

Professor to head NSF's Biological Sciences

James Collins, Virginia M. Ullman Professor of Natural History and Environment, and Faculty Leader of Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Sciences in ASU's School of Life Sciences, has been named to head the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Directorate for Biological Sciences.

Collins, who begins his assignment in October, will oversee NSF's nearly \$850 million annual investment in fundamental biological research and serve on the Foundation's senior management team.

Collins has substantial prior experience with NSF in his roles as program director, a research awardee and as chairman of the external Advisory Committee for the biological sciences directorate.

W. P. Carey School receives high rankings

The *Financial Times*' annual business school rankings place ASU's W. P. Carey School of Business' MBA program 21st world-wide and 15th in the U.S. in doctoral rating.

Additionally, W. P. Carey's executive education division ranked 33rd for its custom programming. "This is the first year we've been large enough to qualify for participation in the rankings, so we're thrilled to have achieved a ranking well up in the top 50," said Andrew Atzert, executive education director.

Drop-out rate spurs new initiative

"Arizona is ranked an alarming 46th out of the 50 states in terms of its high school completion rate," according to Eugene E. Garcia, vice president for university-school partnerships and dean of ASU's College of Education.

Garcia is leading the Pre-K-12 Engagement Council, a team of researchers, practitioners and top-level administrators in establishing a high school completion initiative that will concentrate ASU resources, expertise and capabilities to support and enhance pre-kindergarten through high school education to ultimately raise the number of Arizona students completing high school and transitioning to college.

Plans for launching the initiative, which will be supported by all four ASU campuses, will begin immediately with a goal of reaching full operation by January. The Council has been studying how ASU can best coordinate its service-learning and research activities, to substantively support and improve the state's public education system on a larger scale.

The Council will take what is known from high-performing schools across Arizona and the U.S., such as Cibola High School, located in southern Arizona in the Yuma Union High School District which in 2004 graduated 80.4% of the students who enrolled as freshmen in 2000. Forty-two percent of those students went on to four-year colleges or universities, 47 percent enrolled in community colleges and five percent entered a trade school.

Biodesign Institute in new deal

The Biodesign Institute at ASU is partnering with a national biotech company to improve disease diagnosis and prevention. The collaboration with the CombiMatrix group, part of Acacia Research Corporation, is aimed at developing a novel type of peptide synthesizer. If successful, this tool would be useful in a variety of areas including immunology research, drug discovery and diagnostics.

CombiMatrix and the Institute will share revenue from commercialization of the synthesizer, peptide array products and intellectual property that are developed. The transaction was coordinated by Arizona Technology Enterprises (AzTE), ASU's technology commercialization arm.

Vittal takes reins of national power systems center

ASU electrical engineering professor Vijay Vittal has taken the helm of the Power Systems Engineering Research Center (PSERC), a collaboration of 13 universities dedicated to power systems research.

"Reliability of the electric supply is a critical component of the economic competitiveness of the nation," Vittal says. "To be the lead university in this group gives us national and international exposure."

ASU has eight faculty members and 12 graduate students involved in PSERC projects.

HBLI director receives service award

Leonard A. Valverde, executive director of the Hispanic Border Leadership Institute (HBLI) at ASU, has been selected to receive the LULAC 2005 State Community Service Award for his dedication and advocacy for the Latino community.

Through Valverde's leadership, HBLI – a consortium of eight institutions of higher learning serving Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas – has dedicated its efforts to improving the education of Latinos from pre-kindergarten to doctoral studies.

HBLI was established in 1996 with partial funding from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

Seven grads "Reach for the Stars"

Seven ASU students and recent graduates comprise the inaugural class of Reach for the Stars Fellowships awarded by the Division of Graduate Studies, the Office of the Vice President for Undergraduate Initiatives and the Barrett Honors College. The competitive, university-wide program seeks to recruit top ASU students into graduate school and increase diversity. Selected students demonstrate strong academic merit and the potential to succeed. Fellows receive a \$12,000 stipend and full tuition remission as part of the award.

The Fellows and their endeavors are:

- Dallas de Lowe, seeking a master's in religious studies and advancing the scholarly understanding of O'odham religious life;
- Jahaziel Linare, a research specialist for Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center at ASU, studying for a master's in social work;
- Megan Monaghan, recipient of the National Hispanic Scholarship and Provost Scholarship, seeking a master's in social work;
- Demetra Presley will start the master's program in justice and social inquiry this fall;
- Brent Roam, Rhodes Scholar and Woodrow Wilson Fellow, returning to ASU to pursue a law degree;
- Stephanie Robb wants to earn a master's in biomedical engineering to pursue a career in biomedical research;
- Monica Rodriguez, seeking a master's in counseling hopes to serve people from diverse backgrounds.