$10.9 MILLION GRANT AWARDED TO UW FOR MIND-BODY CENTER

The UW-Madison has received $10.9 million from the National Institutes of Health to create a Mind-Body Center. The Center will focus on understanding how life challenges and the psychological processes surrounding them, particularly emotion, influence health. The major goal of the Center is to better understand the psychological and biological factors that constitute resilience so that these qualities can be fostered more systematically to enrich both mental and physical health. The Center builds on existing research programs at the Institute on Aging, Health Emotions Research Institute, and Wisconsin Center for Affective Science. Administration of the projects will be shared among these groups.

The Center Director is Richard Davidson, Psychology and Psychiatry. Individual project and core directors include Dr. Davidson, Carol Ryff, IOA Director and Professor of Psychology; Christopher Coe, Psychology and Primate Center; Ned Kalin, Psychiatry and Health Emotions Institute; Nadine Marks, Child and Family Studies; Daniel Muller, Medicine; and Burt Singer, Princeton University.

The Center includes five research projects:

Project 1: Influence of the mind and body on later life resilience (Ryff, Singer, Muller, Davidson)

This project consists of a longitudinal study of resilience and vulnerability among aging women going through a major life transition (community relocation). About 40% of the sample showed improvement or maintenance of good physical and mental health over the course of this transition, while about 35% showed decline. Protective psychosocial factors (e.g., social supports, coping strategies) have been linked to resilience. New data collection will allow for assessment of multiple biological factors (e.g., allostatic load, immune function, cerebral activation asymmetry) that may underlie psychosocial resilience. The long-term prediction is that those with greater biopsychosocial resources will show less and/or delayed later-life morbidities, and thereby, longer periods of quality living.

Project 2: Physiological benefits of mental well-being in chronic disease (Coe, Muller)

This project will explore the relation between psychosocial factors and variations in clinical status in women with two skeletomuscular conditions—fibromyalgia (FMS) and rheumatoid arthritis (RA). The key question is whether high levels of psychological well-being are associated with reductions in symptom severity and more positive profiles of immune function. This project will also include an intervention, mindfulness meditation, designed to promote well-being and examine its effects on symptom status and endocrine and immune function.

continued on page 2

COMING APRIL 27 & 28:
12TH ANNUAL COLLOQUIUM ON AGING

The 12th Annual Colloquium on Aging will be held at the Pyle Center on April 27 and 28, 2000. Colloquium events include a dinner and lecture on April 27 and symposia highlighting UW-Madison research about men’s health, and an emeritus luncheon lecture on April 28.

Eugene Cohen from the Center on Aging, Health, and Humanities in Washington, D.C., will speak at the Thursday evening dinner lecture on April 27, 2000.

Philip Lewis, UW Professor Emeritus in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, whose work is in environmental landscape, will deliver this year’s emeritus lecture at 12-noon on Friday, April 28.

Furthur Colloquium information will be mailed at a later date and will be posted on the IOA web site (http://ssc.wisc.edu/aging).
MIND-BODY CENTER GRANT

continued from page 1

Project 3: Brain Mechanisms of resilience and vulnerability (Davidson, Ryff, Singer, Kalin, Coe, Muller)

This project will further characterize the central circuitry of resilient and vulnerable individuals. Subsamples from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study and the Wisconsin Relocation Study will undergo functional and structural MR imaging to test hypotheses about the role of the prefrontal cortex and amygdala in affective style and other biological indices associated with health (immune, endocrine, cardiovascular function, sleep). Morphometric measurements will test whether cumulative adversity is associated with volumetric reductions of the hippocampus. It will also examine the impact of mindfulness meditation on the same constellation of measures in FMS and RA patients from Project 2. The prediction is that meditation will result in increased activation of left anterior cortical zones, decreased activation of the amygdala, decreased cortisol, and improved immune function.

Project 4: Social stress in primates: Vulnerability and resilience (Kalin, Davidson, Coe, Muller)

This project will examine biological substrates of temperament and their relation to health status in a group of free ranging rhesus monkeys on the island of Cayo Santiago. The focus will be on the health status of male animals when they leave the natal group at approximately 4.5 years of age. About 25% of these animals die in the first year following departure. Because they are fed regularly, they are not dying of starvation; rather, it appears they are succumbing to stress-related illness. The investigators will measure brain activity, autonomic activity, HPA function, immune and endocrine function (similar to human studies) in the vulnerable and resilient groups of these monkeys.

