When the going gets tough, the tough get going—or so it is said. OK, we’re tough. Where do we go, exactly? And how do we get there, especially on a path crowded with people just like us who are headed in the same direction? Several scenarios are detailed in this seventh issue of Outlook. Many return to the classroom when jobs evaporate. This group may seek to reinvent themselves through the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, or simply weather the financial storm in an environment that nurtures understanding. Others may consider how to change their personal situation by reaching out to those with greater needs—and fewer resources. Yet another response is to simply dream, to think “out of the box,” and pursue opportunities that are impervious to the litany of doomsday headlines. Each course of action is viable and valuable. Each response is necessary and important. If we are to learn by example, let all of our examples be this exemplary.

—The Editors
2 Reboot: Getting a Foot in the Door
The news traveled far and wide when Oakton first announced “Reboot,” a program that provided free tuition to unemployed local residents. Three students discuss their reasons for taking advantage of this unique job training effort.

4 Shred America
What started as “an impossible journey”—riding from Chicago’s Millennium Park to New York City on skateboards—turned into a life-changing road trip and documentary starring two young filmmakers and the friends they made along the way.

6 Quirky Qlubs
Grab a cricket bat, ukulele, or colorful clown nose if you want to experience college life to the fullest. These five student organizations provide plenty of off-the-wall fun.

8 This Virtual Life
Social media may be a popular conversational buzzword, but not everyone believes that Web 2.0 innovations such as Facebook and YouTube offer the best learning tools. Is higher ed making enough room for “tweets” and other new technologies?

9 A Reason to Smile: 3,700 Toothbrushes
Bright smiles are on the horizon in Gualán, Guatemala, thanks to an upcoming mission trip by Dawn Kuerschner, associate professor of nursing, whose cargo includes 3,700 toothbrushes collected by Phi Theta Kappa.

10 Breaking Records
Women’s basketball star Angie Rieger and Rich Bolinder, head coach, both added luster to the Raiders’ 2008-2009 campaign. As Rieger tried to stake her claim as the College’s all-time leading scorer, Bolinder reached a professional milestone of his own.

12 Another Look
From personal finance to the global recession, money seems to matter more than ever. Accounting guru Jay Cohen breaks down the current economic imbroglio.
AFTER A CAREER SETBACK, starting over can feel like a shock. But for some, going back to college can turn setbacks into opportunities, opening up new possibilities and jolting careers back to life.

Hilario Mutuc was 41 years old when his computer support position was outsourced and he was laid off from his job. He wasn’t interested in launching into a new field. Besides, his main strength lay in the field in which he was already working. Years past earning his bachelor’s degree, the time seemed right to update his skills.

“If you want to be in this field, you have to keep learning,” he says. He jumped at the chance to do just that when his wife, a nursing student at Oakton, told him about the College’s “Reboot” program, which in early 2009 provided free tuition for five career programs to in-district residents who had lost their full-time jobs in the past year.

For Mutuc, the A+ Computer Diagnostic Specialist program offered possible certification following rigorous exams. A+ certification would let potential employers know he had “the right stuff”—the specific diagnostic skills needed for the job.

Mutuc understands that students bring different levels of experience to the course. “We compare notes at break,” he says. For those with less of a computer background, he advises patience and the ability to learn from mistakes. “You don’t learn overnight,” he adds. “You have to practice. You have to be on the job to encounter all the problems.”

Still, he was surprised by the intensity of the program. One lab project was to build a computer from scratch. “The first time, you’re scared to do it yourself. But once you go through it in class you realize it is something you can actually do.”

In April, Mutuc’s job at the help desk was reinstated. “I was ecstatic,” he says. He returned to his previous employer with new confidence and an updated skill set. “I’m better equipped now to be effective on the help desk.” He intends to take the exam for certification and in fall register for Oakton’s Project Management Program.

Unlike Mutuc, Carmencita Ruiz-Panaga had no formal computer training before entering Reboot’s A+ program. Years earlier, she’d earned a bachelor’s degree in education and taught for a year in the Philippines—long enough to realize that teaching wasn’t for her. After coming to the U.S. she worked as an insurance company administrative assistant for more than 20 years before being downsized. Then, after two years at another insurance company, she was downsized again at age 56.

For more information about Oakton’s Reboot fall courses, go to www.oakton.edu/wia.
Ruiz-Panaga knew she “had to find a job that was better, or at least one that was stable.” Trained computer workers were said to be in high demand. And with four computers at home, she was frustrated by the high cost of repairs. “If somebody has to come to your home, it’s $175 an hour. Forget it!”

