Campus weathers wind, rain, storms

Heavy winds showed off again at Indiana University Northwest during a stormy, tempestuous August, but it was the sneakier floodwaters that caused the most headaches.

On Aug. 15, the campus lost another 50 trees during an evening storm that galloped across the area with sudden, sweeping ferocity. IU Northwest had already weathered a similar storm event three months earlier in which 50-plus trees, many of them large evergreens at the center of campus, toppled to the ground beneath the windy onslaught.

If anything, the trees lost during the August deluge appeared to be even bigger, but aside from minor flooding and a few broken windows, no other significant damage was reported. The campus closed on Aug. 16 due to power outages, but by Friday the cleanup was underway and things had returned to normal.

Then came the flood, just in time for the start of Fall Semester 2007.

Planners gather at university to share strategies

Despite the strides made by minority planners during the past 40 years, it’s still a fact that many municipalities hire planners according to the racial demographics of their communities. That is something that needs to change, said Mitchell Silver, planning director for Raleigh, N.C., and one of the featured speakers at the Planning and the Black Community Division’s 2007 national conference, which was held in Gary and at Indiana University Northwest in August.

“When we talk about diversity in planning, I think we need to start defining the word ‘diversity’ (more broadly) and start talking about what it is and especially about what it is not,” Silver said during an address on Aug. 10.

For the planning industry truly to embrace diversity, he said, communities need to realize that race is not a determining factor in a planner’s ability to serve a community.

Silver was speaking at the Gary Genesis Center during the second day of the PBCD conference, of which IU Northwest was co-host. Winning the right to host the event was a great achievement for Gary. City and university officials hoped the visit by top planning professionals would inspire fresh development ideas for Gary.

Silver said his department in Raleigh is blessed with 46 staff members.

“So my heart went out to Gary when I heard that they had a planning staff of one,” Silver said. “But hopefully we can give you some insights during this conference.”

On Aug. 9, during a plenary luncheon at IU Northwest, former Gary planning director and PBCD founding member Charles Allen spoke about the need for city planners to become active members of the political process.
Rominger’s financial literacy efforts honored

A prestigious award named for one of Gary, Ind.’s most accomplished natives will be awarded to an educator at the city’s only four-year university.

The Indiana Council for Economic Education announced recently that Anna Rominger, J.D., dean of the Indiana University Northwest School of Business and Economics, would receive the Paul Samuelson Enterprise Award for Community Leaders at the council’s annual awards banquet on Nov. 2 at the Indiana State House. Rominger will be recognized for her commitment to K-12 education as demonstrated by her support of the university’s Center for Economic Education and its financial-literacy outreach programs.

Gary native Samuelson, in whose honor the award is named, was the founder of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s graduate department of economics. Samuelson was also the first American to win the Nobel Prize in Economics.

Each year, the ICEE honors community leaders who demonstrate outstanding commitment to economic education in their communities. Criteria for selection include personal involvement with economic education programs and leadership in obtaining commitments to economic education from the public and private sectors.

According to the ICEE announcement naming Rominger as this year’s award recipient, the business dean was chosen for her constant dedication to the success and promotion of IU Northwest’s Center.

“I was absolutely delighted. I think it’s a great honor to win something like this,” Rominger told Northwest News. “We all try to contribute in our own ways, and I’ve certainly tried to contribute to this exciting venture. Definitely, financial literacy is one of our major focus areas, so to be recognized for it is rewarding.”

Demonstrating why she is receiving the Samuelson Award, Rominger expounded on the importance of financial literacy in Northwest Indiana. It’s not just younger students in elementary or secondary schools who need to learn good money sense, she said; many college students also lack the knowledge or maturity to make wise financial decisions. That, Rominger explained, is why one of the business school’s most popular courses is a personal-finance class.

“It was something we did to help our students,” she said. “We had students coming to us and saying, ‘Well, I’m maxed out on my credit cards. What do I have to do to get more credit?’ We thought there were some issues here, so we designed this course. We’ve had huge enrollment in it. We’ve used it to help people understand how credit works. We’ve tried to encourage them to move away from credit and to invest a little money.