Project 5: Social inequalities, psychological factors, and health (Marks, Hauser, Ryff)

This project will investigate links between social inequalities, psychological characteristics, and physical health in two longitudinal studies and a recent national survey. The Wisconsin Longitudinal Study includes over 8,000 individuals on whom data have been collected over more than 40 years. The National Survey of Families and Households includes over 3,490 adults aged 25-74, plus 1,000 siblings and a sample of 1,000 twin pairs. Analyses will focus on event-history models to examine the impact of social inequalities on psychological characteristics and health behaviors.

The initial funding for the Center is for a 5-year period beginning September 24, 1999 and can be renewed.

VA GRECC NEWS

Dr. Richard Weindruch’s latest research results are worth noting. He and Dr. Tomas Prolla from the Department of Genetics profiled 6347 genes in mouse skeletal muscle using gene chip technology (Lee et al., Science 285:1390-3, 1999). They found evidence at the genetic level that, during aging, there is an induction of a stress response as a result of damaged proteins and other macromolecules. Most of the largest age-related alterations in gene expression were either completely or partially prevented by caloric restriction, the only intervention known to retard aging in mammals, suggesting that caloric restriction causes a metabolic shift toward increased protein turnover and decreased macromolecular damage. These results provide the first global assessment of the aging process in mammals at the molecular level, underscoring the utility of large-scale, parallel gene expression analysis in the study of complex biological phenomena.

Dr. Tsuyoshi Kayo joined Dr. Weindruch’s lab in July. Dr. Kayo was trained by Dr. Weindruch’s colleagues in Japan. In turn, Dr. Weindruch traveled to Japan from October 9 to 23 to discuss shared interests with colleagues there and to speak at Tokyo Medical & Dental University, Sunstar, Inc. (in Osaka), the Kumamoto Medical Bioscience Symposium, Kyushu University School of Medicine, Otsuka Pharmaceutical, Inc. and Okayama Medical School.

Dr. Weindruch and his colleagues at the Wisconsin Regional Primate Research Center will be featured on Scientific American Frontiers, hosted by Alan Alda, which is scheduled to be broadcast by PBS on January 25, 2000. The show covers both rodent and primate studies directed by Dr. Weindruch, the latter of which is funded by NIA as a Program Project and was recently renewed through 2004.

JoAnne Robbins, PhD, Interim Associate Director of the IOA and Associate Professor in the Dept. of Medicine, Gail Hunt, MSW, Social Worker at the GRECC and Molly Carnes, MD, Professor of Medicine at the UW were invited to present a short course at the national meeting of the American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA) in San Francisco on November 20. The invitation, extended by the steering committee of ASHA’s Special Interest Division in Swallowing, specifically was to focus on the topic of dysphagia (which means disordered swallowing) in the geriatric population. The three speakers were uniquely qualified to do so given their 10-year history of working as a clinical team providing care for geriatric dysphagic patients and conducting NIH funded research protocols on which Dr. Robbins has served as Principal Investigator since 1984. These research efforts have defined presbyphagia, that is, age-related changes in swallowing as demonstrated by healthy older adults, and have led to improved diagnosis and treatment techniques for older persons suffering...
continued from page 2

from dysphagia. Interest in this topic is high because currently, in the U.S. alone, over 44 million individuals are over the age of 60 (U.S. census, 1998), and approximately 15% of those (e.g. 6,228,116) are estimated to have dysphagia.

The 3-hour short course, entitled “TuBe or Not TuBe: Physiological, Medical and Ethical Issues in the Elderly,” focused on effects of aging on swallowing, diagnostic criteria for dysphagia in the elderly, and remediation relative to ethical implications. Indications for alternative modes of nutritional and hydration intake relative to outcomes in the geriatric population were addressed. Finally, advance directives and variation in the manner in which they address alternative modes of intake were discussed to assist the clinical audience with their practices. The focus was on optimizing health, function and quality of life outcomes in older patients with swallowing problems.

