggles facing urban youth. He wanted to know what created the issues.

“My two degrees showed me the causes of urban struggles and gave me critical insight,” said James, who earned a bachelor’s in sociology from Illinois State in 1999 and a master’s in sociology with an emphasis on inequality and social change in 2002.

His coursework—and a class that prepared him for teaching in a community college setting—gave him the tools he needed to help make a change. He is now an assistant professor of teaching and learning at Loyola University Chicago.

“What makes me unique as a faculty member is the adult education I received at Illinois State University. Without Illinois State, I’d be any professor,” James said. He credits Illinois State Sociology and Anthropology Professor Maura Toro-Morn for playing a “critical role” in his college experience.

“She got me through my bachelor’s and master’s,” he said. “She supported me.”

Illinois State provided James with a multicultural education—a program comprised of other fields, including sociology and race/ethnic relations. “Without race/ethnic relations, you don’t have the foundation and principles of sociology,” he said.

Through Illinois State sociology classes, James learned that medically there’s no difference between racial groups. Race is socially constructed. While working on his master’s he remained true to a pledge and returned to Parkland Community College to teach. He had attended Parkland previously and received financial support to go to Illinois State University.

James found many students at Parkland who were interested in attending his college-level course weren’t eligible because they didn’t have the needed skill sets. “There were adults reading at fifth- and eighth-grade levels,” said James, who worked with Parkland to create a course that was supported by remedial English and writing courses.

“We had a really good turnout,” he said. “I was frankly told by students that the counselor sent them to me because other professors wouldn’t let them take courses. I developed a reputation of helping urban kids.”

When James decided to pursue a doctorate, he wanted to find a university with a supportive faculty member like Toro-Morn. Illinois State University friends and colleagues helped him find the perfect match: Texas A&M University and one of its faculty members, former Illinois State Professor Norvella Carter.

While he earned his doctorate in curriculum and instruction in 2008, he still considers Illinois State the place where he built the foundation for his future. “In terms of the work I do today, my experience at Illinois State was more formative than my Ph.D.”

James became an assistant professor at University of Connecticut in 2008 but was homesick for Illinois. A friend recommended Loyola, which is the university Toro-Morn had attended and where Carter had been a professor.

He joined the Loyola faculty in 2011.

Today his resume includes a lengthy list of publications and conference and workshop presentations designed to help teachers understand and help urban learners. His passion remains unchanged from his days at Illinois State.

“My direction came from Illinois State,” he said. “There’s no doubt about it.”



Save the date—Homecoming 2012

Plans are being made for the Department of Sociology and Anthropology faculty, staff, students, and alumni to celebrate. More information is available at IllinoisStateHomecoming.com.

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