“The point is, you can buy all this stuff, and all you have is stuff in a corner,” Rominger said. “But if you can take even a little money and begin to invest, you begin to build something for the future.”

Dean Anna Rominger of the IU Northwest School of Business and Economics, shown here discussing the school’s Weekend MBA for Professionals program at a July 24 open house, has won the Paul Samuelson Enterprise Award for Community Leaders from the Indiana Council for Economic Education. Rominger earned the honor for her support of the IU Northwest Center for Economic Education and for her contributions to financial literacy in Northwest Indiana.

This will be the second consecutive year that the ICEE has recognized IU Northwest in some fashion for its financial-literacy program. Last year, the university’s Center for Economic Education won two Peter V. Harrington University Center Awards for excellence in carrying out its mission of financial literacy. John Gibson, the Center’s director, accepted those awards at last year’s banquet.

It was also Gibson who nominated Rominger for the Samuelson Award. That nomination was supported by Professor of Finance Bala Arshananpalli, Ph.D., and Vice Chancellor for Administrative and Fiscal Affairs Marilyn Vasquez, J.D. Rominger said she knew nothing of her nomination until learning that she’d won.

“It was a surprise to me,” she said.
Labor Studies celebrates new lease on life
Move to Division of Social Work unites programs with similar philosophies

One year ago, prospects for the future of Indiana University's Division of Labor Studies appeared, at best, uncertain. IUPUI officials had indicated that, as part of their restructuring of that campus, they would no longer host the 60-year-old statewide program, and possible alternatives ranged from downsizing and decentralization to complete dissolution of the division.

Labor Studies faculty, students and outside proponents, including many state and even federal legislators, expressed unwavering support for the program, and officials within the division sought a new home within another statewide IU division. Earlier this year, they found one: the Division of Social Work. Now, housed within a program that shares similar goals and philosophies, Labor Studies looks set not just to remain intact but also to grow in terms of the education offered and the constituencies reached.

"Of all the possibilities, this is the best that we could have hoped for," said Indiana University Northwest Professor of Labor Studies Ruth Needleman, Ph.D., who hosted a celebratory party at her Miller home on July 28 in honor of the program's new lease on life. "We see a lot of synergy in this merger."

"We have a lot in common with Social Work," she explained. "Our constituencies are the same, and, in many ways, our need to be advocates of our clients and students are the same. Social Work has to help those who are in need and who have little or no access to services, education and other things. Our clientele and our students tend to be more self-sufficient ... but they are always one step away from poverty. Because, at this point, almost a third of the workforce that works full time is living at poverty level."

With the program's future secure, Needleman said, Labor Studies is looking to add a master's degree to its list of degree offerings. Currently, students may receive a certificate, an A.S. or a B.S. degree in Labor Studies. Interdisciplinary courses between Labor Studies and Social Work also are a possibility, Needleman said, since there are many points of commonality between the curricula.

"They teach community organizing, and we teach organizing," she said. "They teach leadership, and we teach leadership. We do a lot of courses on employment and labor law. We're already designing a special economics course that their people can take. It provides and meets their needs better than a business course in microeconomics would. We hope that (this merger) will take us from being the best Labor Studies program in the country to being even better."

Online courses have become a significant element of the Labor Studies program, in part because the medium is more flexible and convenient for the many non-traditional students who must negotiate schoolwork around full-time jobs and family obligations. IUPUI officials last year ascribed the program's recent financial viability to its influx of online students, and they noted that IU Bloomington particularly had seen a sharp increase in online enrollment for Labor Studies classes. Needleman said the program's next step would be to expand beyond Indiana's borders and develop a national student base for its online offerings.

"We don't think there's another program in the country with the quality and situation that we have," she said. "We have years of experience online, and we have been successful at attracting out-of-state students. We would like to expand on that."

Labor Studies at IU began in 1946 as a non-credit extension program aimed at educating adult workers so they could become more effective participants in labor and community organizations. The program began offering degrees in the 1970s. Needleman described Labor Studies as the continuing fulfillment of IU's pledge to provide education to the state's working class and its underserved populations, thereby contributing to a more skilled and educated workforce. In today's era of free markets and globalization, she said, workers' education is as important as ever.