She enrolled in the A+ diagnostic program to learn how to repair computers. The course work was quite challenging, considering her age and minimal computer experience. Younger students who’d grown up around computers learned faster but were willing to help. They showed her how to read circuit board schematics which used to leave her stumped. She studied hard and found different ways of learning. “Not everyone has the same brain,” she says.

With a help desk job possibly in her future, Ruiz-Panaga remains focused on expanding her skills. “I like learning!” she says. There’s an immediate reward, too.

“Whenever I needed help on the computer, I would ask my nieces or nephew,” she says. “Now I can handle my own software problems and hardware upgrades.”

Twenty-four years ago, Susan Banach graduated with a bachelor’s degree in broadcast journalism. After working as a radio reporter, she switched to advertising and programming sales. On her last job she traveled around the country selling weather content to TV stations. She had a cool job.

Then in her late 40s, she was downsized.

While looking for a new position in environmental sales, Banach enrolled in Reboot’s Green Marketing Program. She was surprised to find so many other Baby Boomer students who’d also had cool jobs in the same boat.

“We’re all facing the same challenges, trying to find new ways to make ourselves more marketable,” Banach says. “We’re professionals. We know how to go the extra mile.”

With so many students in the same age bracket, the instructor adjusted the course to help them better market themselves. She also arranged opportunities for networking with people in the industry, and alerted fellow students to upcoming job fairs and green seminars and events.

The environmental industry is still sprouting dynamically. “It’s not yet determined which companies are truly sustainable,” Banach says. “In some ways, it’s the wild West.” Policies vary widely, not just among companies but across regional and state lines, she notes.

Banach’s next move will be to further her education in environmental management. One arm of green marketing extends towards corporate communications, the other towards science. She may decide to pursue elements of both.

“Ideally, I’d like to work for an ethical company that’s truly serious about being sustainable and moving forward,” she says. “I’m looking for a company that’s serious about the kind of carbon footprint it’s making in the world.”

Meanwhile, the Green Marketing Program has changed how Banach approaches her search. “Oakton’s instructors do prepare people to look for a job. It’s not only about branding an entity but also about branding themselves.”

What’s next? Employment training has now taken center stage at community colleges across the country, thanks to millions of dollars in “stimulus” funds approved by the Obama Administration. In fact, funds provided through the Workforce Investment Act and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act may be used to earn degrees and certificates in more than 60 different programs, from Basic Early Childhood Education, Fire Science Technology, and e-Business, to CNC Operations and Programming, Pharmacy Technician, and Transportation, Warehousing, and Logistics Management.

“The response to our original ‘Reboot’ program was so immediate and positive that we must remain focused on finding innovative ways to provide training,” says Margaret Lee, president of Oakton. “The funding provided by the President’s stimulus plan greatly expands the options for those who are unemployed.”

Hilario Mutuc updates his skills through Oakton’s A+ Computer Diagnostic Specialist program.

Carmencita Ruiz-Panaga receives assistance from instructor Angelo Gero in Computer Peripherals class.

field, you have to keep learning.” –Hilario Mutuc
COMING SOON to a theater near you: Shred America, the story of two young filmmakers who one day decided to ride their skateboards from Chicago’s Millennium Park to Times Square in New York City.

Spoiler alert! Arthur Swidzinski and Mike Kosciesza completed their fantastic journey in 35 days on a modest, self-financed budget of $10,000, and in the process learned valuable lessons about human nature, the geography of the eastern third of the United States—and themselves.
“Originally, the movie was going to only be about us,” admits Swidzinski, an Oakton alumnus currently working to complete his film studies at Columbia College Chicago. “But in the end, it was tough to bring friends along to help and then tell them they couldn’t be part of the whole project.”

Joining Swidzinski and Kosciesza were James Lagen, whom the long-time friends knew from Maine East High School and Oakton, and Tony Michal, a graduate of Maine South and Columbia. Instead of riding skateboards, Lagen and Michal pedaled bicycles pulling yellow baby trailers filled with food, water, clothing, sleeping bags, pillows, and the crew’s film production equipment, including two Canon XH A1 high definition camcorders. The travelers split their five weeks on the road between sleeping comfortably in hotels and “couch surfing,” and camping out under the stars.

“So many people helped us out,” says Swidzinski, rail thin and exuding an impatient creative energy. “We met lots of people like ‘Trucker John’ and his family. They gave us food, built a campfire in their backyard, and took us on a historical tour of their town.”

