Cal State Northridge has begun construction of its much anticipated $4.5 million aquatic therapy center, a project that will greatly expand the university’s already internationally recognized program providing therapeutic exercise for people with physical disabilities. Construction crews began work on the 18,400-square-foot project adjoining the Kinesiology Building at the beginning of the year. Kinesiology professor Sam Britten, who heads the university’s therapy program, said its new aquatic facility will be the only university-based center of its kind in the nation, giving Northridge a special role.

“We will be unique. I know of no other university that has such a comprehensive indoor aquatic facility of this size dedicated to helping those with disabilities,” said Britten. It has been the professor’s life dream to expand his program with an aquatic component, and thereby have professionally trained CSUN graduates expand the entire aquatic therapy field.

The new facility, due to be completed by the end of 2002, will be named the Abbott and Linda Brown Western Center for Adaptive Aquatic Therapy.

The Browns have contributed lead funding of $2 million toward the project, including an original $1.5 million in February 2000 that was CSUN’s largest single alumni gift.

Linda Brown, who earned a bachelor’s degree from Northridge, took a special interest in Britten’s pioneering work at the university’s Center of Achievement for the Physically Disabled (CAPD). For decades, Britten and the 300–325 Northridge students each year who train under him have helped thousands of people with physical disabilities achieve greater independence and a more productive lifestyle.

Northridge’s center aids more than 400 clients each year with chronic disabilities, often those who have been told that hospitals and other providers can help them no further. With the addition of the aquatic therapy facility, Britten said the center should be able to accommodate its current 200-person waiting list and double its client base.

The CAPD works with people who have suffered strokes or spinal cord injuries, those with severe arthritis, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis and other disabilities caused by injury or disease. All clients receive a personalized exercise program that is designed to help them achieve their goals for increased fitness and independence.

The new aquatic therapy component will offer those with disabilities a precious gift—the freedom of movement in exercise and therapy with little or no pain. The buoyancy of water provides an ideal environment for the body to function without the added stress of gravity.

Inside, the aquatic facility—in addition to expansion space for the current operation—will have four therapy pools to aid people with different types of disabilities. Each will be accessible through ramps, stairs or lifts:

- a main 60 x 24-foot heated therapy pool that will include two underwater treadmills, one 30 x 24-foot heated pool with a vertically adjustable floor, allowing the center for the first time to expand its services to children, a 17 x 10-foot spa aimed at those with joint and soft tissue injuries; and
- a 26 x 24-foot cool water pool, suited to those with multiple sclerosis and similar conditions that respond better in cooler environments.

Outside, the aquatic facility will have a half-circle vehicle drop-off area near its entrance on Lindley Avenue south of Plummer Street, said Bill Fairchild, a university facilities project manager. The new facility also will have a mostly white stucco exterior with white ceramic tile highlights to match the adjoining Kinesiology Building.

Britten, a Northridge faculty member since 1959 who is nearing retirement, said he hopes the aquatic therapy center will begin operation in spring 2003, depending on the pace of construction. “I have one more year to work on the campus. I want to see this thing through to completion,” he said.

Britten thanked the Browns and U.S. Rep. Howard “Buck” McKeon, who helped earmark nearly $1 million in federal funds for the project, for making it a reality. He also thanked Northridge President Jolene Koester for “making a miracle occur.” CSUN is continuing to seek additional fundraising support for the project.

“We’re getting calls already about the aquatic therapy program,” Britten said. “The word is spreading. There’s a lot of interest in what we’re doing. Bringing an aquatic therapy program to the university is something I’ve always wanted to do. It will not only make a unique contribution to our community, but also serve as a training model for the country.”

Artist’s rendering shows the university’s new Adaptive Aquatic Therapy Center.
Northridge Wins $6 Million for Biomedical Research

National Institutes of Health Awards Will Support Students and Faculty During Coming Four Years

Cal State Northridge’s Minority Biomedical Research Support (MBRS) program has received two federal grants totaling more than $6 million to develop biomedical research and enhance research education.

The grants—MBRS RISE (Research Initiative for Scientific Enhancement) and MBRS SCORE (Support for Continuous Research Excellence)—were awarded by the National Institutes of Health through its National Institute of General Medical Sciences division.

“We have had the MBRS program on our campus since 1993, and it has provided support for many students and faculty members,” said biology professor Maria Elena Zavala, the director of both programs.

The RISE program will help students participate in research. Its primary goal is to increase the number and competitiveness of underrepresented minority students seeking doctoral degrees in the biomedical and behavioral sciences through its support of developmental activities for faculty, students and the university.

Academic departments involved in the RISE program include biology, chemistry, engineering, family environmental sciences, geology, mathematics, physics and psychology.

