



## Graduate College welcomes new director of the Office of Graduate Ethnic Inclusion

The Graduate College is pleased to announce the appointment of Tarrell Awe Agahe Portman, Ph.D., as the director of the Office of Graduate Ethnic Inclusion (OGEI).

Dr. Portman leads the OGEI staff in recruiting top underrepresented graduate scholars and working to retain them at the UI once they have enrolled. As part of her duties, she coordinates diversity programs and initiatives, and represents the Graduate College at meetings and conferences pertaining to graduate diversity issues. Dr. Portman also works with the Dean's administrative staff on diversity grant and fellowship programs.

Dr. Portman is an Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling, Rehabilitation, and Student Development in the College of Education. She coordinates the Ph.D. Counselor Education & Supervision and M.A. School Counseling programs, and serves as chair of the College of Education Faculty Advisory Committee.

Dr. Portman is currently interim chair of the UI Native American Faculty and Staff Council. She is the Graduate College Diversity Officer, and she has served on the College of Education Diversity Committee, and the UI Charter Committee for Diversity.

Active in diversity efforts nationally, Dr. Portman is secretary for the National Holmes Scholar Alumni Association.

She is vice president of the Native American branch of the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development, and she serves on the Committee for Institutional Cooperation (CIC) American Indian Committee. Her appointment as OGEI director began August 1, 2008.



*Tarrell Portman, director of the Graduate College's Office of Graduate Ethnic Inclusion.*

OGEI's diversity efforts include:

- Graduate student recruitment and retention
- Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SROP)
- UI's McNair Program
- Cooperative efforts with other Big 10 institutions (CIC)

For more about OGEI, visit [www.grad.uiowa.edu/OGEI](http://www.grad.uiowa.edu/OGEI)

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UI students Lesley Irizarry-Fonseca and Lashawn Bacon join Tarrell Portman and other students at the Graduate College's OGEI "Take a Break Pizza Party" gathering. The annual fall event is a networking opportunity for underrepresented graduate students across the UI campus.

OGEI works to build a sustainable practice of inclusion to attract and keep top underrepresented graduate scholars campus wide. OGEI uses an approach that builds community and involves faculty in recruiting and mentoring efforts.



## The UI Welcomes Provost Wallace Loh

Wallace D. Loh was named executive vice president and provost of The University of Iowa effective August 1, 2008.

From 1999 to 2008 Loh served as dean of the college of arts and sciences, professor of public service, and professor of psychology at Seattle University. Previously, he was director of policy for Washington governor Gary Locke. He also was vice chancellor for academic affairs and professor of law at the University of Colorado, Boulder, from 1995-97. From 1990-95, he was dean of the University of Washington Law School and was voted by students as the "Outstanding Professor of the Year."

His other faculty appointments include positions at Cornell University; University of Texas, Austin; Vanderbilt University; Emory University; and Beijing University (China).

Loh's main areas of teaching and scholarship are law and social science. He is the author of "Social Research in the Judicial Process: Cases, Readings, and Text," and articles in both law and social science journals.

Loh has been president of the Association of American Law Schools and has served on various community boards, including serving as vice president of the Seattle Public Library.



Born in China and raised in Peru, Loh speaks Spanish, Chinese and French, as well as English.

Loh received a bachelor's degree and an honorary Doctor of Laws from Grinnell College and a master's from Cornell University, and he was a research assistant at the Universiteit te Leuven (Louvain, Belgium). His Ph.D. in psychology is from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and his J.D. is from Yale Law School, where he was an editor of the Yale Law Journal.

For more, visit  
**[www.uiowa.edu/~fyi](http://www.uiowa.edu/~fyi)**  
or Google **fyi wallace loh**

### Graduate College News

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## Grassian and Schmidt win Graduate College Outstanding Mentor Awards

The Graduate College is pleased to announce the winners of the 2008 Graduate College Outstanding Mentor Awards: Vicki H. Grassian, professor of chemistry in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Frank Schmidt, professor of management and organizations in the Henry B. Tippie College of Business. The awards, which carry a \$2,500 prize, are given annually to faculty who demonstrate exemplary mentoring of graduate students.

The Graduate College recognizes the significant efforts of its faculty mentors, who assist with all aspects of graduate scholars' research, dissertation, professional development and job placement. Because the art of mentoring is such a crucial ingredient of education, the Graduate College presents the Outstanding Mentor Awards to celebrate mentors' demonstrated commitment to helping graduate students succeed at the university and in their future careers.

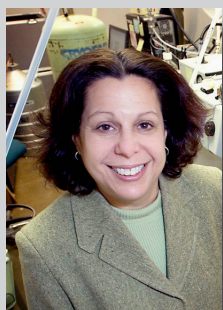
Grassian and Schmidt were selected from an impressive group of graduate faculty mentors nominated for the award by graduate students and other faculty members.