“That was kind of the ‘social experiment’ part of the trip,” he adds. “Some people didn’t believe us when we told them what we were doing. Other people got angry, because they thought we were lying to them.”

The group also suffered a few lectures about the perils of not wearing helmets.

“Street skaters don’t consider helmets very cool,” Swidzinski sheepishly admits. “Kinda dumb, yeah, but really, there aren’t that many head injuries. That’s just the culture.”

The Shred America team set off from Millennium Park on June 2, 2008. At the time, their idea seemed outrageous, outlandish, and, for a variety of reasons, out of the question. They quickly gained exposure to the fickle dynamic that inevitably festers in the chasm between media support and public response.

“One morning early on, Johnny B (WLUP-FM morning personality Jonathan Brandmeier) called, and it was raining really hard in Valparaiso, Indiana. So he says, ‘Oh, there’s a few raindrops on the window?’ and starts to taunt us. Then a whole bunch of listeners called in to rip us. So we thought, ‘OK, we’ll show them,’ and went out and got completely soaked. That was our worst day. We only made 15 miles.”

Typically, the group averaged twice that distance, often dodging law enforcement officials who communicated with one another to more efficiently prevent the team from illegally traversing major highways. On their best day the group put 60 miles between their starting and ending points. They rode all but six of the 35 days spent on the road, dividing responsibilities as democratically as possible.

“This was a really good experience in terms of learning who you can work with and how to delegate tasks,” Swidzinski says. “We rode at least eight hours every day, and everyone took turns behind the camera, so nobody would be left out. If we saw something cool, we’d just pull out the cameras and start shooting.”

To their surprise, the team found its biggest problem had little to do either with transportation or the technology involved in making a documentary film.

It was the shoes.

Inspired by Tracy Fulce, assistant professor of marketing, Swidzinski successfully elicited donations from a number of sponsors, including IPATH Footwear, Zoo York, Skate One, and Essa Clothing. Shipments were delayed, however, and the group was forced to purchase replacements at discount stores along the way.

“The soles of our shoes got completely wasted every two days riding through the Appalachian Mountains,” he says.

By the end of the trip, after the group arrived in Times Square to bask in the warm glow of accomplishment (to say nothing of a posh hotel stay provided by ABC’s Good Morning America), the filmmakers had collected approximately 90 hours of footage from which to extract their planned 90-minute film.

“The main goal now is to finish editing and enter Shred America in a few film festivals,” says Swidzinski, who already has his sights set on another film project, possibly in Europe or Japan. “In fact, we plan to just give it away to anyone who wants to see it. If it goes viral, there will be demand. We’ll be in good shape if every library in the United States buys a copy to satisfy that demand.”
8

MORE THAN 4,000 YEARS AGO, the ancient Egyptian scholar Ptahhotep first expressed a version of the well-known proverb, *All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy*. The meaning of this phrase is simple enough: without time off from work, a person becomes bored—and boring. These quirky clubs certainly keep that from happening in the busy academic life of students.

**Chirping about cricket**

With more than 20 million participants, cricket ranks second only to soccer as the most popular sport in the world. While not particularly well known in the U.S., cricket is extremely popular in England, Australia, New Zealand, India, and many Caribbean countries. The international sport fits perfectly well into Oakton’s diverse culture.

“The majority of our members are from India, Pakistan, and other Asian countries, and are quite familiar with the sport,” says advisor Krunal Patel, a credentials analyst for Registration and Records. “However, the objective of the group is to get students involved in an activity and learn a sport they may not have heard of before.”

The Cricket Club started as a student organization nearly three years ago and for the last year has enjoyed status as an intramural sport. The club meets weekly for three hours throughout the year, allowing students to learn the nuances of the game. Although there are different variations of cricket, the basic concept is similar to baseball. Teams bat in successive innings and attempt to score runs, while the opposing team fields and attempts to bring an end to the batting team’s innings. Each team bats an equal number of innings, and the team with the most runs wins.

“Having cricket become an intramural sport gives more structure for students who want to play the sport every week,” says Patel. “Our goal is to have 15 to 20 regular members and eventually play against other colleges.”

**Tiny bubbles**

Music is a familiar and popular part of Hawaiian culture. From its earliest chants and polyrhythmic drumbeats, island music today combines traditional and luau styles with a variety of genres, including hapa-haole (Hawaiian melody with English lyrics), kolohe (naughty or teasing hula), chalangalang, and jawaiian.

Earl Essig enjoys sharing “the old-style Hawaiian music—soft, sweet, and melodious.” For the past five years he has done just that as director of Na Mele Aloha, the Hawaiian Music Ensemble.

