

MRU eNews

Newsletter for UC Multicampus Research Units and Programs

University of California Office of the President

IGPP Los Alamos Assists in Study of Early Hominid from Ethiopia



UC Hub in Mexico City

The University of California is in the process of acquiring a facility in Mexico City to establish its new California House, *Casa de California*. *Casa de California* will serve the expanding academic, research, and public service mission of UC through the establishment of an Education Abroad Program (EAP) study center, a UC Institute for Mexico and the United States (UC MEXUS) research facility, and a University Relations Office for the UC Alumni Association in Mexico. *Casa de California* will strive to develop California's political and business interests in Mexico as well as a productive relationship between university research and industry.

Governor Davis has placed a high priority on its speedy establishment in keeping with the mandate of a \$5 million UC-Mexico collaborative research agreement. The largest recipient of these funds is UC MEXUS, which administers the UC-CONACYT Agreement of Cooperation in Higher Education and Research, an agreement to support research and training in California and Mexico. For more information visit www.ucr.edu/ucmexus/index.

New Funding Opportunities!
Visit our website at:
www.ucop.edu/Research/

A team of researchers from UC Berkeley and the Los Alamos branch of the Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics (IGPP) announced in July the discovery of fossil bones and teeth belonging to the earliest human ancestors yet discovered—a chimpanzee-sized hominid who walked the wooded highlands in what is now a desert region of Ethiopia between 5.2 and 5.8 million years ago.

The team was led by Berkeley Professors Desmond Clark and Tim White, Berkeley graduate student Yohannes Haile-Selassie and IGPP Los Alamos geologist Giday WoldeGabriel, with technical and financial support from IGPP Los Alamos and funding from the National Science Foundation. They found fossil bones that predate the oldest previously discovered human ancestor by more than a million years. The hominid is part of a newly named subspecies of early man called *Ardipithecus*.

The discovery is an outcome of the Middle Awash Paleontological and Geological Project headquartered at IGPP Los Alamos—an international, multidisciplinary effort whose objective is the elucidation of human origins and evolution. IGPP scientists associated with the project have, under the leadership of Dr. WoldeGabriel, supported the paleoanthropological research through study of the volcanic and tectonic evolution of the Middle Awash area in Ethiopia, recovering evidence for early hominid origins and evolution, and placing this evidence in controlled spatial, temporal, and environmental contexts. They have assessed the geological forces responsible for rifting, volcanism and other geomorphic processes that have resulted in accumulations of more than 500 meters of sediment and volcanic rock on the rift floor over the past 15 million years.

The UC Systemwide Biotechnology Research and Teaching Program (BREP), founded in 1985 and most recently hosted at the Berkeley campus, will be relocated to the Davis campus, effective October 1, 2001. Martina Newell-McGloughlin, present director of the Davis Biotechnology Program, has been named Director-designate, and is expected to become the permanent director once arrangements are finalized.

Under the seminal leadership of Dr. Susanne Huttner, who stepped down in January 2001 to become Associate Vice Provost for Major Research Initiatives and University-Industry Partnerships at UCOP, BREP has provided seed funding to support research in areas that are under-funded by federal agencies, enabling UC researchers to develop data needed to compete in the rapidly evolving disciplines related to biotechnology. The

shows of thick volcanic ash. "It's hard to imagine that life would go on under such hostile



Paleontologists perform a "crawl" of the Digiba Dora hominid site at the Middle Awash area in NE Ethiopia, combing for fragments of fossil bones deposited during the late Miocene. Photo by David Brill, Brill Atlanta. Copyright 1998.

Dr. WoldeGabriel and other IGPP colleagues characterize the newly discovered hominid's environments as 1,500 feet higher in elevation than today, much cooler and wetter, and subject to regular

conditions," WoldeGabriel said. "*Ardipithecus* and the other animals inhabiting the region were real survivors."

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UC Systemwide Biotechnology Program Moving to Davis Campus

Program has worked effectively to educate policy makers and the public about the social and economic benefits of biotechnology, dramatically making the case for increased research and training support in the biotechnology-related disciplines. BREP has also served to advance the careers of hundreds of graduate students—a factor key to California's vitality in the biotechnology industry.

