

NEWSLETTER OF THE DOWNSTATE ILLINOIS INNOCENCE PROJECT

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT SPRINGFIELD / CENTER FOR LEGAL STUDIES

Volume 1, Issue 2
October 25, 2001

Innocence Project Advisory Board

Alva Busch

Bill Clutter

Nancy Ford

Kelli Gidcumb

Larry Golden

Ted Gottfried

Jonathan Hess

Sister Lori Kirchman

Archie Lawrence

Michael Metnick

Brian Otwell

Dennis Rendleman

Sheila Stocks-Smith

Steve Spearie

Cecelia Tumulty

Charlie Wheeler

Innocence Project Receives Its First Grant Funding

The Downstate Illinois Innocence Project received a grant from the Illinois Campus Compact starting November 1st. The grant for \$2,000 will support the service learning activities of students who will be working on the project while fulfilling master's degree requirements this fall and students who enroll in the Legal Studies undergraduate closing seminar this Spring.

Two UIS professors are serving as co-project directors on the grant — Nancy Ford, Associate Professor of Legal Studies and Public Affairs, and Larry Golden, Professor of Political Studies and Legal Studies. Ford wrote the grant proposal and will help administer the project. Golden will teach the seminar titled "Wrongful Conviction." Bill Clutter, a local criminal investigator will co-teach the class and guide students' inves-

tigative efforts.

Students enrolling in the class will be able to provide research and investigative assistance to individuals who have been arrested, tried, and found guilty of crimes that they most likely did not commit.

The class, which is for legal studies students completing their undergraduate degree requirements, will be open to other undergraduate and graduate students on a limited basis. Interested students must get the permission of the instructors to enroll.

The Office of the State Appellate Defender is a partner in the effort and will refer appropriate cases to the project. The project also hopes to work closely with both

the Innocence Project in New York and the Wrongful Conviction Project at Northwestern University in Chicago.



The Illinois Campus Compact is a network of universities that supports innovative proposals from faculty interested in engaging students in public work.

Workshop on Demystifying Scientific Evidence Postponed

Due to a competing workshop for criminal defense attorneys this fall, the workshop on demystifying scientific evidence will be held in February or March of 2002 .

The workshop, which is being co-sponsored by the Downstate Innocence Project in partnership with the Office of the State Appellate Defender, will be open to criminal defense attorneys, faculty members, and students.

Topics will include fingerprint, hair, fiber, and DNA evidence, as well as the limitations of scientific evidence.

Trainers will include crime scene technicians, crime lab experts, a pathologist, a DNA expert, and/or members of the defense bar. It will held in Springfield and will either be free to participants or be the cost of their lunch. .



NEWSLETTER OF THE DOWNSTATE ILLINOIS INNOCENCE PROJECT

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT
SPRINGFIELD/CENTER FOR
LEGAL STUDIES

P. O. Box 19243
Springfield, Illinois 62794
Phone: 217-206-6535
Fax: 217-206-7397

Currently, the Downstate Illinois Innocence Project conducts research and investigative activities in cases where there is a strong likelihood that an inmate is actually innocent. The Project involves students, who are taking a class on Wrongful Convictions as a part of their course of study at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

UIS Graduates Continue Working on the Harris Case

Five UIS legal studies graduates, who were enrolled in last spring's Wrongful Conviction class, continue to work on the Keith Harris case on their own time. Each of the students graduated in June; two of them have gone on to law school.

Harris was convicted in 1978 of attempted murder. Later another man confessed to the crime, but Harris remained incarcerated. Even though Harris was set free on May 1, 2001 for time served after serving 22 years in prison, he is seeking executive clemency from Governor George Ryan.

The five former students, Amanda Ade, Amanda Hopwood, Kateena Lawson-Licks, Lani Mayberry, and Matt Smith meet on Saturdays and whenever they can get together. They are convinced of Harris' innocence and want to do all they can to see that he is exonerated,

Research Beginning on DNA Exoneration Cases in the U.S.

The Innocence Project at Cardozo Law School in New York, operating under the direction of Barry Scheck and Peter Neufield, two prominent civil rights lawyers, is working closely with University of California Irvine Professor Bill Thompson and other social scientists on a systematic analysis of post-conviction DNA exoneration cases in the U.S.

In the process of conducting their research they have identified 93 cases from across the country and they are looking for more. So far, the following Illinois cases have been identified:

- 1989 exoneration — Gary Dotson;
- 1992 exoneration — Steven Linscott;
- 1994 exoneration — Ronnie Bullock;
- 1995 exoneration — Rolando Cruz and Alejandro;
- 1996 exoneration — Richard Johnson, Verneal Jimerson, Kenneth Adams, Willie

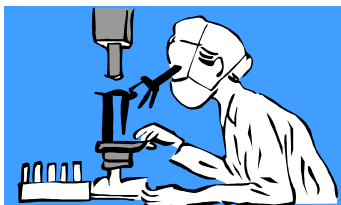
Rainge, and Dennis Williams;

1997 exoneration — Billy Wardell; and

1999 exoneration — John Willis and Ronald Jones.

Calvin Ollins, Larry Ollins, and Omar Saunders may soon join the list. Recent DNA tests have shown that semen and blood evidence collected at the time of the rape and murder of Lori Roscetti, a medical student in Chicago originally from Springfield, does not match that of any of the men convicted of her murder. Efforts continue to prove their innocence.

Forensic DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) testing began in the late 1980s. DNA, which is different for each person, can be compared to evidence collected at a crime to help show that a person did or did not commit a crime. Anyone knowing of more DNA exoneration cases in Illinois should contact the Innocence Project in New York.



Thirteen Illinois inmates have been exonerated of their crimes on the basis of DNA tests.