"One thing that is distinctive about Labor Studies is that we really are one of the only programs in the university that focuses on issues that are critical and current for labor and industry," Needleman said. "We teach about globalization. We teach about the integration of markets. We teach about free trade and its impact on jobs, and we enable leaders in the labor movement to do a better job of representing their members and negotiating with transnational corporations."

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Chemistry profs chasing E.coli in study
Vinodgopal, Peller get $120,000 to find chemical clues to contamination

Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water ... two Indiana University Northwest professors are looking for quicker testing methods to tell you whether it really is.

As Northwest Indiana’s beach weather starts to cool down, IU Northwest Professor of Chemistry Kizhanipuram Vinodgopal, Ph.D., of LaPorte, and Asstant Professor of Chemistry Julie Peller, Ph.D., of Chesterton, are gearing up for a two-year, $120,000 study on chemical indicators, or markers, in area lake waters that they say may allow for quicker analysis of E.coli levels at local beaches.

Peller and Vinodgopal, in conjunction with researchers Richard Whitman, Ph.D., and Muruleedhara Byappanahalli, Ph.D., of the United States Geological Survey’s (USGS) Great Lakes Research Station, obtained $80,000 of the funding from a recent Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant (IISG) award. The balance of the funds will come from an IU Northwest matching grant.

A longstanding concern with regard to water testing has been the length of time it takes to confirm elevated E.coli levels in lake water through microbiological testing, the results of which typically take 24 hours to confirm. This has led local authorities in some cases to close beaches after heavy rains or other conditions favorable to E.coli contamination, just in case elevated bacteria levels might be present. As Vinodgopal pointed out, even unnecessary closures can have negative consequences.

“If it’s a false closure, that means a lot of money that is potentially being lost in terms of tourism revenue, etc. If it’s a real closure, the question is whether it was closed in time to prevent people from swimming in the water,” he said. “So there is a fairly good amount at stake in this.”

Chemical analysis, Peller explained, can be carried out much more quickly than testing for the bacteria itself, with results coming back in just a few hours or less. The goal of this study is to identify chemical markers that reliably occur in tandem with E.coli bacteria, meaning that if the chemical in question is found to be present in lake water in elevated amounts, it’s safe to assume that bacteria levels are also elevated. Such markers could also reveal the nature and source of the contamination, she said.

“One of the issues our study focuses on is where this bacteria originates from,” Peller said. “Is it a human source or an animal source? Is it coming from overflow of sewage treatment plants, or is it coming from animal feces?”

Vinodgopal and Peller said they are not the first researchers to consider chemical analysis as an alternative to microbiological testing. But the longtime IU Northwest scientists and educators have some interesting theories about what types of chemicals might prove to be reliable harbingers of E.coli contamination.

“There are many chemicals that are produced by a wastewater treatment plant,” Vinodgopal said. “It’s a question of identifying the chemical appropriately and being able to use that chemical to devise a test that is cheap enough and reliable enough.”

So, what sort of chemicals might accompany E.coli in wastewater? The kind found in laundry detergent, Vinodgopal said.

“Almost 15 to 20 percent of the water that pumps through a wastewater plant in a typical urban setting is from laundry use,” he explained. “Chemicals that are used as whiteners and brighteners abundantly in all detergents will, we believe, be a good marker for identifying this kind of discharge. That’s the starting point. We’ll go on to other methods of detection, as well.

“We believe that, by the end of the project, we will be in a position to use these chemical markers to make much quicker identification of bacterial contamination,” he said.

The partnership with USGS is crucial, Peller said, because Whitman and Byappanahalli have years of experience sampling and testing the waters along Lake Michigan’s southern shores. Whitman is a former faculty member at IU Northwest. USGS will handle the microbiological testing, while the IU Northwest team will do the chemical analysis.

“They have a lot of experience in how to sample and where to sample,” Peller said of the USGS participants.

This IISG-funded project comes at a time when issues surrounding Lake Michigan’s water quality have commanded regional and even national attention, due both to concerns about E.coli-related beach closures and to the current controversy surrounding oil giant BP’s recent plans for increased lake discharges from its Whiting, Ind. refinery.