During the next four years, Northridge will receive $2.2 million for the project. The funds will support 20 undergraduate students and five graduate students each year through workshops, lab work and other activities.

The SCORE program helps develop faculty research in the biomedical and behavioral sciences. The $4 million SCORE grant to Northridge will support six faculty research projects for four years.

The six CSUN faculty members participating in the SCORE awards are Robert Carpenter (Biology), Joseph Hajdu (Chemistry), Taebom Oh (Chemistry), Michael Summers (biology), Michele Wittig (Psychology), Lisa Banner (Biology) and Steve Dudgeon (Biology).

“The grants have enabled our students to have access to some excellent pieces of equipment, including a DNA sequencer, confocal microscope and improved Internet connectivity to MBRS and MARC supported labs,” Zavala said.

The program provides mentorship and research experience, paid hourly wages for lab time, a budget for travel and research supplies and materials, and tuition and fees for graduate students.

College of Science and Math Welcomes Twin Professors

Rheem Medh in Biology and Jheem Medh in Chemistry Bear More Than Just Physical Resemblance

For only the second time in campus history, Cal State Northridge has identical twins working at the same time as faculty members. Rheem Medh, an assistant professor of biology, and Jheem Medh, an assistant professor of chemistry, joined the university community at the start of the fall 2001 semester.

Rheem teaches general and human genetics classes to upper-division undergraduate and graduate students in the genetic counseling program. Her research interests include understanding cell death, what leads to cell death and how genes are involved in the process. Understanding cell death is essential to dealing with drug and therapy responses to neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer’s disease, autoimmune disorders and cancers.

Jheem teaches two upper-division biochemistry lecture classes and one biochemistry lab class to dietetics majors. She also conducts research on the effects of high-level, low-density lipoprotein and low-level, high-density lipoprotein on cardiovascular diseases.

The twins, age 40, earned their Ph.D.s together from the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston in 1990. Rheem in biology and Jheem in chemistry.

Before coming to Cal State Northridge, the Medh sisters, who were born in India, had been teaching in undergraduate and professional programs for the past eight years.

Rheem taught graduate workshops in genetics to medical students at the University of Texas at Galveston, while Jheem was responsible for small group laboratory classes in biochemistry for undergraduates at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. Thus in recent years, the two had been living and working in different states.

“We lived quite far from each other and were looking for colleges and universities in California,” Rheem said.

“We researched larger universities on the web because we wanted to live in the same place. But we didn’t dream of landing at the same campus,” Jheem said.

The twins describe their sisterly relationship as very trusting and understanding. “My sister is not just a sibling, but also a best friend,” Rheem said. They share almost everything and have the same outside hobbies and interests—traveling and painting.

Jheem said the large size of the Northridge campus probably has helped avoid the problem of students and faculty members getting the twins confused. “We work in different buildings and most students don’t know yet that we are twins,” she said.

Both professors are enthusiastic about their futures at Cal State Northridge and are looking forward to conducting research after they set up their laboratories. “Everyone on campus is nice and friendly and is going the extra mile to make us comfortable and feel at home,” the twins said.

Northridge’s only prior faculty twins, campus officials said, were Richard and Robert Doctor, both now retired. Richard, a psychology professor, taught at Northridge from 1966 to 2001, while Robert, an educational psychology professor, taught here from 1960 to 1996.

Community Connection continued from page 1.
Professor Helps Give Musical Voice to the 2002 Olympics
Elizabeth Sellers Compiles Musical Medley for Opening Ceremony’s Parade of Athletes

It was one of the most moving highlights of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City: several thousand athletes marching into Rice-Eccles Olympic Stadium for the opening ceremonies as several billion people worldwide watched and listened on television. As the music swelled, Cal State Northridge assistant music professor Elizabeth Sellers, sitting at home with her husband, was nearly overcome with joy—but for a different reason. Along with the rest of the world, Sellers was now hearing the Olympic musical medley that she had compiled for the opening ceremony’s parade of athletes. "Exactly what I did is exactly what they played. I was thrilled to death," said Sellers, who had spent the prior four months working as music research coordinator for the team that produced the Olympic opening and closing ceremonies. "I knew every single note of every single piece backwards and forwards by the time I was done with it," she added.

The melody that accompanied the marching athletes—a mix of arr. recorded contemporary and upbeat marching music—was in fact a 20-minute medley of 14 different musical segments that Sellers had compiled and blended, working for the ceremonies’ music director and executive producer. Originally, the plan was for the 20-minute medley to be repeated once, giving about 40 minutes of musical coverage for the marching Olympics. But because of the number of athletes and the pace of the February 8 proceedings, Sellers said the medley actually was at least into its third rendition before it was concluded.