A team of researchers from the VA GRECC presented a symposium at the Gerontological Society of America meetings in San Francisco in November. Participants of the symposium, titled “Immobility and Falls on Medical Units at a University Hospital,” were Jane Mahoney, Carey Bubolz, Renee Euhardy, and Myra Enloe. Michael Hunt and Thelma Wells were discussants.

Immobilization is a common consequence of hospitalization and may contribute to adverse outcomes, including loss of walking independence, functional decline, and falls. Despite extensive literature documenting the adverse consequences of immobilization, there are few studies examining the frequency of ambulation or barriers to mobility in the hospital setting. Hospitalized patients’ perceptions of barriers to mobility have also not been explored.

This symposium presented findings from four studies performed on the medical units of a busy university primary and tertiary care hospital. Presenters discussed 1) the frequency of ambulation in hallways of medical units; 2) environmental barriers to hallway ambulation (both based on quantitative observational research); 3) patients’ perceptions of ambulation on a medical unit (based on qualitative research); and 4) a comparison of falls by medical and surgical patients, highlighting mobility-related issues that are of particular importance to medical units.

Discussion by Dr. Hunt stressed the role of environmental design in patient ambulation and falls by relating the effects of environmental cognitive clarity and restorative environments. Discussion by Dr. Wells highlighted the complexity of acute care and the implications of this for design of programs to improve mobility and prevent falls and implications for architecture and design.

New Director Named
Joseph Kemnitz, a Professor of Physiology and Institute on Aging affiliate, became the fourth Director of the Wisconsin Regional Primate Research Center this summer. Dr. Kemnitz, an authority on the physiology of aging, previously served as senior scientist, associate director, and interim director of the Center. According to UW News and Public Affairs, Dr. Kemnitz says his top priority is to extend the WRPRC record of first-rate biomedical research and studies of basic primate biology.

Primate Models of Aging
Numerous aging-related studies are being conducted at the Wisconsin Regional Primate Research Center. Richard Weindruch’s Program Project, which was recently renewed by the National Institute on Aging, investigates the mechanisms underlying the retardation of aging and disease processes by caloric restriction in both rodents and primates. Joseph Kemnitz and colleagues are studying the neurobehavioral and hormonal mechanisms that control food intake and energy expenditure and the consequences of caloric imbalances for physiological well-being. Gregory Cartee is investigating the influence of calorie restriction on muscle glucose metabolism. Judd Aiken is researching mitochondrial involvement in aging processes and the characterization of transmissible neurodegenerative diseases. Neil Binkley is studying osteoporosis and vitamin K in the rhesus monkey model. Wendy Saltzman heads an interdisciplinary team studying common marmosets as a model for osteoporosis research. Christopher Coe is researching two points in the life span when there is a heightened vulnerability to disease: infancy and old age. He is currently studying aged rhesus monkeys to characterize the process of immune senescence and to determine how different social and environmental conditions may influence immune responses in the aged host. Paul Kaufman is developing new compounds to enhance aqueous outflow from the eye and treat glaucoma. James VerHoeve and his colleagues are investigating normal aging in the visual system pathways of rhesus monkeys using a combination of evoked potential, behavioral, single-unit, and anatomical methods.

New initiatives include a study of the neuroendocrinology of menopause (Ei Terasawa), the biology underlying perimenopausal hot flushes (Robert Freedman), hearing in aging monkeys (Cynthia Fowler), comparison of calorie restricted rhesus monkeys’ changing biological responses to traditional biomarkers of aging (David Allison), and resistance to diseases in aged and dietary restricted rhesus monkeys (David Watkins).

[Information abstracted from the Wisconsin Regional Primate Research Center Fact Sheet, Primate Models of Aging.] The Wisconsin Primate Center’s website: http://www.primate.wisc.edu
MEMBERS OF IOA ADVISORY BOARD IN THE NEWS

Jean Manchester-Biddick was honored in March as recipient of the 1999 ATHENA Award. The ATHENA Award honors individuals who demonstrate excellence, creativity and initiative in their business or profession, provide valuable service by devoting time and energy to improve the quality of life for others in the community, and assist women in reaching their full leadership potential. In addition to serving on the UW-Madison Institute on Aging Advisory and UW Foundation Boards, Ms. Manchester-Biddick founded and served as the first president of the Business Forum, a local professional businesswomen’s organization. She is a charter member of TEMPO, a networking group for executive women, and established the Council on Women’s Giving, a national model for educating women about philanthropy and finance. Ms. Manchester-Biddick has served on numerous professional and philanthropic boards and established the Center for Excellence in Family Studies at UW-Madison.