“It’s simple,” says Essig, “We just enjoy Hawaiian music together. The Hawaiian people are so generous when I travel there that I want to bring the aloha spirit to others.”

Essig took his first ukulele lesson in Molokai more than two decades ago. Annual visits allow him to maintain status as a member of the Na Kapuna Serenaders and Dancers in Lahaina.

Na Mele Aloha performs at special events and for regular audiences at two popular Des Plaines restaurants, Tiki Terrace and Cheeseburger in Paradise.

Essig founded Na Mele Aloha with Judy Maritato, a singer and classically trained cellist who, like Essig, took classes at Oakton with Michael Adamczyk. The now retired guitar instructor generously agreed to be the group’s first advisor.

In fall 2007, Na Mele Aloha joined with the Hawaii Club of Northwestern University to honor the U.S. Army’s 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a unit of Japanese American volunteers, mostly from the Hawaiian Islands, who fought in Europe during World War II. This traditional “Makahiki,” a celebration of spiritual and cultural renewal, was recognized by students as the Outstanding Event of the Year.
Big shoes, big heart

Members of the Doctor Clown Club don’t actually dress in makeup and clown costumes, but they do show up at hospitals wearing colorful aprons and clown noses and entertain patients by telling jokes.

Formed in 2009, the Doctor Clown Club brings hope and joy to patients using the healing power of laughter. Its eight active members already have visited dozens of children patients at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge.

“We don’t limit ourselves by seeing children with just one type of illness,” says founder Monika Makurath, a freshman chemistry student. “We get more confidence with each patient we see. In the future, we plan on visiting other hospitals and adding card tricks and puppet shows.”


The club is advised by part-time faculty member Marvin Bornschlegl, who is a licensed professional counselor. While the group members enjoy interacting with patients, there are certain protocols they must follow before visits.

“To volunteer you have to go through a training and orientation program on how to interact with patients,” Makurath says.

While the Doctor Clown Club is currently geared to youngsters, the organization also plans on entertaining adult patients down the road.

“We want to spread laughter to as many people as we can,” says Makurath. “A smile may be a little thing, but it is very powerful. It’s nice to be able to bring a smile to someone’s face.”

Helping hands

While many student clubs include volunteer opportunities and fundraising in their activities, Asmaa Shafiq wanted to start an organization devoted solely to charitable works. As a result, she created Oakton Helping Others in February 2008.

“It was kind of crazy,” she says. “I petitioned to create a club and just four days later we were holding our first activity.” For its inaugural event, OHO sold “goodie bags” and baked treats to raise money on Valentine’s Day.

With help from advisor Princess Escudero, student activities assistant, OHO organizes at least two fundraising events and two service projects each month. All fundraising activities benefit a designated nonprofit organization.

In its first year, the group raised nearly $600 for Partners in Health, which supports the construction of hospitals in Third World countries. In 2009, the club raised funds for The Afghanistan Orphanage Project, which is attempting to build an orphanage in the Khalakhan district located near war-torn Kabul.

While OHO’s fundraising efforts so far have benefited people in another part of the world, the club donates a substantial amount of time helping people in its own community. Members participate in charitable events through groups like Misericordia and Target, and volunteer at soup kitchens, nursing homes, and community festivals.

“We have received so many appreciative responses for our work,” says Shafiq. “It feels good to know we are making a difference in people’s lives.”

Alternative tech

ULTRA is perhaps Oakton’s most mysterious student club. In fact, members occasionally change the meaning of the club’s acronym, always “keeping ‘technology’ as our middle name,” according to advisor Jeff Moro, senior systems administrator. “We do like to play with technology.”

While currently known as the Universal Laboratory for Technical Resource Alternatives, previous incarnations of the group’s name have included the names of Unix and Linux, specific computer operating systems. Don’t think for a moment, however, that members keep their eyes glued to a video screen. ULTRA’s current major project involves the hands-on installation of solar panels on the rooftops at both the Des Plaines and Skokie campuses.

Originally designed to collect information that could guide future decisions about the viability of converting a portion of the College’s electricity use to solar energy, the project’s direction took a different turn when a suspected software bug produced conflicting results.

“Since our product is data, we want the information to be as solid as it can be,” says Moro. “Our students apparently uncovered a bit of confusion between the manufacturer’s programmers and documentation people. We’re trying to work with them to correct the problem, but for now they seem unwilling to admit anything is wrong.”

