



# @ Washington University in St. Louis

May 2008  
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## University News

### Chris Matthews to address 2008 graduates:

Chris Matthews — host of "Hardball with Chris Matthews" on MSNBC and "The Chris Matthews Show," a syndicated weekly news program produced by NBC News, and a regular commentator on NBC's "Today" show — will give Washington University's 2008 Commencement address. The University's 147th Commencement will begin at 8:30 a.m. May 16 in Brookings Quadrangle on the Danforth Campus.



Chris Matthews, the host of "Hardball" since 1997, will give the Commencement Address on May 16.

### Position of provost reestablished:

Executive Vice Chancellor Edward S. Macias, Ph.D., dean of Arts & Sciences and the Barbara and David Thomas Distinguished Professor in Arts & Sciences, has been named provost, effective Jan. 1, 2009. Macias will relinquish his duties as dean of the faculty of Arts & Sciences on June 30, 2008, and will take on expanded leadership responsibilities as provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs following a six-month sabbatical.

### Mellon Foundation helps endow interdisciplinary fellowships:

Washington University has received a \$1 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to endow the "Modeling Interdisciplinary Inquiry" postdoctoral program in Arts & Sciences. The program — now in its ninth year — ensures a steady flow of outstanding young academics to the University with an unusual range of original and provocative scholarship that seeks to bridge knowledge among humanities disciplines and between the humanities and the social sciences.

## Research

### Alzheimer's plaque buildup reduced by drug:

The ability of brain cells to take in substances from their surface is essential to the production of a key ingredient in Alzheimer's brain plaques, School of Medicine neuroscientists have learned. The researchers used a drug to shut down the intake process, known as endocytosis, in a mouse model of Alzheimer's disease. The change led to a 70 percent drop in levels of amyloid beta, the protein fragment that clumps together to form Alzheimer's plaques.

### Technique traces origins of disease genes in mixed races:

A team of researchers from Washington University and the Israeli Institute of Technology (Technion) in Haifa has developed a technique to detect the ancestry of disease genes in hybrid, or mixed, human populations. The technique helps researchers isolate the genetic causes of disease by detecting from which continent the recurrent disease genes originated.

### New research reveals surprising lifetime risk of economic insecurity among Americans:

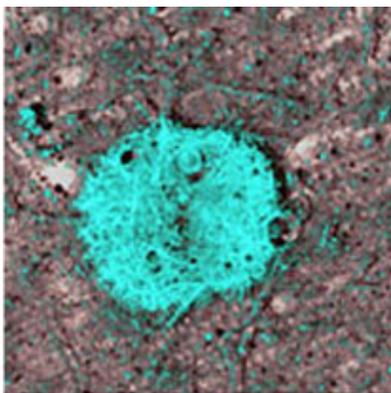


image courtesy of NIH

An amyloid plaque found in brains that have Alzheimer's disease

Recent economic events have shaken the confidence of many Americans with respect to their ability to achieve the "American dream." Research by Mark R. Rank, Ph.D., the Herbert S. Hadley Professor of Social Welfare in the George Warren Brown School of Social Work, is shedding a new light on the amount of economic risk that Americans face across their lifetimes. His work has shown that the likelihood of economic turmoil during one's adulthood is exceedingly high, and has been rising over the past three decades.

## Features

### Green Farms:

Engineers at Washington University, using an impressive array of imaging and tracking technologies, have determined the importance of mixing in anaerobic digesters for bioenergy production and animal and farm wastes treatment. They are studying ways to take "the smell of money," as farmers long have termed manure's odor, and produce biogas from it. The goal is two-fold; one is to have farms that grow their own energy by using readily available farm waste to power the farm, the other is to eliminate the environmental threat of methane, a greenhouse gas considered 22 times worse than carbon dioxide.

### Earthquake in Illinois could portend an emerging threat:

To the surprise of many, the earthquake on April 18, 2008, about 120 miles east of St. Louis, originated in the Wabash Valley Fault and not the better-known and more-dreaded New Madrid Fault in Missouri's bootheel. The concern of Douglas A. Wiens, Ph.D., and Michael E. Wyssession, Ph.D., seismologists in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences in Arts & Sciences, is that the New Madrid Fault may have seen its day and the Wabash Fault is the new kid on the block.

### Lessons unlearned from the 1993 flood:

Patterns in the Midwest this spring are eerily reminiscent of the back-to-back years of flooding in 1993 and 1994. Despite the similarity in conditions, Midwesterners have not learned "geologic reality," says Robert E. Criss, Ph.D., professor of earth and planetary sciences in Arts & Sciences "When people build commercial or residential real estate in flood plains, when they build on sinkholes, when they build on fault lines, when they build on the hillsides in L.A. that are going to burn and burn, over and over again, they're ignoring geologic reality. They're asking for chronic problems," he says.

## Heard on Campus

"America today is extraordinarily divided, and, for some reason, we are drawn to polarization and conflict... and that polarization takes a toll on all of America's new organizations. We end up doing more reporting on the controversy of the day than the issues of the era."

—Ken Paulson, editor and senior vice president of news for *USA Today* and *usatoday.com*, from his lecture, titled "Rebooting America: News for a New Generation," at the April 2 Assembly Series in Graham Chapel



David Kilper/WUSTL Photo

Muthanna Al-Dahhan (left), Ph.D., professor of energy, environmental and chemical engineering, and graduate student Rajneesh Varma are researching effective ways to take agricultural waste and make biofuel out of it.

## Kudos

Ramesh K. Agarwal, Ph.D., the William Palm Professor of Mechanical, Aerospace & Structural Engineering, has been selected to receive the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics' 2008 Aerodynamics Award.

Haluk Ergin, Ph.D., associate professor of economics in Arts & Sciences, has been named an Alfred P. Sloan Research Fellow by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

Marc S. Levin, M.D., associate professor of medicine in the Division of Gastroenterology, has been inducted as a Fellow in the American Gastroenterological Association.

Henry L. "Roddy" Roediger III, Ph.D., the James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor in Arts & Sciences, has been awarded the Howard Crosby Warren Medal, the highest honor awarded by The Society of Experimental Psychologists.

For the second year in a row, Washington University was named to the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for exemplary service efforts and service to disadvantaged youth.

*BusinessWeek* ranked the John M. Olin School of Business undergraduate program at No. 15, up from No. 16 in 2007.

Washington University's Department of Athletics ranks No. 7 among the Annual Hall of Fame Magazine Top-15 Collegiate Athletic Programs, judged by their excellence across all sports. Rankings include all NCAA Division I, II, III and NAIA colleges and universities.

The Graduate School of Architecture & Urban Design, a unit of the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, has been ranked No. 5 in the nation by *ARCHITECT Magazine*.

About @Washington University in St. Louis

This newsletter is prepared by Special Development Communications Projects staff in Alumni and Development Programs. It is intended to provide a brief summary of what is happening at the University. Alumni, parents, and friends of the University for whom we have valid e-mail addresses automatically receive @Washington University in St. Louis.

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