this week

Van Sant is named '03 Conner Prize winner

BY GAIL SHORT
Media Relations

Assistant Professor John Van Sant (History) has been named the winner of the 2003 Frederick W. Conner Prize in the History of Ideas. He will receive the award during a ceremony 3:30 p.m. Nov. 5 in the Mervyn H.Sterne Library Henley Room.

The Conner Prize is presented annually to a UAB faculty member for an outstanding essay on the history of ideas. The prize, which carries a $250 award, is named for Frederick Conner, former dean of the School of Arts & Humanities.

Van Sant, who specializes in East Asian and Japanese history, is the author of the winning essay Sakuma Shozan’s Hegelian Proposal for 19th Century Japan. In his essay, Van Sant discusses the samurai scholar Sakuma Shozan’s philosophy of combining Neo-Confucian ethics with the knowledge of Western-based science and technology as a means of strengthening Japan in a world increasingly dominated by Western industrialization and imperialism.

Van Sant earned his doctorate from the University of Oregon. He taught history at Auburn University.

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Power Atlas to aid microarray research

BY STEPHANIE HASBROUCK
Reporter Staff

A new grant from the National Science Foundation is helping researchers here create a Microarray Power Atlas for their colleagues to conduct more effective and efficient microarray research.

“We are trying to help investigators design experiments in microarray research, a fairly new technology that allows investigators to survey the entire genome to measure gene expressions,” said Postdoctoral Trainee Jode Edwards (Biostatistics). Microarray technology also measures to what extent genes are turned on and off.

Edwards said many genes in the body do nothing until nature, hormones or the environment cause the gene to be turned on. “And we want to be able to measure that,” he said.

Microarray chips are small glass slides used to measure thousands of genes in a single sample. The chips are used to compare two different samples. For example, in cancer research, scientists examine the differences in gene expression between normal and cancerous tissue.

“It’s not so much the changes we study, it’s which genes are responsible and which genes are affected. We hope to generate a better level of understanding, which may or may not lead to treatments,” Edwards said.

“In order to study gene expression this way, it is necessary to use replicate microarray chips from each condition of interest,” he said.

But, he said, the microarray chips are expensive, sometimes costing as much as $1,000 per chip.

Researchers receiving funding for their work must include in their grant applications a budget and justification for that budget. Edwards said oftentimes it is difficult for those conducting microarray research to predict the amount of microarray chips they will need, which directly affects the amount of funding they will need.

“So we are going to use publicly available data from these [kinds of] experiments — a minimum of 500 sets of data — in the gene-expression omnibus maintained by the National Center for Biotechnology Information,” he said.

Edwards and his colleagues also will use data from several other databases to conduct a statistical analysis to determine how many replicate chips would be needed for a particular experiment.

“It won’t be exact, but it will be similar and will be something they can use in the grant-writing process,” Edwards said.

“The proposed Power Atlas will be somewhat revolutionary among biological databases in that the information provided to users is the result of advanced statistical

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Ireland Prize nominations sought

The Ireland Distinguished Visiting Scholar Committee is requesting assistance in identifying potential candidates for the 2004-05 Ireland Distinguished Visiting Scholar Prize. The purpose of the Ireland Visiting Scholar Prize is to bring to the UAB campus outstanding scholars in the arts and sciences to present a public lecture and participate in other campus activities. The prize carries a cash award which is made possible by an endowment established by Caroline P. Ireland and the late Charles W. Ireland.

Nominations for the 2004-05 Ireland Prize should be individuals of distinction in the liberal arts and sciences. The Visiting Scholar should be someone who will interact profitably with UAB faculty and students in his or her area of specialization, as well as be able to present that specialty in a way that will be of interest to the whole academic community.

Recent past recipients have included Dr. Claude Steele, Dr. Jared Diamond, Dr. Charles Rosenberg, and Dr. Fred Robinson. The 2003-04 recipient is Dr. Bruce Budowle, Senior Scientist for the Laboratory Division of the FBI, who will visit UAB in March 2004.

Nomination guidelines can be obtained by campus mail, e-mail, or FAX by calling 934-0513. Deadline for nominations is Dec. 1. Send to: Diane Tucker, Chair, Ireland Visiting Scholar Committee, Psychology, Campbell Hall, Room 415, +170, FAX to 975-6110, or e-mail [dtucker@uab.edu].

Evidence needed

Continued from page 1 analyses on the data, as opposed to a being a warehouse of raw, unanalyzed data,” he said.