Future ULTRA endeavors may involve artificial intelligence, DVR technology, and producing heat using parabolic reflectors. Members may or may not be completely serious about producing a “rock concerto for orchestra and supercomputer” and the Theremin Marching Band, two additional projects found on the club’s Web page.
WHILE SHE ADMITS to spending about two hours daily keeping in touch with friends and family on Facebook, TrevorSpace (a social media site oriented to young GLBT adults), and other Web sites, “Jamie” (not her real name) tries to steer clear of the “drama” that many people bring to their online interactions.

“I do have friends who spend way too much time with social media,” says the 21-year-old Oakton student, who counts approximately 200 virtual friends. “I tend to avoid them because they do not live in the reality of life. They also neglect their responsibilities, like going to class. Also, some people try to glorify events that may or may not have taken place, so it’s harder to filter the data.”

Indeed, people can’t seem to stop talking about the cultural implications of “social media,” the Web 2.0 phenomenon that allows people all over the world to easily connect with each other online in a variety of environments. The media “cloud” bursts with voices claiming to understand the complex implications of people being able to post countless stories, photos, and videos; bookmark articles of interest; and sharing comments on personal blogs as well as Facebook, Myspace, YouTube, Flickr, Digg, del.icio.us, and, of course, Twitter.

So, who has the upper hand? Early adopters who embrace every so-called “advance” in technology, or those who prefer tested methods to fads and fashion?

“Technology can be a great tool to convey concepts and information,” says Gene Carr, professor of earth science. “A nice animation can show in two minutes what can’t be explained in 20 minutes.

“But there is a wave of younger students who have trouble focusing for more than five minutes,” he adds.

“That’s a result of technology, and some faculty members are frustrated at attempts by those students to change our methods of instruction to what they perceive is the best way to learn.

“In my opinion, technology divorces students from the human element in teaching,” says Carr. “There is value in meeting face to face with students. Those meetings can provide clues as to what a student might need—other than the answer to a question. It’s easier to e-mail an excuse for not coming to class than it is to explain your reason to the teacher in person.”

Flesh yields to the avatar—a cartoon-like alter ego—in Second Life, the 3D virtual environment where users socialize, study, and create using voice and text chat. As she “flies” her avatar to a tree house where students gather for distance learning classes, Pamela Hegg, professor of computer information systems, enthusiastically explains the colorful world’s educational applications.

“You can take a group students, who themselves are at any physical location they choose to be, into so many engaging worlds,” says Hegg, who recently visited Portland, Ore., in person to accept the Instructional Technology Council’s Outstanding e-Learning Faculty Award. “History professors can walk through the streets of Paris in the 1800s. Art students can explore the Vatican collection in Rome.”

Even though Oakton’s Second Life compound (including one building that closely resembles the Art, Science, and Technology Pavilion in Skokie) is being constructed with the help of experienced developers, “newbies” may still balk at the steep learning curve. “Individualized, investigative study can take a bit longer,” admits Hegg, “but we are seeing much better retention in students who learn this way.”

And the social media beat goes on. Oakton’s official Facebook page is just one of several affiliated with the College. Other pages are administered by the Center for Promoting STEM, Internship Program, Theater League, TRiO, and even Desis at Oakton. More than 500 individuals currently identify with the Oakton “network” on Facebook, and several hundred people subscribe (or “follow”) @OaktonCollege on Twitter, many of them suburban library and media professionals seeking updates on College events.

While online relationships may evolve over time to include personal encounters, even strong proponents are quick to acknowledge social media’s solipsistic traits.

“I have Facebook friends whom I haven’t seen in months, but when it comes to making plans with them they just never seem to get offline,” says Meredith, a fine arts student from Glenview. “I try and get them out of their house but it doesn’t tend to work very well. Some days I wonder if the ‘old-fashioned way’ of getting to know someone really is the best way.”

For now, university and college professors must continue to define and refine their use of these new technologies, if only to remain competitive. For better or worse, the “consumer” still drives many decisions made by businesses and institutions alike.

“There’s room for all of it, provided there is a successful blend,” says Carr. “My experience is that some distance learning courses serve their purpose, but may not always offer the best delivery method. Yet, with Kaplan and the University of Phoenix in the marketplace, we have to offer classes like that, or we’re cutting ourselves off.”
DAWN KUERSCHNER makes many sacrifices to deliver medical supplies to the poor in Central America. In addition to traveling more than 1,800 miles and raising thousands of dollars for travel expenses, she must endure a lack of running water, the risk of parasites, and being under 24-hour surveillance.

In the end, the associate professor of nursing says the smiles on the faces of people she helps makes it worthwhile.