Another nominated faculty from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences—Michael J. Lovaglia, professor of sociology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences—will receive a Special Recognition Award for Mentoring.

This year's awards recognize faculty in social sciences and in mathematical and physical sciences and engineering. In alternate years the awards are presented to faculty in humanities and fine arts and in biological and life sciences.

A reception to honor the award winners and nominees is planned for November.

### On Mentoring...



*"My philosophy on mentoring is to be available, expect excellence by demonstrating excellence, to have high expectations for my mentees, and to do what I can to provide as many opportunities as possible for the professional development of graduate students."*

—Professor Vicki Grassian, department of chemistry



*"One element of my teaching and mentoring philosophy is to always start students on research early, during their first year, even before they fully know what they are doing. This promotes rapid and active learning (i.e., learning by doing)."*

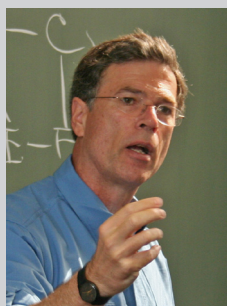
—Professor Frank Schmidt, department of management and organizations

*"Perusing my CV, I cannot find a single publication among my 120+ peer reviewed publications that does not trace ideas back to my discussions with Frank or the initial direction and guidance he has provided. Frank's willingness to share his knowledge has had indelible impact on my scholarly record."*

—Dr. Deniz S. Ones, former student, Hellervik Professor of industrial psychology, University of Minnesota

*"One-on-one discussions with Dr. Grassian have taught me how to think like a successful scientist and be proactive about research progress during challenges. I know I am learning how to become the professional scientist I want to be by working with Dr. Grassian."*

—Sherrie Elzey, current graduate student in chemistry, The University of Iowa



*"Collaboration is the key to modern research. My students are responsible for my professional success. Mentoring them did not interfere with my research career but made it possible. My publication record is also a list of my graduate students."*

—Professor Michael Lovaglia, department of sociology

*"I have thought before that the guidance [Professor Lovaglia] has given me was like receiving a secret key to instructions on how to be a successful researcher, teacher, and mentor. I am certain that I would not be nearly as successful in academia today if I had not had that "dumb luck" to connect with Michael Lovaglia when I started graduate school."*

—Jeff Lucas, former student, professor of sociology, University of Maryland



## Graduate College Program in Human Toxicology

### Researching the impact of contaminants on the human body

by Andrea Parrott

One of the most popular adages in the field of toxicology is, “The dose makes the poison.” Attributed to the ancient Swiss scholar Paracelsus, that saying has never rung more true than today. Greenhouse gases, toxic sludge, soil contaminants, air pollution, overflowing landfills.... Many have found it impossible not to wonder *how much is too much*.

This is where the UI interdisciplinary toxicology program enters the picture. Toxicology is the study of the adverse effects of chemical, physical or biological agents on living organisms and the ecosystem, with the aim of preventing and eliminating such undesirable effects.

Or, as program director Larry Robertson puts it, “We are the protectors of mankind!”

#### Studying the effects of chemicals

In many ways, Robertson could not be more right. Some of the most studied chemicals in the UI’s toxicology program are polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs.

These nasty chemicals were used heavily as pesticides and industrial lubricants until the mid 1970s, when they were banned due to their extreme toxicity.

Traces of PCBs still remain in our land, water, and the wildlife around us. It will take years of diligent study to understand the complex impacts PCBs might have on our environment.

Luckily, the Iowa Superfund Basic Research Program, dedicated to funding research on PCBs, is headquartered at the UI. The 12 million dollar superfund currently finances six projects and approximately 20 doctoral researchers.

In the 1960s through the ‘80s, when PCBs were at the forefront of national attention, the UI toxicology program was a successful part of the pharmacology department. In fact, “University of Iowa toxicology was the number one program in the past,” said Dr. Robertson, “creating a generation of leading toxicologists.”

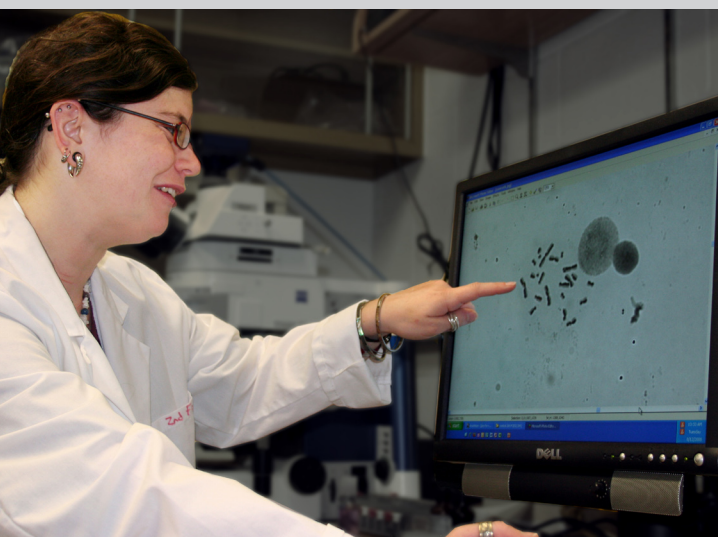
However, due to a shift in administration and lack of funds, the program was disbanded for more than two decades. As years passed, the absence of a toxicology program became more and more noticeable.