Carol Toussaint, IOA Advisory Board Chair and UW-Madison alumna, was the 1999 recipient of the Madison Community Foundation’s Lifetime Achievement Award. Ms. Toussaint was the 1998 ATHENA Award Recipient.

Alma Baron has been elected president of the newly formed UW-Madison Retirement Association. Membership consists of more than 600 current and retired university employees.

James Crow, UW Emeritus Professor of Genetics and Zoology, and vice chair of the National Commission on the Future of DNA Evidence, is studying controversial calls for police databases of genetic fingerprints from anyone arrested, not just convicted of a crime. According to Crow, DNA has been useful in convicting the guilty but also protecting the innocent. (reported in “Wisconsin Week” 3/17/99)

IOA AFFILIATES RECOGNIZED

The Web Innovation Award was presented to Professor Mary Brittain-Peterson, UW-Extension and Department of Family Development, and Joy First for the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren web site at the UW-Extension Cooperative Extension Tech Summit, held on September 8 and 9, 1999 in Madison. Dr. Brittain-Peterson and Ms. First received this award as developers and owners of a Wisconsin Cooperative web site that is exemplary relative to its contribution to the impact of an important educational program.

Emeritus Professor Betty Hasselkus, Kinesiology, was inducted in the Academy of Research of American Occupational Therapy Foundation and also received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Wisconsin Occupational Therapy Association.

Professor William P. Morgan, Kinesiology, is one of 22 exercise and sport scientists from around the world who has been nominated as a Founding Member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Olympic Academy of Science. He was inducted into the Academy during a formal ceremony held in Sydney, Australia in November.

Associate Professor Stephanie Robert, Social Work, received the Eliot Freidson Outstanding Publication Award for her article titled “Community-Level Socioeconomic Status Effects on Adult Health,” published in the March 1998 issue of the Journal of Health and Social Behavior. This award is given in alternate years for works published in the preceding year for publications that have had a major impact on the field of medical sociology.

Professor Lawrence Wu, Sociology and Education, was appointed to the Technical Review Committee of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This is the oversight board for the National Longitudinal Surveys.

EVERETT SMITH RECEIVES FIRST ANNUAL INSTITUTE ON AGING TEACHING AWARD

The Institute on Aging has established a new award to recognize excellence in teaching or curriculum development in Aging. Dr. Everett Smith, Department of Preventive Medicine, was presented with the first award at the 11th Annual Colloquium on Aging dinner in April. Dr. Smith has taught courses in the Biology of Aging for 23 years.

Nominations for next year’s award will be solicited in the spring of 2000.

IOA PRESENTS NEW INVESTIGATOR AWARDS FOR RESEARCH IN AGING

Each year the Institute on Aging recognizes outstanding achievement in biomedical and sociobehavioral research in aging by new investigators. The 1999 awards, which were presented at the 11th Annual Colloquium on Aging dinner, went to Cara Westmark and Hey Jung Jun. Following are abstracts of their research. 

continued on page 5
NEW INVESTIGATOR AWARDS FOR RESEARCH IN AGING

continued from page 4

Biomedical Award-Cara J. Westmark

Downregulation of b-Amyloid Precursor Protein mRNA in Peripheral Blood Mononuclear Cells by Protein Kinase C and Calcium Signal Transduction Pathways (Westmark and Malter)

Alzheimer’s Disease is a degenerative neurological disorder characterized by patchy deposits and tangles of neural fibers in brain tissue. The major protein in these deposits is b-amyloid, a product derived from amyloid precursor protein (APP). Drs. Westmark and Malter proposed that stabilization and accumulation of APP messenger RNA (mRNA) lead to increased synthesis and processing of APP, resulting in higher b-amyloid levels.