“It’s priceless seeing the expression on the children’s faces after we demonstrate basic hygiene techniques, such as how to rid themselves of lice,” Kuerschner says. “After we wash and style their hair, we’ll take photos of the children with instant cameras. When we give them the pictures, you would have thought we had given them gold—that’s how excited they are.”

Kuerschner received support for a planned trip from Oakton’s Phi Theta Kappa chapter. The international honor society spearheaded a campaign to collect toothbrushes for the medical mission. PTK members sold toothbrushes for 50 cents in a two-day drive entitled, “Give Them a Reason to Smile.” For every toothbrush purchased, the chapter donated one to Kuerschner’s mission. The chapter collected 3,700 toothbrushes, more than double its goal of 1,500.

“It was a shock to see how many toothbrushes we collected,” says Theresa Bashiri, president of PTK. The chapter also purchased 1,200 combs for Kuerschner to take on her next journey.

Kuerschner has been on four medical missions to Honduras with members of Trinity Lutheran Church in Roselle since 2003. Her group provides basic hygiene education and offers medical, dental, and optical care for the less fortunate in surrounding areas of the capital city of Tegucigalpa. This year the group is traveling to a new location—Gualán, Guatemala. Located 100 miles from Guatemala City, Gualán consists of residents in need of humanitarian services.

A typical medical mission lasts 10 days, each one starting with an early wake-up call and two-minute shower—if water is available. After loading medical equipment on a bus, the group travels an hour to nearby villages to see as many patients as possible.

“It’s amazing how the word spreads,” she says. “Before we even get to our destination there are people already lined up. It’s not unusual for people to walk up to six hours just to get to a medical mission.”

While Kuerschner has some basic understanding of Spanish, translators are necessary on the trips.

“The translators are trained in medical Spanish,” she says. “There’s a big difference between the Spanish you learn in school and the Spanish being used by the natives.”

During their trips, Kuerschner and her associates also are guarded 24 hours a day by Central American troops.

“It’s for our protection,” she explains. “Most people automatically assume Americans are rich. We also carry medications and supplies that some people might try to steal. The guards keep such a low profile that we often forget we’re being watched.”

Volunteers face many rules about what they can take along on a trip. Because of flight restrictions, each participant may bring a trunk weighing no more than 75 pounds for medical purposes. Eye glasses, combs, vitamins, antibiotics, parasite syrup, and aspirin are the most common supplies carried.

Individuals who come to the medical missions must choose between receiving medical, optical, or dental services due to limited supplies and time constraints.

“Sometimes we’ll teach parents how to treat diaper rashes for their babies,” says Kuerschner. “Other times it’s something as simple as teaching them the importance of wearing hats to protect themselves against the sun and staying well hydrated.”

Kuerschner considers her mission work both a personal and global learning experience.

“After my first trip, I was surprised how content people are with such a simple life,” she says. “It made me realize that we often take things for granted and it truly centered me on what’s important in life.

“It’s very common that a parent will ask one of us serving on a medical mission to take a child back to America with us,” she says. “Parents are willing to give up their children because they think by doing so they will be offering them a better life.”

When she returns from a medical mission, Kuerschner shares her experience with students.

“So many people think that nurses just work in clinics or hospitals,” she says. “By telling my students about my trips, I’m helping them to explore other avenues and inspiring them to think differently about nursing.”
IT SHOULD COME AS no surprise that coaching staffs at every level—perhaps even more so than their players—keep a close eye on individual statistics. A virtual “cone of silence,” however, enveloped Oakton’s athletic department near the end of the 2008-2009 season as sophomore guard Angie Rieger closed in on the College’s all-time scoring record.

“It’s like when a pitcher is throwing a no-hitter,” says Richard Varyu, assistant women’s basketball coach. “You don’t want to say anything to jinx it. We were all rooting for Angie, but at the same time didn’t want anything to foil her effort.”

Rieger broke the record February 26, 2009, with six seconds remaining in a home contest against Prairie State College. She leaves Oakton with 900 career points, surpassing Natalia Jedlinska, who scored 888 points for the Raiders from 1999 to 2001.

“At first I thought there was no way I would ever be able to break the scoring record,” says Reiger, who played basketball at Maine South High School. “However, once I started getting closer to it, I wanted it more and more. Breaking the record shows that once you set your mind on something, you can accomplish it.”

A competitive spirit flows through Rieger’s veins, and she harnessed that energy time and again in her two years playing for the Raiders. Growing up the third oldest of six children, Rieger often would race her two brothers and three sisters to see who could be first up the stairs of the family home.

