

Inside Oregon

FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON COMMUNITY

August 20, 2007

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[Full story »](#)

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An expert on political campaigns, Jamieson has written numerous books and articles. She recently co-authored "un-Spun: Finding Facts in a World of Disinformation." The appealing and thought-provoking guide to the world of spin is recommended to incoming students for summer reading.

"'Spin' is a polite word for deception. ... [It] is tolerated and even admired in some circles. ... voters and consumers need to recognize spin

when it is used against them, just as good batters spot the spin on a curveball," the book's introduction reads. "If they don't recognize spin, they risk not only buying the wrong cold remedy or the wrong car but also going into the voting booth with false notions in their heads about the candidates."

Jamieson excels in guiding her readers to critical analysis of the world of spin around them. Her book is available at the UO Bookstore.

University Convocation is held every year just before the start of fall term to welcome new faculty and students and to remind everyone of the intellectual essence of the university community.

Seating is first-come, first serve. Doors open at 3 p.m.

In keeping with long-standing tradition throughout the academic world, UO faculty and staff are invited to wear academic regalia to the Convocation. The cost of regalia rental will be covered by the university through the Office of the President.

If you are interested in wearing regalia for Convocation, please contact Cathy Kraus by Aug. 29. You can e-mail, ckraus@uoregon.edu, call 541-346-1221, fax, 541-346-6277, or write, UO Convocation c/o Cathy Kraus, UGS, 372 Oregon Hall 5256 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-5256.

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Kevin Williams, currently a division commander with the Lane County Sheriff's Office, will start at the university on Aug. 31. He brings a wealth of insight to the position, Dyke said.

"Kevin exudes authority and demands respect in a subtle and unassuming way," Dyke said. "He's committed to being a leader in the UO community. His way with people and his impressive background in law enforcement make him an asset to the university."

As director of public safety, Williams will run a department of more than 70 people charged with the safety and well being of students, faculty, staff and visitors at the University of Oregon. In addition, the Department of Public Safety is also responsible for parking services on campus.

Williams started his LAPD career in 1984 as a police officer. In 20 years there, he climbed the ranks from officer to detective, to sergeant and eventually to lieutenant. In 2005 he left Los Angeles and started work as a division commander with the Lane County Sheriff's Office. Williams pledged that he is committed to the university, students and staff for years to come.

"I am confident I have something to contribute to the university and to the university community," he said. "This job combines my love for academics with my career in law enforcement and public safety. All the ducks fell into a row so to speak. Now I'm proud to be one myself."

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"Never before have we seen so clearly, so far back in time," said project leader Joe Thornton, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Oregon. "We were able to see the precise mechanisms by which evolution molded a tiny

molecular machine at the atomic level, and to reconstruct the order of events by which history unfolded."

The work involving the protein is detailed in a paper appearing online Aug. 16 in Science Express, where the journal Science promotes selected research in advance of regular publication.

A detailed understanding of how proteins -- the workhorses of every cell -- have evolved has long eluded evolutionary biologists, in large part because ancient proteins have not been available for direct study. So Thornton and Jamie Bridgham, a postdoctoral scientist in his lab, used state-of-the-art computational and molecular techniques to re-create the ancient progenitors of an important human protein.

Thornton then collaborated with University of North Carolina biochemists Eric Ortlund and Matthew Redinbo, who used ultra-high energy X-rays from a stadium-sized Advanced Photon Source at Argonne National Laboratory near Chicago to chart the precise position of each of the 2,000 atoms in the ancient proteins. The groups then worked together to trace how changes in the protein's atomic architecture over millions of years caused it to evolve a crucial new function -- uniquely responding to the hormone that regulates stress.

"This is the ultimate level of detail," Thornton said. "We were able to see exactly how evolution tinkered with the ancient structure to produce a new function that is crucial to our own bodies today. Nobody's ever done that before."

The researchers focused on the glucocorticoid receptor (GR), a protein in humans and other vertebrates that allows cells to respond to the hormone cortisol, which regulates the body's stress response. The scientists' goal was to understand the process of evolution behind the GR's ability to specifically interact with cortisol. They used computational techniques and a large database of modern receptor sequences to determine the ancient GR's gene sequence from a time just before and just after its specific relationship with cortisol evolved. The ancient genes -- which existed more than 400 million years ago -- were then synthesized, expressed, and their structures determined using X-ray crystallography, a state-of-the-art technique that allows scientists to see the atomic architecture of a molecule. The project represents the first time the technique has been applied to an ancient protein.

The structures allowed the scientists to identify exactly how the new function evolved. They found that just seven historical mutations, when introduced into the ancestral receptor gene in the lab, recapitulated the evolution of GR's present-day response to cortisol. They were even able to deduce the order in which these changes occurred, because some mutations caused the protein to lose its function entirely if other "permissive" changes, which otherwise had a negligible effect on the protein, were not in place first.