As might be expected, the true story of Northridge music professor meets the Olympics also has its own share of Hollywood-esque elements. In a real-life example of the industry maxim "It's who you know," Sellers' Olympic musical research in October and November—focusing on ethnic music and musical instruments from various countries—came to naught when producers decided not to proceed with that particular idea. So from late November on, Sellers' focus shifted to what finally became the parade of athletes segment.

To compile the medley, Sellers said she spent many hours sifting through music collections, finding likely segments, and taking those to Watters, who then cleared them through executive producer Don Mischer. After some chosen segments were enhanced, Sellers then imported the music onto a computer for mixing and sequencing to get the final CD.

But in an example of suspense to the very end, Sellers wasn't certain, until her musical medley actually began broadcasting, that it would be featured in the Olympic opening ceremonies. She had submitted the final version on compact disc nearly two weeks earlier as Watters left for Salt Lake City, but then had heard nothing since.

Finally, after the opening ceremonies were done and word spread about Sellers' involvement, a common question among her Music Department peers and others was what particular music segments had she used in the medley. But at least until the Olympic Games had passed, Sellers was required to keep mum, bound by a confidentiality agreement.

On a personal level, Sellers nonetheless views her Olympic assignment as a thrilling once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Indeed, the television broadcast of the opening ceremonies in Salt Lake City was the highest-rated ever for the Olympics during winter, drawing an estimated 72 million viewers in the United States alone.

But from a university perspective, Sellers also sees her Olympic assignment as one of the many special kinds of opportunities that come to faculty in Northridge's highly rated Music Department set in the San Fernando Valley, which is the heart of California's entertainment industry.

Throughout the department, faculty members regularly hone their musical crafts in real-world settings, and then bring that experience back to the classroom. "I feel it's critical for us as faculty members to be in the real working world," Sellers said, "because we can't guide our students if we're not active in our profession.

Sellers' role with the Olympics did not surprise Jerry Luedders, chair of the Music Department. "This is a normal part of what our faculty does," Luedders said. "We feel the faculty needs to be active in the profession so we're not educating students just in the abstract or theory."

Other faculty examples cited by Luedders include Matt Harris, who heads the campus's Grammy Award-winning vocal ensemble, and Crista Chow, who directs the World Youth Choir. Sellers came to Northridge in fall 1999 to oversee the Music Department's media composition program, a newly reshaped option available to Northridge music majors who want to do music for films, television, musical theater and similar ventures. (See the accompanying article at left.)

Prior to Northridge, Sellers had completed the score and title song for a yet-to-be-released independent feature film, composed music for documentaries and done session conducting work in Los Angeles. She previously spent 11 years as music director for both the Helena and Bozeman Symphony Orchestras in Montana.
Countrywide Gift Creates Endowed Finance Professorship

Countrywide Credit Industries, best known for its subsidiary Countrywide Home Loans, has donated $300,000 to Cal State Northridge for the creation of an endowed professorship in the Department of Finance, Real Estate and Insurance.

The donation by Countrywide, the nation’s largest independent residential mortgage lender, will create the first endowed professorship in the College of Business and Economics. Payable over five years, the donation will help the Finance Department recruit and retain top faculty, enhance an existing program, and attract distinguished visiting scholars.

The Calabasas-based company has many Cal State Northridge business alumni among its executives, including Stanford Kurland, executive managing director and chief operating officer for the parent companies in the mortgage and retail banking businesses, and chief executive officer for its main home loans subsidiary.

Assisting in the creation of the endowed professorship at CSUN aply coincides with Countrywide’s ongoing community involvement and active philanthropic efforts,” said Anna McCallion, Countrywide’s managing director and chief administrative officer.

Judy Knudson, Northridge vice president for university advancement, called Countrywide’s gift a wonderful partnership that will benefit both organizations and particularly the university’s students.

“Countrywide was a leader in the creation of the endowed professorship at CSUN and we are very grateful for their commitment and generosity,” said Kreznor. “This gift is a testament to the strength of our relationship with Cal State Northridge and our commitment to community involvement and education.”

The company is headquartered in Calabasas (www.countrywide.com) and has more than 15,000 employees spread among more than 500 offices. Northern California (www.CountrywideBusinessAndEconomics.com), the university’s largest college, serves more than 5,700 undergraduate and graduate students, and is one of the largest undergraduate business programs in the U.S.

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The Associated Students Ticket Office in the University Student Union sells tickets to many events on campus, except for some held by outside groups. The ticket office is open from 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m. Mon.–Fri. For prices not given, call (818) 785-8885.