“Those were really serious competitions,” she recalls. “Everyone wanted to win and it wasn’t unusual for one of my siblings to try to pull me down or knock me over to get to the top first.

“In the swimming pool we’ll set up markers and hold contests to see who can travel the farthest holding their breath underwater,” she adds. “And I play one-on-one basketball with my younger sister. I always want to beat her and I hate losing.”

That intensity has served Rieger well, according to her coaches.

“Her energy level stirred the pot for us this season,” says Rich Bolinder, head coach. “Players like Angie don’t come around too often. With her determination and competitive spirit, she has provided leadership on and off the court. Angie represented our program with class over the last two seasons and as a result, she has earned the respect of players and coaches in our region. She gave our program everything that she could and that’s all you can ask of a player.”

For the 2008-2009 season, Rieger averaged 16.4 points per game and led the team in steals and three-point baskets. Her season-high 28 points came in a November contest against Harper College. Her post-season accolades included being named to the Illinois Skyway Collegiate Conference First Team and the NJCAA Region IV Division II All-Region First Team.

Playing college level basketball, however, was something that took some adjustment for Rieger. She started playing in grammar school and continued with the same teammates throughout junior high and high school.

“Prior to Oakton, I had the same teammates for eight years,” she says. “Here, I was starting over. By my second year, it became easier as I knew what to expect and it helped that a lot of the same players from my freshman year returned.”

Bolinder and wife Lisa, assistant women’s basketball coach, followed Rieger’s career at Maine South and knew there was something special about her.
“We could see she had great shooting form and could get to the basket and score,” says Lisa Bolinder. “We were confident when she came to Oakton she could shine and become a scoring threat.”

As Oakton’s second leading scorer this past season, opponents would employ a variety of methods to prevent Rieger from getting to the hoop, including psychological tactics. Opposing coaches often would announce to their players—right in front of Rieger—that she couldn’t use her left hand. Rieger is right-handed, but used that as motivation to prove them wrong and adjusted her style of play.

“Teams wouldn’t let me go to my right so I had to work hard on learning how to shoot with my left,” she says.

“She made the most of her opportunity,” says Rich Bolinder. “There’s such a big difference between the high school and college game. There is no shot clock in high school. The shot clock was made for Angie. She likes to run, create shots, and play with a sense of urgency.”

Standing still is something Rieger has trouble doing. She was a two-sport athlete at Maine South, also playing soccer for four years. When Rieger wants to visit a friend, she’ll often run instead of drive. She also enjoys being around younger athletes and spends time as a referee for youth basketball and soccer leagues. Her other athletic endeavors include basketball camps and coaching soccer teams for her siblings.

“I like teaching kids what I know,” she says. “It’s fun coaching and seeing them improve.”

Rieger earned her associate’s degree in May and is entertaining offers to attend North Central College, Carthage College, Dominican University, Judson University, or Elmhurst College. Her career plans definitely include something related to physical education.

“I’d like to be a health or physical education teacher,” she says. “I’ve been around athletics all my life and it is something I really enjoy. I wouldn’t know what to do if athletics weren’t part of my life.”

Women’s basketball coach Rich Bolinder achieved his 500th career win as a head coach February 10, 2009, when his Raiders defeated Elgin Community College 59-43. His 500 victories include wins at the high school and college level.

“I’m very fortunate,” says Bolinder, who recently completed his 21st campaign (and 284 wins) on the hardwood at Oakton. “A lot of the credit goes to the many talented players I’ve coached over the years.”

Bolinder, who holds his master’s degree in secondary education from National-Louis University and a bachelor’s degree in health and physical education from Illinois State, started his coaching career in the late 1970s at Crown High School in Carpentersville (now Dundee-Crown High School). He also has served as a head coach at the National College of Education, Mundelein College, and Elgin Academy.

While admitting that 500 victories constitutes a prestigious milestone, Bolinder insists there is more to coaching than just winning and losing.

“As a coach, you tend to remember the close games you lost, rather than the close games you won,” he says. “Now I understand losses better. You have to learn from your losses quickly and prepare your team for the next game.

“I love teaching and making a difference in people’s lives,” he adds. “The most fun for me is staying in touch with players. I hope they remember that I was fair and that I was more than just a coach. I try to be a mentor and a sounding board, to help them with life situations outside of basketball.”

With 30 years of coaching under his belt, Bolinder also has come to better understand the yin and yang of his own personality.