“There is a big problem with investigators having limited resources and trying to do an experiment in which they don’t get enough data and in the end they have spent all of their limited resources but they don’t have enough evidence to draw adequate conclusions,” he said.

The Power Atlas, Edwards said, will focus on eliminating such problems.

“This is the only [Web site] of its kind that I know of that is specifically geared toward the development of new experiments based on existing experiments,” he said.

Edwards hopes to launch the new site in six months.

Pulitzer Prize winner to speak at UAB

Pulitzer Prize-winning critic Michael Dirda will be the featured speaker for the annual English Department Alumni Lecture 7 p.m. Nov. 14 in the Hill University Center Auditorium. Dirda will talk about his work as an essayist and critic for the Washington Post Book World section. The lecture is sponsored by the UAB English Department and UAB Cultural Affairs. The event is free and open to the public. Call 934-4250 for more details.


His latest book is a memoir, An Open Book: Coming of Age in the Heartland. His book Bound to Please: Why Reading Flaubert is Fun and Other Essays on Great Books and Their Writers is due in 2004.

Mayor Bernard Kincaid asked city residents to show their colors in a proclamation declaring Oct. 31 Green and Gold Day in tribute to UAB’s homcoming celebration.

The mayor cited UAB’s economic contribution to the city, the hard-won, competitive accomplishments of UAB athletics and the academic achievements of its athletes in his declaration.

Said Kincaid, “In support of UAB’s homecoming football game, we encourage our citizens to participate by wearing green and gold colors and to be mindful of the valuable and ongoing work performed by this outstanding educational organization in the service of our community.”

UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center Intramural Grants for Cancer Research

The UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center plans to fund up to three Junior Faculty Development Grant awards in 2004.

The primary purpose of these grants is to provide seed grant funding to junior faculty members that facilitates successful competition for extramural funding programs at the national level. Awards will be limited to a maximum of $30,000 per investigator for a 12-month period beginning March 1, 2004.

Deadline for proposals: Dec. 12

Application guidelines are posted on the Comprehensive Cancer Center Web site [http://www.ccc.uab.edu/Research/Intramural_Funding_Opportunities.htm]. Application guidelines and instructions also may be obtained from Lisa Wilson [zwilson@uab.edu], 4-5279, or Denise R. Shaw [dshaw@uab.edu], 4-2387.

Nominations are due 5 p.m. Friday, Jan. 9, 2004

Nomination forms are available. Mail or bring to:

UAB Women’s Center, Holley-Mears Bldg Room 150 • Birmingham, AL 35294-1150 • 934-6946 • FAX 934-5833

The Center for Aging requests research proposals from UAB faculty that examine a fundamental aspect of the aging process or a major clinical, behavioral, social science or health policy problem that jeopardizes the health and well-being of a significant segment of the elderly population.

This program is designed to target the broadest range of scientific disciplines, including but not limited to the biological sciences, clinical sciences, health services delivery and social and behavioral sciences. It is expected that research supported through this mechanism will lead to the submission of a competitive application to a major research funding agency at the end of the project period.

Funds Available: Up to $30,000 for a one-year project period. Awards cover direct costs only. The Center for Aging expects to make two awards in FY 2004.

Funding Period and Program Requirements: April 1, 2004-March 31, 2005. A final report will be due within 60 days of the project completion date. In addition, investigators will be asked to provide periodic reports in subsequent years to enable the Center to track the impact of intramural grants. Investigators will be expected to participate actively in the Center for Aging Scientific Seminar Series; present their research at scientific meetings and publish their findings in scholarly journals.

Eligibility: Principal investigators must have primary faculty appointments at UAB at the level of Instructor or higher. Graduate students and post-doctoral trainees may serve as co-investigators. Faculty previously funded by the CFA Intramural Grants Program as a Principal Investigator are not eligible.

Application Guidelines: The UAB Center for Aging (CFA) Intramural Grant Application guidelines package must be used in preparing applications for this program. The guidelines package is available through the CFA Web site [http://aging.uab.edu] or may be requested by mail, FAX 934-7354, or via e-mail [ambrose@uab.edu]. Address requests to: CFA Intramural Grant Application, 201 CH 19, UAB Campus 2041. E-mail copies of the guideline package are in MS Word format.

Deadline: Applications must be received by 4:30 pm Dec. 8

Application Review: Each application meeting program and technical guidelines will be reviewed on the basis of scientific merit by faculty with expertise related to the proposed. Final selection will be made by the Center for Aging Steering Committee. Written critiques will be provided.

Notification: Applicants will be notified of the outcome by March 1, 2004. Direct questions to Richard Ambrose, Center for Aging, 934-9261.

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