

Dear Colleagues:

Winter/Spring 2009

It is always a pleasure to announce the addition of a new faculty member to our department, and in this issue I have double the pleasure, as they say. OEH alumnus Dr. Nate Fethke and Dr. Renee Anthony both joined us in January, increasing our faculty total to 20, and strengthening our Industrial Hygiene and Ergonomics programs. These new colleagues journeyed to wintry Iowa from Tennessee and Arizona, which I think you would agree underscores their commitment.

**Nate Fethke, PhD 2006**, left the UI with a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in biomedical engineering and a doctorate in OEH. He had worked as a research scientist in our department's Biomechanics and Ergonomics Facility and provided ergonomics consultation to several corporations and non-profit organizations. Following his graduation, Nate joined the faculty of East Tennessee State University, contributing an occupational health emphasis to their Department of Environmental Health (which was part of a new College of Public Health). At ETSU, along with his teaching duties he served as a biomechanist for the Sports Performance Enhancement Consortium in the Department of Kinesiology. In addition, he achieved the Certified Professional Ergonomist (CPE) credential from the Board of Certification in Professional Ergonomics, which is inter-nationally recognized as the premier credentialing body in the field.



Dr. Nate Fethke

He and his wife Amy, and their newest family member Brooke, enjoyed living amidst the Appalachian Mountains, but when our faculty position in ergonomics opened up, he opted for "the breadth of research opportunities here—and not just in OEH. I hope to reestablish collaborative relationships with faculty in other departments and colleges, such as industrial and biomedical engineering and physical therapy." Along with teaching and advising students, Nate is completing two research projects, one an intervention evaluation through the Center to Protect Workers' Rights and the other on "Exposure variability among workers performing non-cyclic work."

According to **Dr. Tom Cook**, Nate's former academic advisor, "Nate has a rare combination of solid training in engineering and biomechanics, work in industry, and many practical skills, from writing his own software programs to designing and building electronic circuits. We're very pleased indeed that he is bringing all his experience and skills back to our department." Ergonomics graduate student **Alysha Meyers**, who has known Nate since she came to OEH, also feels the program will benefit from his arrival. "It's great to have someone who has a vision for where we're going," she says, "and good ideas about how to get there."

Our second new faculty member, **Dr. Renee Anthony** earned her PhD in 2005 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, developing her expertise in exposure assessment techniques related to inhalable aerosols. In the years between receiving her master's in environmental engineering (1992) and her doctorate, she worked in the paper and pulp industry, for International Paper and Georgia Pacific. There she experienced firsthand the limitations of aerosol samplers and effects of wind velocity on accurate monitoring of worker exposures. That, and her growing awareness that the training of the companies' industrial hygiene interns could be improved, led her back to academia and from UNC to a faculty position at the University of Arizona at Tucson. She is currently collaborating with IH faculty at Colorado State University, designing a sampler that better matches how aerosols are inhaled in indoor conditions. Also, her research assessing the CBRN canisters (personal protection equipment) of firefighters will be published soon in the "Annals of Occupational Hygiene." **Dr. Wayne Sanderson**, who heads the Industrial Hygiene training program in our department, believes "Renee brings a lot to our IH team—not only her depth and breadth of training but her experience in private industry. The fact that she holds both CIH and CSP certifications brings strong credentials and a greater emphasis on safety training to our program."



Dr. Renee Anthony



Dr. Bill Heitbrink

The workplace applications of our faculty's research are not always as clear as they were last September when NIOSH posted a "Workplace Solutions" report (NIOSH Publication No. 2008-126) on the work of **Dr. Bill Heitbrink** and his student **Scott Collingwood, PhD 2006**. They studied construction workers engaged in tuckpointing, the grinding or cutting of mortar or cement from between the bricks of old buildings, and demonstrated that workers' hazardous dust exposures could be reduced with a tool-mounted industrial vacuum cleaner and accompanying work practices (the NIOSH report is online at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/wp-solutions/2008-126/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/wp-solutions/2008-126/)). A month later, an article in "Inside OSHA" reported that the Heitbrink/Collingwood guidelines would likely be incorporated



Something missing? Tuckpointing minus the cloud of dust—thanks to modifications developed and tested by OEH scientists.

in a silica hazard identification matrix being developed by an OSHA advisory work group. Bill's research is also helping to support a California OSHA standard that requires control measures for construction tasks involving excessive exposure to respirable crystalline silica.