"These permissive mutations are chance events. If they hadn't happened first, then the path to the new function could have become an evolutionary road not taken," Thornton said. "Imagine if evolution could be rewound and set in motion

again: a very different set of genes, functions and processes might be the outcome."

The atomic structure revealed exactly how these mutations allowed the new function to evolve. The most radical one remodeled a whole section of the protein, bringing a group of atoms close to the hormone. A second mutation in this repositioned region then created a tight new interaction with cortisol. Other earlier mutations buttressed particular parts of the protein so they could tolerate this eventual remodeling.

"We were able to walk through the evolutionary process from the distant past to the present day," said Ortlund, who is now at Emory University in Atlanta. "Until now, we've always had to look at modern proteins and just guess how they evolved."

The work was funded by multiple grants from the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation, the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center and an Alfred P. Sloan Research Fellowship to Thornton.

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Becky Megerssa, a UO international student adviser in the International Affairs office, has worked with the Friendship Foundation for International Students to find placements for most of them. But a few new students still need families.

The students will need help getting back and forth from campus, but shouldn't require much attention during the work day, Megressa said. In the evening, a nice dinner and time to rest is sometimes the best thing a family can give a student new to the country, she said.

Anybody interested in hosting, can contact Megerssa, at 346-1436 or ffis@uoregon.edu. There

will be a host family orientation from 10:30 a.m. to noon on Aug. 25. Host families are also strongly encouraged to attend a Sept. 16 potluck picnic at Alton Baker Park.

The UO boasts more than 1,200 international students from 83 countries.

The Friendship Foundation (FFIS), founded in 1950 under the leadership of UO faculty members and community members, is a nonprofit organization that exists to bridge cultures and to promote world peace and understanding through international friendship, personal diplomacy and exchange of ideas.

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during that time frame that will attract visitors, especially those without tickets to the Trials, can be listed.

Simply send an e-mail to roses@uoregon.edu containing the following information:

1. Event name (working titles are fine).
2. A contact name and number (or e-mail) for additional information about each event (internal questions, not given to the public).
3. The school/college/program that is sponsoring the event (please include all co-sponsors as well as indicating the primary sponsor, if applicable).
4. The actual dates that you'll be holding each event.
5. A description of the event(s) -- the more detail, the better.

Please send information for any event that you are sure will happen, as well as any events that may still be tentative -- please identify which ones are definite and which are tentative.

Feel free to contact Shannon Rose, 346-3314, roses@uoregon.edu, if you have questions.

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Fink photographs the stark beauty of extreme climates



These 100- to 200-foot deep crevasses were photographed from a helicopter. The deep blue color in the ice is natural and almost fluorescent. "I always think of marshmallows when I look at this photo," Fink said. Antarctica. 2004

An photo exhibit at the University of Oregon School of Law by former Seattle psychiatrist Bob Fink graphically captures extremes in global climate, from the glaciers of Antarctica to the deserts of Namibia.

The exhibit will run through Jan. 6, 2008 in the second floor gallery of the law school.

From the translucent blue of frigid water to the fierce orange of the afternoon sun burning in a

desert sky, Fink's collection depicts fascinating extremes of color and mood, reflecting the infinite diversity and beauty of the natural world.

Fink's Antarctic and Namibia pictures are almost abstract in their otherworldly geometry. Many of the images in this collection have a non-representational quality allowing for a pure experience of pattern and color.

Fink only recently found his way back to his true vocation in the arts after practicing psychiatry in Seattle for 25 years. Fink in 2003 was inspired by the story of a developmentally disabled man forced to live independently for the first time at age 56.

Fink explored the man's new experience through digital film making, which resulted in Fink's 2006 documentary, "Wally," which has shown at dozens of independent film festivals across the country and internationally, including the 2007 Cannes film festival. "Wally" can be viewed at Fink's Web site, <http://sweatyboy.com>.

Slides of the exhibit can be viewed at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/sweatyboy/sets/72157600948683044>.

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Margaret "Margie" Paris, dean of the University of Oregon School of Law, addressed the graduates, their families and friends during the outdoor ceremony on the Memorial Quadrangle on the west edge of the University of Oregon campus.

When Paris was named dean in June 2006, she became the first woman to serve in the position at the law school. Before joining the law school faculty in 1992, Paris practiced criminal law for six years in Chicago. She served as associate dean for academic affairs for four years before being named dean.

Paris' scholarly work focuses on the reform of the criminal justice system, and she is co-author of a textbook on criminal procedure, "Constitutional Criminal Procedure."

Summer term's 1,125 degree candidates included 683 receiving bachelor's degrees, 141 certificate recipients, 248 master's degree candidates, 51 completing doctoral degrees and two receiving law degrees. Altogether, 1,132 degrees and certificates were awarded.

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