To ascertain which signalling control pathways maintain a consistent level of APP mRNA, they tested the effect of several activators and inhibitors of these pathways in white blood cells. They have determined that protein kinase C (PKC) and calcium signalling pathways mediate a reduction in APP mRNA. Drugs which modulate these pathways reduce APP mRNA by 40%, whereas drugs which modulate other controlling pathways did not alter APP mRNA levels significantly from controls. Their findings suggest the PKC-mediated decline in APP mRNA is due to repressed expression of the APP gene, as opposed to instability of the resulting mRNA. Their data demonstrate the importance of PKC and calcium signalling pathways in the regulation of APP mRNA levels.

Sociobehavioral Award-Hey Jung Jun

Providing Support to Others and Physical and Mental Health (Jun and Marks)

Most research on supportive social relationships has focused on the positive effects of receiving help from other people on enhanced well-being of older adults. Potential benefits of providing help to others in older adulthood, however, have received little attention.

The main purpose of this study was to examine the impact of providing informal support to others on the physical and mental health of older adults. Specifically, this study examined how the influence of giving support varied due to 1) gender differences among the providers of support, 2) differences in type of support given (instrumental or emotional support), and 3) differences in nature of the relationship with recipients of support (kin or nonkin).

Data from 2,606 persons aged 60-85 who were respondents to two waves of the U.S. National Survey of Families and Households (1987-1993) were used for these analyses. Multivariate regression models controlling for physical and mental health at time 1, receipt of social support, and several demographic variables were estimated.

Results suggest that the effect of providing informal support to others is dependent not only on type of support and gender but also the nature of the relationship with recipients of support. Providing support to kin is not related to either physical or mental health, whereas providing support to nonkin is associated with both health measures, both positively and negatively, depending on type of support and gender. Providing instrumental support to nonkin is negatively related to mental health for both men and women, whereas providing emotional support to nonkin is positively associated with both physical and mental health for women (but not for men).
NEWS ON IOA
AFFILIATE GRANTS
continued from page 5

Professor Li Li Ji, Kinesiology and Interdepartmental Graduate Program of Nutritional Sciences, received a grant from University-Industry Relations (matched by Wisconsin Ginseng Board) to study the antioxidant effect of Wisconsin ginseng during aging.

The Center for Health Systems Research and Analysis (CHSRA) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has been awarded a contract from Helath Care Financing Administration (HCFA) entitled “Development and Validation of Performance Measure Set/Quality Indicators for Medicaid Services Rendered to People with Mental Retardation or Developmental Disabilities.” Project work will be conducted by researchers at CHSRA and its subcontractors, under the direction of Sara Karon, Associate Scientist. The contract is administered through a Master Contract held by Research Triangle Institute. The purpose of the contract is to “evaluate, develop and validate a performance measures set for Medicaid services rendered to people with developmental disabilities.” The project is scheduled for three years, from October 1, 1999 to September 30, 2002.

Associate Professor, Julie Mares-Perlman, Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, received The Research to Prevent Blindness Lew R. Wasserman Merit Award contributing $55,000 toward her research in the study of diet and age-related eye diseases.

Assistant Professor Tomas Prolla, Genetics, has received the Shaw Scientific Award for his study of how cancers can develop from various genetic defects in DNA repair pathways. The work is seeking a better explanation of the molecular mechanisms that cause cancers to grow and may lead to a better understanding of the aging process. The Shaw Award is designed to encourage young scientists from UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee to conduct innovative research in biology, chemistry and cancer-related fields. (reported in “Wisconsin Week” 5/12/99)

Associate Professor Stephanie Robert, Social Work, has been chosen as one of ten faculty members across the country to participate in the Hartford Geriatric Social Work Faculty Scholars Program, sponsored by the Gerontological Society of America and funded by the John A. Hartford Foundation. The primary goal of the program is to identify and develop outstanding social work faculty committed to teaching, research, and leadership in the area of geriatric care. As part of the program, Dr. Robert will receive support to conduct a research project examining aspects of Family Care – Wisconsin’s new long-term care redesign pilot program. Marsha Seltzer, Professor of Social Work, will serve as Dr. Robert’s on-campus advisor, and Rosalie Kane, an expert on long-term care and a Professor at the University of Minnesota, will serve as Dr. Robert’s national research advisor.

Professor Gregg Vanderheiden, Industrial Engineering and Trace Center director, will head up the Trace Research and Development Center five-year grant awarded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education in conjunction with the Technology Assessment Program at Gallaudet University, Washington D.C. This project is to make standard telecommunications systems more accessible for people who are older or disabled

Associate Professor, David T. Watts, Medicine, has received grant support through The Wisconsin Geriatric Education Center (WGEC) for two years. The WGEC is directed by Dr. Anthony Iacopino at Marquette University.