#### Retooling toxicology at the UI

“In order to prevent dangerous exposures and to treat people who are exposed to chemicals, we must understand how they get into the body and how they exert their effects,” said Dr. Peter Thorne, now associate director of the toxicology program.

“Thus, it was clear that the College of Public Health, the Holden Cancer Center, and the Environmental Health Sciences Research Center would benefit greatly from a renewed presence of toxicologists at the University of Iowa.”

So in 1999 he proposed a renewal of the toxicology department. The Graduate College approved the proposal, and classes were offered beginning in spring 2006.



Susanne Flor, lab manager, examines a microscopic image of cytoskeletons and DNA showing chromosomal exchange during mitosis. Toxic substances cause errors in mitosis which can either kill a cell through apoptosis or cause mutations that may lead to cancer.

#### How do toxicologists contribute to our everyday lives?

Toxicologists work in a broad spectrum of settings including academia, industry and the government. Here are some examples of the most common toxicology specializations:

- **Clinical Toxicologists** work with Poison Control Centers to diagnose diseases caused by toxic substances.
- **Forensic Toxicologists** discover important toxicological clues to help solve crimes, help establish causes of death.
- **Environmental Toxicologists** study the effects of pollution on people and their communities by studying the environment both in the field and in the laboratory.
- **Industrial Toxicologists** develop non-toxic pharmaceutical products, consumer products and industrial chemicals. Some examples include soap, paints, cosmetics and food additives.
- **Mechanistic Toxicologists** study the toxic effects of chemicals on living organisms.
- **Regulatory Toxicologists** help determine if a drug or other chemical is safe enough to be on the consumer market and quantify safe exposure levels.

Source: Society of Toxicology, 2005, *How About a Career in Toxicology?*

**For more information about research in Human Toxicology, visit [www.toxicology.uiowa.edu](http://www.toxicology.uiowa.edu).**

### Hosting national conferences

Already, the work produced by students and faculty in the toxicology program has been some of the best in its field.

As a result of the department's notable work in the field of PCBs, the UI was selected to host 140 scientists and the Fifth PCB Workshop this past May. This international biannual meeting gathers top scientists in the field to share and analyze the latest findings related to PCBs.

The UI toxicology program also had the honor of hosting the Central States Society of Toxicology (CS-SOT) annual meeting last September, with the UI's Dr. Gabriele Ludewig serving as president of the CS-SOT. There, 100 participants presented their work, networked, and attended lectures.

### Professional development for students

Although there have been plenty of professional opportunities to present research at the local level, one of the perks of being a UI toxicology student is the chance to travel.

"There are many opportunities for cooperation with other labs," said Bingxuan Wang, a doctoral student.

Jim Jacobus, a doctoral candidate and one of the new toxicology program's inaugural students, agrees. "I've been to Poland, Seattle, and Charlotte for conferences; it's a really fun part of the program."

Each doctoral student is fully funded for research, so each can focus on his or her studies rather than rounding up money. Because of this and the interdepartmental nature of the program, there is much flexibility in subject matter – and in job opportunities after graduation.

### Career opportunities for UI toxicology grads

"Toxicology students can fit in so many different fields," said Flor, "such as biochemistry, chemistry, environmental sciences, pharmacy—so the job market is pretty much open if you are open for it."

The program sits between chemistry and biology and the physical and biological sciences; thus there is a broad interest from many disciplines in hiring toxicologists.