“I feel that this is a very timely issue, because the Great Lakes are on everybody’s mind,” Vinodgopal said. “Lake Michigan is the biggest resource in Northwest Indiana.”

“There is a lot of public interest in Lake Michigan issues, because we rely on it for so many different aspects of our lives,” agreed Peller. “We feel this is a good, solid project that has a lot of potential uses for the region.”

IISG is one of 32 programs nationwide that makes up the National Sea Grant network, which is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s primary university-based research program in support of America’s coastal resources. Each year, IISG disperses funds for research purposes to a variety of important projects aimed at improving the utilization, understanding and protection of the region’s most precious water resource: Lake Michigan.

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Allen said he earned a degree in architecture but decided that he was more interested in the broad strokes of planning policy.

“Planners are at their best when they take that planning discipline and apply it to a broad range of decisions that are in everybody’s interests,” Allen said. “Many planners don’t want to be political. If you don’t want to be political, you don’t want to be a planner.”

The IU Northwest Department of Minority Studies and Associate Professor Earl Jones, Ph.D., were involved in bringing the PBCD conference to Gary. As part of the event, the PBCD assigned a Technical Assistance Team comprised of division members to evaluate Gary’s development needs and come up with definitive recommendations and even designs for a proposed Broadway corridor redevelopment.

Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Kwsie Aggrey, in his introductory remarks at the luncheon, said that, despite IU Northwest’s status as a regional university, it remains very much concerned with the development and well being of its host city.

“This campus of Indiana University was established to be part and parcel of the overall development of Northwest Indiana,” he said. “However, it is important for us to realize that the need for Gary to be a vibrant, safe community for all is intertwined inescapably with the quest for excellence and recognition long sought by IU Northwest. The two must go together. Without a vibrant city like Gary, a city that will be welcoming to all, IU Northwest cannot get to where it needs to be.”
Students say class size matters

Individualized attention from profs makes the grade at IU Northwest

Among the many qualities that make Indiana University Northwest attractive to students, its small class sizes top the list. Students surveyed by the Office of Marketing and Communications as part of a recent promotional project assigned high value to the individualized attention they receive in classes where professors, and not graduate students, teach the curricula.

For 2007 business grad Ogochukwu Anokwute, who recently began a job in the Chicago offices of Ernst & Young, small class sizes at IU Northwest caused her to abandon plans to complete her degree in Bloomington.

“I just really like the small class sizes,” said Anokwute, a native of Nigeria. “I had originally planned to go here first and then finish my degree down in Bloomington. But I had such a good experience here with the professors and the small class sizes that I wound up not going to Bloomington. The small classes are the main reason I stayed at IU Northwest.”

Indeed, students praised most aspects of attending a regional campus like IU Northwest, saying the opportunities students have here far outweigh the supposed glamour of becoming an anonymous undergrad at a larger residential school.

“I believe you should go to a small school for your undergrad and a large school for graduate school,” said Bryan Conger, a Portage resident and senior IU Northwest theatre major. “The reason is, at a large school, the graduate students get everything.”

Conger, who directed Theatre Northwest’s summer comedy “Fashion: or, Life in New York,” credited IU Northwest’s small but excellent performing-arts department with giving him the opportunity to learn all aspects of stagecraft. At a larger campus, he said, such opportunities would not have existed for an undergraduate.

“I never would have been able to direct a main stage play at a large university,” said Conger, who has applied to several noted graduate programs. “I did that here. I got to stage manage, direct, act, run the lighting board, and do costuming. I like the individualized attention here. This is a small department, but there is a lot of talent here, and we have great professors.”

Psychology student Rachel Testi of Crown Point agreed that the personalized attention from professors at IU Northwest often translates into greater success in the classroom and more chances for experiential learning outside of it. Testi was one of many IU Northwest students who participated in faculty research projects during the summer.

“The professors are amazing,” Testi said. “They go out of their way to help you. They offer you research. Their tests are fair. Their lectures are easy to understand – but the classes aren’t easy! The professors are all very knowledgeable, and they’re all very good in their own fields. They all specialize in something different, so they all have something different to offer you.”