Master's student **Javier Santalla** also contributed to this research project with a study of how vacuum cleaner air flows are affected by loading, and an article on his findings is being published in the February 2009 issue of the trade publication "Masonry Construction."

Over the past six months, **Dr. Corinne Peek-Asa** has had some unique experiences in her professional life. First, some special guests attended her June birthday celebration, since she was traveling through China at the time with her UI Injury Prevention Research Center colleague **Dr. Ginger Yang**, assistant professor in the Department of Community and Behavioral Health. Cori and Ginger conferred with students and faculty at Soochow University in Suzhou, and Cori met with the chair of the Epidemiology Department about future collaborations on occupational injury prevention.



Dr. Corinne Peek-Asa, director of the Injury Prevention Research Center, with her Injury Control and Emergency Health Services' Excellence in Science award. At the same meeting IPRC Deputy Director John Lundell was recognized for his long-term contributions as the ICEHS section newsletter editor.

Then, in October at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association, Cori received a prestigious APHA award, for Injury Control and Emergency Health Services' Excellence in Science. The award recognizes an individual at mid-career for outstanding dedication and leadership and for significant achievements that have made a long-term impact on the field. Dr. Carol Runyan, director of the Injury Prevention Reserach Center at the University of North Carolina and the first winner of this award, told us, " I was thrilled to learn about Cori's award; it is so well deserved! She is a great scholar, doing important research and providing important leadership to the field. Iowa is very fortunate to have Cori at the helm of your injury center and I am pleased to have had opportunities to collaborate with her over the years. I hope there will be many more chances in the years ahead."



Dr. Bill Field

The professional activity of several other faculty members deserves recognition. **Dr. Bill Field** was one of 10 experts who presented information to the President's Cancer Panel in December. Testifying on the adverse health effects of radon exposure, Bill outlined the current understanding of radon-related lung cancer and described future research and policy needs. He also expressed his concerns about the increasing exposure created by builders who are constructing homes without radon-resistant features faster than existing homes are mitigated to reduce radon.

**Dr. Marizen Ramirez** studied the human impact of last year's flood disaster with a university-wide student survey. The survey was supported by the Provost's Office and the Midwest Preparedness Center and conducted through our Injury Prevention Research Center. Marizen's data indicate that while a very small proportion (2.7%) of her 1400+ respondents reported physical injury, mental health outcomes were more prevalent, including symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that she found greater than the prevalence in other groups impacted by floods. She also evaluated the effectiveness of various sources of help and information, concluding that students who may need recovery services might be best reached through informal means, such as outreach to families and peer groups.

And **Dr. Patrick O'Shaughnessy** should be congratulated for achieving Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) status. His new credential enhances our Industrial Hygiene program in the eyes of its accrediting body and further strengthens the Heartland Center for Occupational Health and Safety of which the program is a key component. Patrick tells me he now feels a special empathy: "I have deep respect for students who tackle this challenge."



Dr. Marizen Ramirez



Dr. Patrick O'Shaughnessy



We appreciated hearing from **Ben Torrez, MPH 2004**. He let us know of his graduation from Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences last May—pictured with his wife Jennifer, a 2003 UI graduate of the Tippie College of Business—and his subsequent enrollment in Orthopedic Residency training through Michigan State University at Pontiac Osteopathic Hospital. After the five-year residency, he and Jennifer and their year-old daughter Lyvia plan to return home to Waterloo.

Please do not be shy about letting us know of milestones in your lives or any news that you think would interest your fellow OEH alumni. You may be a far-flung group but you are by no means forgotten here.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig Zwerling".

Craig Zwerling, MD, PhD, MPH  
Professor and Head

Department of Occupational and Environmental Health