The Center for Health Systems Research and Analysis (CHSRA) at the University of Wisconsin - Madison has been awarded a task order contract from HCFA entitled “Complaint Improvement Project”. Project work will be conducted by researchers at CHSRA and its subcontractors, under the direction of David Zimmerman, Senior Scientist. The contract is administered through a HCFA Master Contract for Research and Demonstrations, held by CHSRA. The purpose of the contract is to provide information that will enable HCFA and the States to improve their nursing home complaint investigation processes, improve abuse and neglect prevention efforts in nursing homes, and respond more effectively to reports of abuse and neglect in nursing homes. The project is scheduled for three years, from October 1, 1999 – September 30, 2002.

SPOTLIGHT ON NEW INSTITUTE ON AGING AFFILIATES

Jon Ramsey, Assistant Scientist
Wisconsin Regional Primate Research Center
As an assistant scientist in the Aging and Metabolic Disease section at the Wisconsin Regional Primate Research Center, Dr. Jon Ramsey’s research focuses on the role energy metabolism plays in the aging process. He received his bachelor of science degree in biochemistry from Iowa State University. In 1995, he received his Ph.D. in animal sciences from Colorado State University. Dr. Ramsey’s doctoral research was on the role mitochondrial proton leak plays in regulating energy expenditure (also termed metabolic rate). After completing his doctorate, he came to the University of Wisconsin-Madison to begin post-doctoral research work at the Primate Research Center and Institute on Aging. He is currently concentrating on two areas of research; the role energy expenditure plays in the aging process and the neuroendocrine regulation of food intake.

One focus of Dr. Ramsey’s research is directed at determining the role energy expenditure may play in the retardation of aging with dietary restriction. It has been proposed that loss of cell function with age is the result of...
accumulated damage to proteins, lipids, and DNA by oxygen free radicals. Oxygen free radicals are oxygen molecules with an unpaired electron, making them highly reactive. The majority of the oxygen free radicals in the cell are produced as byproducts of mitochondrial oxidative phosphorylation. This process, the central biochemical step in energy expenditure, is responsible for approximately 90% of oxygen consumption. It follows that a decrease in energy expenditure may retard aging by decreasing the number of oxygen molecules interacting with components of the mitochondrial oxidative phosphorylation system. Dr. Ramsey is studying the effects of dietary restriction on energy expenditure at the whole animal, organ, and cellular level. This research has shown that dietary restriction causes an initial decrease in mass-adjusted energy expenditure that disappears with time. This change, however, does not appear to be uniform across all tissues, and current research is focusing on the specific organs responsible for energy expenditure changes. At the cellular level, Dr. Ramsey is investigating changes in mitochondrial proton leak with dietary restriction. Proton leak is a major contributor to cellular energy expenditure, and initial studies show proton leak decreases with dietary restriction. He is currently focusing on the theory that a decrease in proton permeability of the mitochondrial membrane may be central to the retardation of aging with dietary restriction.

In addition to energy expenditure studies, Dr. Ramsey is also interested in the neuroendocrine regulation of food intake. Early in the aging process, obesity is a major health problem while in very late life, loss of body weight, or wasting, is a major concern. Treatments that could effectively control food intake may alleviate both of these problems. The hypothalamus has long been known to play a central role in regulating appetite and food intake. However, it is only within the last few years that many of the key neuropeptides which appear to play a role in this regulation have been isolated. Dr. Ramsey is investigating the role leptin, orexin, neuropeptide Y, melanin concentrating hormone, and other neuropeptides play in regulating food intake in rhesus monkeys. Once the critical components involved in neuroendocrine regulation of food intake are identified, it may be possible to design better treatments to prevent obesity or encourage weight gain.