IU Northwest Prof. Paul Blohm, Ph.D., provides instruction to his reading-education class during Spring Semester 2007. The advantages of small classes like this one are the reason many students say they chose to attend IU Northwest instead of a larger school. The benefits include more personalized attention from the instructors, greater access to assistance outside of the classroom, and a substantial variety of research and experiential learning opportunities for undergraduates.

Valparaiso resident Britta Neinast, a first-year Master of Social Work student, also praised her department’s small class sizes and the instructors’ willingness to listen to students’ ideas and concerns.

“The professors and advisers are just really great people,” Neinast said. “They’re very interested in what I’m doing and very helpful in listening to any questions and issues that I have. They are very interactive. I am enjoying the program.”

Lynn Watthanapha of Merrillville, a chemistry major and pre-pharmacy student, said she sees a steady flow of IU Bloomington students from Northwest Indiana who eventually make their way back home and finish their degrees at IU Northwest.

Small class sizes, she said, are a major reason for that.

“I’ve noticed that a lot of people from Bloomington come back here,” Watthanapha said. “But not a lot of people from IU Northwest seem to be going to Bloomington.”

For anyone who is serious about getting an education, Watthanapha conclud ed, smaller universities are the way to go.

“I think, if you really want to concentrate on learning, it’s better to go to a smaller campus,” she said.
WEATHER from page 1

Following the Aug. 15 storm, heavy rains persisted across Northwest Indiana on an almost daily basis for the better part of two weeks. Portions of I-80/94 became impassable at one point, prompting Indiana Department of Transportation officials to pump the floodwaters into the Little Calumet River.

University officials suspect that influx of water into the nearby waterway, combined with total ground saturation from all of the rain, may have been a major factor in the appearance of floodwaters in the main campus parking lot on the weekend before classes began. On Monday, Aug. 27, IU Northwest officials closed the main parking lot due to flooding and set up a free shuttle service from a parking lot at The Village shopping center on Grant Street to the campus. Students and instructors with the campus unit of the Reserve Officers Training Corps joined IU Northwest police officers and other employees in directing traffic to alternate parking areas, and the Office of Marketing and Communications created signage to facilitate the flow of traffic.

Meanwhile, Physical Plant employees worked diligently to pump the water out of the parking lot and into the Little Calumet River Prairie just north of campus. By the next day, more than half of the main parking lot had been cleared, and a majority of parking spaces were in use again by week’s end.

Unfortunately, several campus buildings sustained water damage during the flooding. Offices in the Moraine Student Center, including the IU Credit Union and the RedHawk Café, quickly relocated elsewhere on campus after that building’s basement took on water. Cafeteria employees operated a grill outside of the Savannah Center and served hamburgers, hot dogs and other items from 11 a.m. until after 5 p.m. on the first day. As the week progressed, cafeteria personnel were able to expand their menu, and they continued to provide quality food service despite the challenging conditions. Meanwhile, IU Credit Union employees worked from the Office of the Bursar to provide members with financial transactions. Moraine is not expected to become fully operational again until later in September.

Lindenwood and Sycamore Halls also sustained some flooding on their first floors, and offices there were relocated elsewhere within the buildings or on campus.

The campus flooding was the result of August rain totals in Northwest Indiana that were reportedly the heaviest in 15 years. Thanks to a unified campus effort, however, IU Northwest weathered the bad weather remarkably well and fared much better than some neighborhoods across the area. Thousands of residents and many businesses went without power for several days following the Aug. 15 storm, and some area residents were flooded completely out of their homes by the subsequent rains.

Because that storm, unlike the May 15 event, took place after school hours, there was little damage to vehicles, and no injuries were reported. However, an IU Northwest Police Department vehicle did sustain mechanical damage after an accident involving debris following a severe storm on Aug. 15. Campus administrators, including Chancellor Bruce Bergland and Vice Chancellor Marilyn Vasquez, also pitched in.