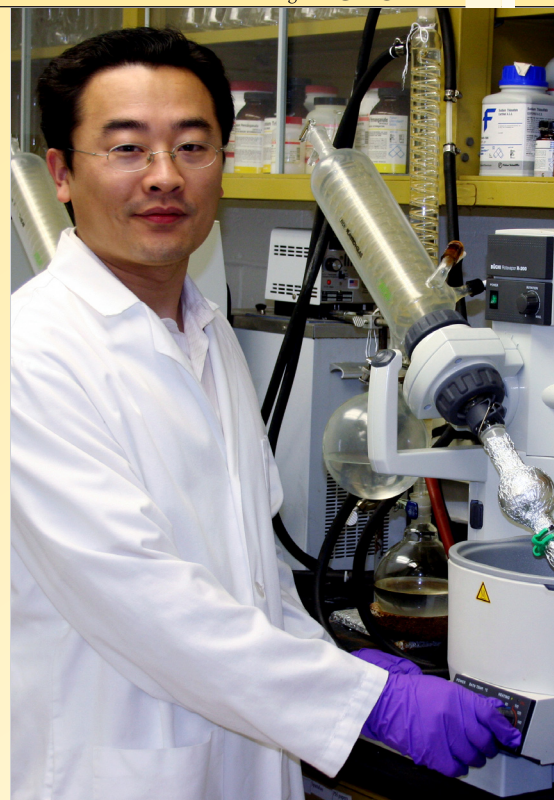
Career opportunities are plentiful in academia, government, and industry. In fact, Dr. Robertson recently received an email expressing the FDA's need for 300 new toxicologists. "Though some Americans may face a continuing shortage of jobs," said Robertson, "there will be a market for toxicology jobs for many years to come."

### An eye toward sustainability

As we move forward, it is inevitable that humankind will continue to produce substances that affect our living environments. As we seek to foster and maintain a sustainable, healthy environment on our planet, we ask questions such as *how much is too much?*

For toxicologists, this translates to a lifetime of research. "That's another thing about toxicology—there are so many ways a substance can be potentially toxic," said Jacobus.

In our quest to discover how much of each dose makes a poison, we can at least take comfort in knowing that leading toxicologists—such as those who will graduate from the University of Iowa's program—will be working and ready to assist, as protectors of mankind.



**Dr. XueShu Li with Rotary Evaporator.** The rotary evaporator gently warms solutions in order to reduce the solution and isolate chemicals. In this instance, Dr. Li is using a light sensitive compound that must be encased in aluminum foil so as not to be exposed.

### The interdisciplinary nature of toxicology

Subject matter includes:

- Chemistry
- Pathology
- Psychology
- Genetics
- Statistics
- Risk Assessment Sciences
- Pharmacology

### Notable research

The UI toxicology program is especially known for its research on environmental chemical contaminants and biological agents and their effects on our cells.

UI toxicologists are also investigating the role genetics plays in our susceptibility to toxic injury.

Yet another notable UI research project studies chlorinated persistent organic pollutants—toxic compounds that cycle within the environment and move upward through food chains.





## Letter from the Dean

Graduate programs across the entire campus rose to the occasion this fall, as the UI continued to recover from the summer's flood damage while maintaining the university's high quality of graduate and professional education and research.

The arts campus has found temporary quarters in of the Iowa City/Coralville area, while creative work,

research, and performances continue to enrich our campus. Our thanks to the many volunteers who helped during the flood. Those wishing to give to the UI's rebuilding process can visit [www.givetoioowa.org/floodfund](http://www.givetoioowa.org/floodfund) to assist with ongoing efforts.

Whether you contribute to the flood fund or to a particular graduate program, your support for UI graduate students and faculty makes a tremendous difference. UI graduate research and creative work enrich our society, impacting Iowans' daily lives. Please read about our graduate scholars and alumni in this newsletter or online at [www.grad.uiowa.edu](http://www.grad.uiowa.edu) to get a glimpse of how your support can help our graduate scholars.

Sincerely,

**John C. Keller**

Associate Provost for Graduate Education  
Dean, Graduate College

**"The Seashore Dissertation Year Fellowship** has been a tremendous assistance to me in my final year of graduate school. The fellowship has allowed me to devote all of my time and energy toward completing my thesis and working on manuscripts to submit for publication. In addition, the fellowship has given me the opportunity to devote more time to my clinical work counseling cancer patients and leading a cancer support group for women. Without this fellowship, I may not have had the opportunity to learn all of the diverse skills necessary to be at the top of my field when I go on the job market next year."



**Jennifer Lee** is studying for her doctorate in Behavioral Medicine (sponsored by the graduate program in physical therapy and rehabilitation science). She is a member of the Graduate Student Senate, and an organizer of the Jakobsen Conference this past spring.



**Dr. Laura Frey-Law** is an assistant professor of physical therapy & rehabilitation science at Iowa and an Iowa alumna. She is Jennifer Lee's dissertation advisor.

**I feel that it is important to give back** so that the Graduate College can continue to support students in the future, which now as a faculty member at Iowa, I realize supports Iowa's research mission as a whole. The Graduate College provided tremendous support to me during my training through the Iowa Presidential Scholarship as well as the overall support to the Graduate Student Senate (GSS), which allowed me to meet and interact with other graduate students from across campus that I would never have met.

## Donor Honor Roll

This honor roll gratefully recognizes alumni and friends who contributed \$100 or more from July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2008, to the Graduate College and its departments and programs through The University of Iowa Foundation, the preferred channel for private support of all areas of the University.

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