Karen Swallen, Assistant Professor
Sociology

Karen Swallen received her Ph.D. from the Department of Demography at the University of California at Berkeley in 1996, her M.P.H. in Epidemiology/Biostatistics from the School of Public Health at the University of California Berkeley in 1994, and her B.A. from Yale University in Political Science in 1989. After completing her Ph.D., Dr. Swallen spent two and a half years as a National Institute on Aging postdoctoral fellow at the University of Michigan where she was affiliated with the Institute for Social Research and the Population Studies Center. During her fellowship, Dr. Swallen was housed with the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) and used these data for a variety of projects on the effects of sociodemographic variables on health and aging. Dr. Swallen was the principal investigator for a National Institute on Aging grant that examined the influence of socioeconomic status measured by income, assets and occupation on the health of the HRS near-retirement population. She found that socioeconomic status predicts health in a robust manner, but that assets appear more powerful than occupation or income in predicting future disease, disability or death.

Dr. Swallen began her position at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in January 1999. In addition to her appointment in Sociology, she is affiliated with the Center for Demography and Ecology, the Center for Demography of Health and Aging, the Institute on Aging, and is a member of the Population Health program faculty. Dr. Swallen’s research focus continues to be the influence of sociodemographic factors on health and aging, with an emphasis on American immigrant populations. Her recent work has examined the apparent mortality advantage of older Americans relative to older Europeans. When place-of-birth information is added to mortality estimates, Dr. Swallen finds that the American advantage is reduced but not eliminated. Adding information about Hispanic ethnicity appears even more powerful. Thus, part of the explanation for the increased longevity of older Americans may be population composition, rather than public insurance systems or medical interventions. Dr. Swallen continues to examine this topic, with an emphasis on examining different cohorts of immigrants and adding better information on second-generation Americans.

A second major area of interest of Dr. Swallen is in the “Hispanic paradox” which describes the finding that Hispanics, although relatively low in socioeconomic status and very likely to lack health insurance, have excellent health. Dr. Swallen’s current research focus is on data quality issues that may be influencing these results. Her finding that Hispanics are likely to be misclassified as non-Hispanics in cancer registries, for example, indicates that part of the paradox may be due to ethnic misclassification. Eventually, she hopes to be able to create corrected disease rate and mortality estimates, and then move to examining potential explanations for the advantage.

WISCONSIN DEMENTIA SERVICES WEB SITE

The Wisconsin Alzheimer’s Institute of the UW-Medical School is pleased to announce the new Wisconsin Dementia Services Database. The database provides a comprehensive listing of dementia-related facilities, agencies, and services in the state of Wisconsin, including adult day care centers, adult family homes, community based residential facilities (CBRFs), dementia diagnostic clinics, home health agencies, hospice care, nursing homes, support groups, and state and county agencies, to name a few. To access the database, go to the following website: www.wisc.edu/dementia
INSTITUTE ON AGING DIRECTORS
Director: Carol Ryff, Ph.D., Department of Psychology
Interim Associate Director: JoAnne Robbins, Ph.D., Department of Medicine

VA GRECC DIRECTORS
Acting GRECC Director; Acting Associate Director for Clinical Programs; Fellowship Director: Steven Barczi, M.D., Department of Medicine
Associate Director for Research: JoAnne Robbins, Ph.D., Department of Medicine

INSTITUTE ON AGING WEB SITE:
WWW.SSC.WISC.EDU/AGING

INSTITUTE ON AGING E-MAIL:
AGING@SSC.WISC.EDU

Aging Notes
IOA Editor: Kay Smith
IOA Program Assistants: Kathy Page & Karen Meinholz
GRECC Editor: JoAnne Robbins

Articles for Newsletter
If you wish to submit an article or other information for this newsletter, please contact Kathy Page or Karen Meinholz at 265-4005 or via e-mail: sagemail@ssc.wisc.edu

12th Annual Colloquium on Aging:
April 27 & 28, 2000
Dinner: Thurs. evening, April 27, Pyle Center
Colloquium: Friday, April 28, Pyle Center

13th Annual Colloquium on Aging:
April 19 & 20, 2001
Dinner: Thurs. evening, April 19, Pyle Center
Colloquium: Friday, April 20, Pyle Center

6th Annual Wisconsin Symposium on Emotion
“The Neurobiology of Positive Emotion”
April 13 & 14, 2000
Monona Terrace Convention Center
Madison, WI
Call (608) 263-6161 for registration information.

Institute on Aging
University of Wisconsin - Madison
Room 2245, 1300 University Avenue
Madison, Wisconsin 53706-1532