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“Business schools also do some work on global economics, but they do it from the point of view of business.” Needleman continued. “And they are considered objective and essential. Likewise, Labor Studies looks at these issues from the point of view of the vast majority of people in the world – the working people. And the skills and knowledge we provide really help to create an informed and educated workforce.”

One ardent Labor Studies supporter who attended Needleman’s July 28 celebration was U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky (D-1st). The longtime congressman from Northwest Indiana lauded efforts by Needleman and others to oppose the diminishment or dissolution of the program.

“Labor Studies plays such a vital role in Northwest Indiana,” Visclosky said. “Given the economic difficulties we face today, and given the increasing difficulties the middle class is facing as far as securing jobs that pay a living wage and provide good benefits packages, the information and training provided by this program are more important than ever.”

“It’s a great program and a great education,” agreed current Labor Studies student Anthony Timmons, 32, a U.S. Steel employee from Gary, Ind. “I love it. I love the way it’s set up for working people. There is a lot of knowledge here that working people are able to get if they want it.”

Needleman thanked the many IU faculty members who supported Labor Studies during the deliberations over reorganization, saying that faculty backing was essential to the eventual favorable outcome. She also credited legislators, labor leaders and Labor Studies graduates with providing much-needed vocal support for the program.

“Very often, it’s those people at the bottom who have the broadest and most positive vision of what our country can be,” Needleman concluded. “It has always, throughout history, been those at the bottom who transformed the country. That’s where we got changes in meatpacking; that’s where we got reforms on child labor; that’s where we got minimum wages; that’s where we got public education. So we think our program is essential to creating a nation where people take responsibility for the well being of their communities. We see our role as a program that turns working people, adults and students, into informed citizens who play an active role in society.”

Photo by Christopher Sheid/Northwest News
This tree, located at the northwest corner of the IU Northwest campus, is one of more than 50 that fell victim to powerful winds that swept across campus during an Aug. 15 storm. Heavy equipment replaces vehicles in the west side of the main campus parking lot on Aug. 28. Heavy rains flooded the lot the weekend before fall classes began, and the water had to be pumped into nearby wetlands.
September Calendar of Events

Wednesday, Sept. 12
“How to be a Gay-Straight Ally” – 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., Savannah Auditorium. Gay activist Chrissy Gephardt, daughter of former Democratic House Majority Leader and 2004 presidential contender Dick Gephardt, will appear at IU Northwest to deliver a presentation entitled “How to be a Gay-Straight Ally.” Gephardt’s sexual orientation was revealed in the media during the 2004 Democratic primary, when she campaigned actively on behalf of her father. Students, faculty and community members are invited to attend this special presentation, sponsored by the Department of Communication and featuring an individual who has worked on the front lines of American political wars and of the battle for social justice.

Monday, Sept. 17
Constitution Day – 12 p.m. to 2 p.m., Moraine Student Center. The campus community will take this opportunity on the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution to consider the great document’s legacy and think about ways that today’s Americans can develop better habits of citizenship. Sponsored by the Department of Communication, Constitution Day will include games, prizes and informative presentations about one of the most important documents in human history. Attendees will receive free pocket-sized copies of the Constitution.

Tuesday, Sept. 25
Diversity Awareness Video Series – 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Savannah Center Room 205. Each month, the Office of Diversity and Equity hosts a video presentation and discussion focusing on a different ethnicity or nationality. Guest speakers also occasionally make special presentations. Campus community members are invited to bring a brown-bag lunch to this monthly event and learn about a new culture.

Take Action: Vote Smart – 12 p.m. to 3 p.m., Moraine Student Center. If you’re curious about the issues and candidates in upcoming elections in Northwest Indiana and the state, come to this event sponsored by the Department of Communication and find out all you need to know about the rapidly approaching political contests. At Take Action: Vote Smart, IU Northwest students will debate the most important issues of the day and shed light on the coming election season.

Friday, Sept. 28
South Shore Arts Summit – 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., Savannah Center. For the second year in a row, IU Northwest hosts the South Shore Arts Summit, where artists and those who support the arts gather to honor their accomplishments and plan for the future. An awards ceremony will take place at 3 p.m., followed by a closing reception at 4:30 p.m.