

THE CENTERPIECE

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- How did President Obama's election in 2008 affect African-Americans' sense of their status in America? Drawing on stereotype threat theory, a robust body of research in social psychology, **John Transue**, an associate professor of political science at UIS, is comparing national survey data from before and after the 2008 Presidential Election. The purpose is to see whether the election increased African-Americans' scores on tests of political knowledge in a way which, according to the theory, would suggest that it also enhanced their sense of their standing in the American polity. So far, there is some suggestive evidence of a small increase in test scores. Transue is currently working with data over a longer span to get a better measure of political knowledge well before the election and eventually hopes to see what the effects are long-term.
- The **Illinois Innocence Project**, based at UIS, has just been awarded a two-year grant of \$547,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) to continue the Project's efforts to improve access to DNA evidence in cases where a person has been found guilty and imprisoned for a crime he or she probably did not commit. With money from the new grant, the Project will focus on cases in northern Illinois. Under a similar federal grant it received in 2010, it has been targeting "DNA cases" in the bottom two-thirds of the state. The Project carries out its work through a unique collaboration involving faculty, staff, and students not only at UIS, but also at the three public law schools in the state – the College of Law at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and the Schools of Law at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale and Northern Illinois University in Dekalb.
- **Illinois Issues** has published the fourth edition of "**Governing Illinois**," a civic engagement textbook aimed at advanced high school students or new college students. The magazine has filled several orders for the current semester and is currently taking orders for the spring semester and the 2013-2014 school year. The new edition of the book, edited by Illinois State University political scientists Nancy Lind and Erik Rankin, also comes with a guide for teachers who order 10 or more books.
- Not surprisingly, prosecutors are more supportive and defense attorneys less supportive of a law which requires first-time DUI offenders to have their vehicles equipped with a breath alcohol ignition interlock device (BAIID), according to a recent survey conducted by the **Institute for Legal, Legislative, and Policy Studies** and **Survey Research Office** for the Illinois Department of Transportation. When a car is equipped with a BAIID, the driver has to breathe into the device to confirm a lack of alcohol impairment, before the car will start. Previously, the BAIID requirement only applied to repeat offenders. But

that changed in January 2009, when the requirement was extended basically to all first-time offenders. Fewer BAIIDs have been installed than expected, and in the survey defense attorneys said some of the key reasons for that include high monthly costs for operating the device and the stigma of having it visibly displayed on the car dashboard. By contrast, prosecutors were more likely to believe that offenders avoid the device because they are willing to risk the penalty of driving without one.

- WUIS General Manager **Bill Wheelhouse** was elected vice president of radio for the Illinois Public Broadcasting Council (IPBC) at the group's recent summer meeting. The IPBC represents public radio and TV stations in Illinois that receive funding from the Illinois Arts Council. Wheelhouse will sit on the IPBC board and represent the interests of public radio stations.
- The **Office of Electronic Media** last week taped a training video for the Regional Office of Education serving Calhoun, Greene, Jersey, and Macoupin Counties (southwest of Springfield). The video features five hours of training content on creative teaching methods and enhancing professional practice for high school teachers. OEM also recently produced a training video for the Illinois Department on Aging to show banks how to train their personnel to identify situations where seniors are being financially exploited. IDOA will send DVDs of the video to banks and other financial institutions throughout Illinois to help prevent financial abuse of older people.
- There are a number of new faces in key positions in the Center for State Policy and Leadership. **Ashley Kirzinger** came on board in mid-August as the new director of the **Survey Research Office**. Kirzinger has a Ph.D. in Media and Public Affairs from Louisiana State University, where she served as the assistant director of their Public Policy Research Lab. **Mark Verduin** recently joined the staff of the **Office of Electronic Media**. Verduin began his video production career at the SIU School of Medicine, where he was nationally recognized for his production of continuing medical education video programs. Before coming to UIS, Verduin ran his own media production company and worked in corporate communications. **Illinois Issues** has a new associate director for marketing and circulation. **Rachel Lattimore**, who previously worked in UIS' Career Development Center and before that in advertising sales in the private sector, will be responsible for promoting and selling advertising for the magazine and other publications it produces.

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