Approved by the Board of Trustees

March 28, 2024

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Board Meeting

March 28, 2024

APPOINT ASSOCIATES TO THE CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDY,

ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-2025, URBANA

**Action:** Appoint Associates to the Center for Advanced Study, Academic Year 2024-2025

**Funding:** State Appropriated Funds; Gift Funds from the Beckman Endowment

Each year, the Center for Advanced Study awards appointments as associates in the Center for Advanced Study, providing one semester of release time for creative work. Associates are selected in an annual competition from the tenured faculty of all departments and colleges to carry out self-initiated programs of scholarly research or professional activity.

The chancellor, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and vice president, University of Illinois System, recommends the following list of associates selected for the Academic Year 2024-2025, and offers brief descriptions of their projects:

Aleksei Aksimentiev, professor, physics,

*Resolving the 3D Structure of Viral Genomes with Atomic Resolution*

This project aims to develop a computational approach for determining the structure of genomes inside fully packaged viral particles. The knowledge of such structure may provide a treasure trove of data for identifying new targets for pharmacological treatment of viral infections.

Jozsef Balogh, professor, mathematics,

*Advanced Applications of the Hypergraph Container Method*

The theory of combinatorial structures is closely related to several areas of mathematics, including algebra, logic, number theory, and probability, as well as to other fields such as information theory, coding theory, theoretical computer science, and statistical physics. Professor Balogh plans to investigate this theory via his recently invented “Container Method,” which has already resulted in numerous breakthroughs in mathematics.

Alison Bell, professor, evolution, ecology and behavior,

*Integrating Neural and Gene Regulatory Networks to Understand Behavioral Evolution*

Professor Bell will explore new ways to link genotypes and behavioral phenotypes by taking a deep dive into the disparate literatures on neural networks and gene regulatory networks. The overall goal is to develop a conceptual framework which integrates neural and gene regulatory networks to offer new insights into fundamental questions about the origin and maintenance of behavioral diversity.

Merle Bowen, professor, African American studies,

*“We Were Never Meant to Survive”: African Diasporic Communities in Atlantic Canada*

This is a comparative study of black rural communities’ claims to land and their connections to the broader fight against racism in Canada. By looking at their protracted struggle for land, livelihood, and citizenship rights, Professor Bowen will bring to light untold stories of African-descent communities’ ingenuity and resilience.

Ripan Malhi, professor, anthropology,

*Time Transect of Genomic Diversity of Salmon on the Kenai River System*

This is a community-engaged project with the Dena’ina speaking community in Alaska. The project will examine genomic diversity of salmon through time to use as a marker of population viability and assess the impacts of European colonization.

Ewa Maslowska, professor, advertising,

*How Do Incentives Affect Consumer Reviews and Can We Learn to Recognize Incentivized and Fake Reviews?*

Online reviews play a crucial role in consumer decision-making, which motivates some companies to incentivize reviews, flooding platforms with sponsored and fake reviews. This project aims to investigate the effects of incentives on reviewers' and consumers’ decisions and to identify indicators of fake reviews to ‘help consumers detect them and make better-informed decisions.

Ramon Soto-Crespo, professor, English,

Narrative Storm*: Ecocritical Neorealism, Climate Change, and the Caribbean*

***Narrative Storm*** tells the story of climate change in the Caribbean, focusing on a century’s worth of ideological conflicts between modernization and environmentalism in Puerto Rico. Soto-Crespo’s book tracks those conflicts through a multidisciplinary range of narratives, moving between fiction and nonfiction to chart the uneven development from industrialized monoculture to a more recent focus on sustainable landscape design, as the island grapples with accelerating vulnerability to hurricane devastation.

Yurii Vlasov, professor, electrical and computer engineering,

*Dynamic Information Flows in Brain Cortical Networks*

Professor Vlasov and his research group’s primary objective is to reconstruct the cellular-level temporal functional anatomy of neuronal networks in the mammalian brain that are relevant to the decision-making process. To achieve this goal, they propose to develop experimental and computational methods to dissect millisecond-scale temporal interactions in cortical neural networks at a cellular level directly from the spike trains recorded during goal-directed behavior.

[[1]](#footnote-1)Russell Weinstein, professor, School of Labor and Employment Relations,

*Do Regional Universities Affect K-12 Education in Their Communities?*

This project will study the impact of regional universities on K-12 education in their local communities. A central focus will be to evaluate whether proximity to these universities reduces hiring difficulties for nearby school districts, which has important implications for policies aimed at relieving teacher shortages.

The Board action recommended in this item complies in all material respects with applicable State and federal laws, University of Illinois *Statutes*, *The General Rules Concerning University Organization and Procedure*, and Board of Trustees policies and directives.

The president of the University of Illinois System recommends approval.

1. This faculty member has been recommended for appointment as a Beckman Associate in the Center for Advanced Study, named for the donor of a gift that permits additional recognition for outstanding younger faculty who have already made distinctive scholarly contributions to their respective fields. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)