Professor runs rat race, wins

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>
> **Robert Lennartz**
> **assistant professor**
> **psychology**

Rats, such as this one, are used in a maze devised by Robert Lennartz, assistant professor of psychology, to study spatial behavior.

Robert Lennartz, assistant professor of psychology, recently finished a study about the spatial behavior in rats. The purpose of the study was to find out what cues rats use to navigate their way through a maze.

Lennartz said he found the fact that rats are able to navigate their way through the maze effectively, even in darkness, to be intriguing.

He said he would like to find out what is guiding them.

"It is one of the things that I'm interested in," Lennartz said.

The parts of the brain that control the ability to navigate are similar in both rats and humans. Lennartz said this is a good reason why rats were good candidates for this study.

During the study, a rat was placed in a maze that is shaped like a plus sign and allowed to navigate the maze. Lennartz said he noticed the rats would explore each arm separately before moving on to the next arm of the maze.

Throughout the study, visual stimuli were added and subtracted to see how they affected the rat's ability to navigate around the maze. Lennartz said the rat had an easier time navigating when visual cues were used on the first day of the study, but after the first day, the rat's ability to navigate remained the same with or without visual cues.

The maze was equipped with infrared sensors so the rat's motion could be detected in darkness. There was also a video camera rigged up to the bottom of the maze, which is clear, to record the rat's action when no one is observing.

"It allows me to not be in the room and track what they're doing," Lennartz said.

The study concluded that rats navigate well with or without visual stimuli in light or in darkness. The next step is to find out what is actually guiding the rats.

Lennartz said the study he just finished is similar to some post-doctorate work he did. In his post-doctorate work he actually analyzed the brain of the rats to try to find answers to some of the same questions posed in the recently completed study.

"I wanted to look at behavior before actually analyzing the brain," Lennartz said.

Lennartz said he does not have much free time outside of his research and his work as a faculty member at IU Southeast.

"I don't have a lot of time for hobbies during the school year," Lennartz said.

Lennartz said when he does have some free time, he enjoys reading.

"I'm a fan of mystery novels," Lennartz said.

Lennartz is in his sixth year as a professor at IU Southeast and he said he is happy here.

He grew up in Hawthorne, Calif., a suburb of Los Angeles and he attended the same high school of a familiar music group.

"I went to the same high school as the Beach Boys," Lennartz said.

After finishing high school, Lennartz finished his undergraduate degree at the University of Southern California. From there he went on to graduate school at the University of California, Irvine.

After finishing graduate school Lennartz left California and lived a couple of other places before settling in Virginia, where he did his post-doctoral work at the University of Virginia. Before teaching at IU Southeast Lennartz held visiting teaching jobs at Williams College in Massachusetts and the College of William and Mary in Virginia.

Lennartz said he was living in Williamsburg, Va., when he heard about the opening at IU Southeast.

He applied for the job, got it and has been happy ever since.

Goodbye Corbean, welcome Barbour

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Channell Barbour is the new associate director of Campus Life, a position previously held by Kathy Corbean who resigned this November to be with her family in North Carolina.

Barbour came to IU Southeast in 2005 where she held the position of academic advisor in the Academic Success Center before transferring to Campus Life.

One of the goals she hopes to attain as the current associate director of Campus Life is to convince students to get a life with student life.

She will be advising student groups such as the Pan-Hellenic Council and the Student Program Council. She said she will be supervising students who work in the game room and will also be the volunteer program coordinator.

She said her main focus as associate director of campus life is to help strengthen membership and engagement among student groups.

"One of our challenges in Campus Life is the IUS campus is a commuter campus and most students are focused on class, or they may have families or jobs that do not allow them to participate," she said.

She said once residence halls are in operation the campus involvement should increase.

Campus Life is working on programming that will get commuter students more actively involved.

Barbour attended Berea College where she received her undergraduate degree in political science. She attended West Virginia University where she received her master's degree in public administration.

Barbour said she loves it at IU Southeast.

"Before coming to IUS I was in politics in Kentucky," she said. "I worked with Governor Paul Patton. I also worked over in Mayor Jerry Abramson's office as well, where I decided that I was looking for more fulfillment in my career."

She said everybody wants a job they enjoy. She has previously held positions at Eastern Kentucky University and at her alma mater. She is originally from Oldham county and the youngest of nine children.

"I have always been a career driven person and since my siblings all have kids and my parents have both grandchildren and great grandchildren," she said. "There is no hurry or pressure for me to worry about starting a family of my own."

She said during her college career she met Shamar Moore at the Kentucky Derby and Bill Clinton along with Jesse Jackson in eastern Kentucky while on assignment in order to try and bring a call center to eastern Kentucky to help promote the area.

At the moment she is looking forward to having a big celebratory bash before she turns 40.

She said it may be a cruise but she is still soliciting the idea.

Barbour said there was a time when she thought she was destined for California.

Creative Connections **Artists Reception** December 8, 2007 5 to 6:30 pm
Lynn Thomsen, Indianapolis, IN Oil Paintings Loftus House Gallery
Sebastian Moh, Louisville, KY Porcelain Blackburn Fine Arts Gallery
Both exhibits run Dec. 8 - March 1

Holiday Ceramics Sale The first three weekends in December.
Dec. 1&2, 8&9, 15&16 from 10 am to 2 pm

Christmas Love & Light Concert - Mario DaSilva
Dec. 8 from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm Mount Saint Francis Chapel
Tickets are $15, $10 for members. Call (812) 923-8602 to reserve your tickets, seating is limited. All proceeds benefit the Mary Anderson Center.

For more information, please visit
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– Sacha Guitry

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