“To me, coaching is a way to release energy,” he says. “Off the court, I’m pretty laid back. But during practices and for the two hours I’m coaching a game, there’s nothing else to worry about. During that time, I’m just focused on basketball.

“I still remember my first victory,” he says, as if to prove the point. “It came in 1977 during my debut as a head coach. We beat Round Lake High School 28-24. Since it was my first win, I had nothing else to compare it with. Five hundred wins was the farthest thing from my mind. But now that I have 500, I’d like to get to 1,000.”

Oakton has earned one Illinois Skyway Collegiate Conference title (1994) and reached the semifinals in 10 NJCAA Region IV Tournaments under Bolinder. Most recently, the Raiders celebrated their first 20-win season in College history after the 2008-2009 campaign.
WHEN THE U.S. jobless rate soared to its highest level in more than 25 years, at the same time the stock market hit its lowest point since the mid-1990s, people naturally sought a scapegoat. Fingers were pointed at the government, the stockbrokers, and the economists.

Just don’t blame accountants, implores Jay Cohen (“Winning Attitudes,” Outlook, Vol. 6, No. 1).

“Accountants are not in the business of predicting the future,” says Cohen, professor and chair of accounting, and winner of the 2009 Outstanding Faculty Member Award from the Illinois Community College Trustee Association. “We’re only expected to know what is most likely to happen based on the past.”

Unlike previous financial crises, including the Enron/Arthur Andersen scandal earlier this decade, Cohen says accountants share little blame in the current economic downturn. Rather than predict a market’s rise and fall, he says, accountants make their assessments based on market value and historical trends. And while the housing industry and those who profited from its inflated values are at the center of the collapse, few expected the trend of rising home values to decline, he says.

“In accounting terms, the mortgage is the receivable in this scenario, and that went bad,” says Cohen. “An entire Wall Street community was built around mortgages, and when mortgages failed, so did everything else.”

For nearly a decade, home buyers took advantage of low interest rates and easy credit to buy homes they otherwise might not be able to afford, Cohen explains. As interest rates and life situations changed, many borrowers failed to meet their monthly payments. At the same time, many high-risk lenders sought to protect against their subprime loans through AIG, Lehman Brothers, and other insurers. When borrowers defaulted on their mortgage payments, banks looked to insurance companies to even the costs. However, these corporations already had divided those mortgages into several pieces to sell to investors through the stock market.

When the banks needed cash from their insurance policies, AIG and other companies were unable to make payments because their actual cash was tied up in the market. This caused banks to lose money, stock values to drop, credit confidence to crash, and a decline in the entire market.

None of this, of course, explains why those in positions of power—the economists, financial analysts, stockbrokers, and yes, accountants—failed to warn the general public about inflated housing prices and wobbly loans.

“Why blow the whistle?” says Cohen. “If buyers are willing to pay a given price, then the price is still considered reasonable and the market works the way it should.”

If a specific scandal or defined moment had triggered the current morass, perhaps the financial crisis pill would be easier to swallow. But the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and other laws and regulations that resulted from the Enron/Arthur Andersen scandal, have forced CEOs and CFOs to be more conscientious than ever regarding fiduciary practices. Accountants, too, are held to a higher standard than in the past.

“The burden of responsibility is always there for accountants,” says instructor Jody Padar. “Ethics always has been taught in our classrooms.”

To emphasize the importance of socially responsible accounting, Padar requires students in her income tax accounting class to participate in Ladder Up, a nonprofit organization that provides tax return services to underprivileged families.

“Our clients fall within a certain income level, usually around the poverty line,” Padar explains. “Students know they are using their knowledge to help make a difference in someone else’s life.”

Students gain experience by working in a professional setting where they learn to think on their feet through exposure to a variety of situations. The bottom line is that accounting jobs are plentiful, says Padar, as long as students are well prepared.

Cohen agrees with that forecast. “Accountants have a relatively safe place in this market,” he says. “As current circumstances have shown us, everyone needs an accountant.”
For most Western audiences, viewing the complex ink brush paintings of Shanghai-born artist Qigu Jiang “is like reading a poem in translation,” according to James Elkins, his colleague at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. “You might get an idea of the subject of the poem, but you will not sense the subtle and intricate reverberations of the words.” Indeed, Jiang's exhibition at the Koehnline Museum of Art, *Figures*, presented a group of small and large works that bridge the gap between 3,000 years of Chinese tradition and the post-Renaissance history of Western figurative painting. Upon the exhibition's closing, Jiang generously donated *After Michelangelo #4*, a 2007 nude rendered on handmade rice paper, to Oakton's permanent art collection. Xie xie!