Office of Research Multicampus Research Units



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Coleman named Vice Provost for Research



Lawrence B. Coleman, UC Davis Professor of Physics and former chair of the systemwide Academic Council, was named Vice Provost for Research in August after having served as Interim Vice Provost for Research since January. "Research at the University of California impacts the lives of countless individuals as well as the economy of the state and nation," Coleman said. "I am very excited about serving the university and the state in this position." As Vice Provost, Larry's duties will be to provide leadership and coordination on research matters and policy issues affecting all ten campuses, UCOP and the three UC-managed national labs.

Upcoming Events *meetings and conferences*

"The Black Aesthetic" October 19-20, 2001. Centers for Ideas and Society, UC Riverside. For more information contact the Center at (909) 787-3987.

"CONACYT/Nuevo Leon Workshop on University-Industry Collaboration," December 3-5, various Bay Area locations. Workshop for delegation of Mexican officials on UC's experience with collaborative research with industry, tech transfer, etc. For more information contact Jeff.Hall@UCOP.edu.

"PATH Annual Conference: Transportation Research," October 17-18, Institute of Transportation Studies, Davis. Contact ITS Davis for more information.

"Digital Culture: Epistemologies/Subjectivities," January 18-19, 2002, UC Humanities Research Institute, Irvine. This workshop, organized by UCI Professor Mark Poster, will explore social transformations taking place through networked computing. For further information contact Poster@uci.

COMING SOON: NEW EDITION OF THE ONLINE GUIDE TO UC MULTICAMPUS RESEARCH UNITS AT:
[HTTP://WWW.UCOP.EDU/RESEARCH/MRU.PDF](http://www.ucop.edu/research/mru.pdf)

Multicampus Research Unit News and Announcements

Major Research Initiative Selection Process Suspended

Due to the deteriorating state budget situation, no above-the-partnership research initiative requests were ultimately funded in the 2001 State Budget Act, and in fact UC's base funding was cut by \$90 million. Further short-falls are anticipated in the 2002-03 budget. For this reason, the annual process to identify high-priority research initiatives for inclusion in the Regents' Budget has been temporarily suspended. Initiatives developed for possible inclusion in the 2002-03 budget—on Energy and the Environment, Women's Health, Management of Invasive Species, Demographic Change in California, and Support for Graduate Students, as well as those eliminated in 2001—will be forwarded for consideration for the Regents' Budget as soon as the opportunity arises.

HRI Selected as Fellowship Site

The UC Humanities Research Institute, headquartered at Irvine, has been selected to be among the 17 host institutions for the prestigious Woodrow Wilson Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Humanities for two years, beginning Fall, 2002. Two-year fellowships of \$30,000 per year, plus benefits and office space, will be awarded to successful candidates who have earned, or will have earned, their Ph.D. between December 2000 and June 2002. For more information see www.woodrow.org.

New IGPP Branches

Two new branches of the Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics have been formally approved by Vice Provost Coleman: IGPP Berkeley, which will specialize in research and education in

Planetary Science, and IGPP Irvine, which will focus primarily on the atmosphere, land and ocean systems of the Earth. Actual operations of the new branches will commence once core funding is arranged.

IGPP UCR Names Director

Gary Zank, Professor of Physics at UC Riverside, has been named to replace Harry Green as Director of the IGPP Riverside Branch effective July 1, 2001.

PRRP Call for Proposals

The Pacific Rim Research Program announces its Call for Proposals for the 2002-03 academic year. Research proposals may be from any discipline. Submission deadlines vary from mid-December to mid-January. Full details and application forms are available at www.ucop.edu/research/pacrim.

Hominid Find, continued

All geological samples collected during the field investigations were brought to Los Alamos for analysis. WoldeGabriel and current IGPP Director Dr. Grant Heiken used electron microscopes and microprobes to study the samples, collaborating with other laboratories in establishing dates for the geological samples—which, in turn, confirmed the antiquity of the hominid find. Over the past ten years five other hominid species from the region have been discovered and dated in this manner, making the Middle Awash Project the most successful effort of its kind in the world.

Encouraged by Dr. Chick Keller, former director of IGPP Los Alamos, this international and multidisciplinary project has fostered first class research collaborations among sister institutions and scientists from both LANL, Berkeley and other universities and research laboratories in Ethiopia, the U.S. and Europe.