Chances are excellent that they didn’t spend their semester and summer breaks lying on a beach somewhere working on their tans or flipping burgers for some extra cash as you did when you were in college.

The life of a university professor is a complicated one. Part researcher and part teacher, faculty split their time between teaching and advising responsibilities and their professional research and publications. Time for writing articles, painting canvases, or building databases may come during winter, spring, and summer breaks, in the early hours before dawn, or periodic sabbaticals.

These breaks from the classroom or, in one case here, the locker room, have a secondary effect that is just as important as time off campus. While some of our interviewees were writing a novel, coaching professional soccer, and studying venomous snakes, they were also soaking up new ideas and formulating new plans for the classroom.

They return to campus energized and excited to share their experiences and their research with students. One might start organizing a study-abroad opportunity in a country where she does her research. Still another might turn over his actual data for students to verify and expand upon.

In this section, faculty and staff talk about their research, their time off campus, and how students benefit from both. As Assistant Professor Dennis Wasko says, “I love doing research and I love teaching. Each makes me appreciate the other more.”
Teresa Stores has a dual identity made up of what she calls the “writer-self” and the “teacher-self.”

On the one hand, she is a prize-winning author of short stories, a young-adult novel, and three novels, most notably *Backslide* (2008). On the other hand, she is a tenured faculty member in the English department with classes to teach, papers to grade, and students to advise and inspire.

As for teaching, Stores says she has always loved it. “Students keep me fresh, keep me thinking, keep me from being stuck inside my own brain too much. Teaching and writing have become symbiotic practices in my life—each feeds the other, and neither seems to be fully alive without the other to inform it.”

On sabbatical during the 2009–10 academic year, Stores and her family moved to the French countryside. Once there, she shifted gears and dived into uninterrupted, full-time writing. In addition to working on the three projects she took with her, Stores used the experience of living in France to plan a study-abroad trip on travel writing that she will lead next summer.

“The time away allowed me to refocus and rebalance the two parts of my identity—teacher and writer—with more emphasis now on the writer within me. I actually think this will benefit my students quite a lot,” says Stores about the sabbatical. “Teaching as a writer rather than being a writing teacher is a subtle but very important difference. When I teach from the perspective of writer, I believe that I offer the students a chance to see themselves as prospective professional writers too.”

Although she seldom uses her own work in the classroom, Stores has shared with students copyedited versions of a short story to show how a writer works with an editor in the publishing process. She talks to her students about being a writer and what she calls the “long, long road” to getting there.

“I see myself as a role model, mostly of the ‘real-world’ life of the writer. I show them rejections, cover letters, my submission-tracking spreadsheet, and I help them find venues for publishing their own work.”

And the writing? During the semester, Stores rises before dawn and writes for at least an hour in the morning while her household sleeps and the phone doesn’t ring. She also tries to block out some unscheduled hours for writing each week and during semester breaks. As a parent, Stores says she’s had to learn not to be fussy about when or where she writes. “I keep a pad and pen with me wherever I go. I write in the minivan during soccer practice, if necessary.”

*Editor’s note:* Stores is currently working on a new novel, *Ten Facial Types of Women*, named for a woodblock series done by Kitagawa Utamaro, an 18th-century Japanese artist. Like her protagonist, Margaret Underwood, Stores traveled to Japan to study the woodblock printing process.
Dennis Wasko spent two months this past summer trekking through mud and searching the undergrowth in the small West African country called Republic of the Gambia or The Gambia. His quest? Puff adders, which he calls “one of the most dangerous snakes in the Old World.”

Wasko, an assistant professor of biology in Hillyer College, was in The Gambia on a Greenberg Junior Faculty Grant. These internal grants promote research, scholarship, and artistic work by young, tenure-track faculty.

Puff adders, a type of viper, are prevalent in The Gambia, where they present a significant public-health problem from venomous snakebites. Because little is known about the snakes’ habits, Wasko is collecting data on their preferred habitat, movement, feeding patterns, and other information that may help predict where the snakes can be found.

“Vipers are my thing,” says Wasko. “If, through my work, I can eventually put some information out there that will help people, that would make me very happy.”

In May, Wasko led a group of eight Hillyer students to Costa Rica, where they spent 10 days learning about rainforest ecology. Wasko had previously spent time there studying a pit viper called the fer-de-lance, whose bite is also potentially lethal to humans.

But it’s not the fact that these snakes are venomous that attracts Wasko.

“That’s only incidental to me,” he says. “I am interested in the way they lead their lives, the way they perceive the world around them. Vipers rely on scent and ground vibrations to catch prey rather than sight and hearing like a lot of other animals. Pit vipers have a pit between their eyes that allows them to see body heat. These snakes are just so different and that is what fascinates me.”

Wasko leads the double life of a college professor—in his case, one part catching snakes and implanting tracking devices to collect data, and one part teaching general and environmental biology to first- and second-year Hillyer students.

“Being in the field does recharge my batteries, but I wouldn’t want either life by itself,” says Wasko. “I love doing research and I love teaching. Each makes me appreciate the other more.”

Wasko uses his research to enrich students’ experiences in the classroom.

“I draw examples from my own fieldwork in my teaching, and I show my students photographs taken in the field to illustrate certain points. Also, my fieldwork in Costa Rica led to the student study-abroad trip this summer.

“Taking the students to Costa Rica gave them an experience they won’t forget—not just the ecology we studied but also the opportunity to see that people live very differently from us in other parts of the world. I think that’s an important lesson too.”
This past summer, Ivana Milanovic spent 10 weeks at the NASA John Glenn Research Center in Cleveland, Ohio, where she is becoming a familiar face. This marks the fourth time she has received a NASA Faculty Fellowship to conduct research at the center, which was named for the first American astronaut to orbit the Earth.

Milanovic, an associate professor in the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture, does research in a branch of aeronautics called aerodynamics. It is the study of how air flows over a body in motion and how it affects that body’s movement. Aerodynamics plays an important part in racecar and aircraft-wing design to determine how much lift and drag are generated. It also has a role in improving fuel efficiency in passenger vehicles.

The high-technology equipment Milanovic needs for her research is so expensive that only a handful of universities in the United States can afford it. As a result, she must go into the field to do her research, much as her colleagues in other subject areas do.

“It would be impossible for the University to provide this type of equipment here on campus. So, that means that I must work with NASA and private companies in industry to test my theories and collect data,” says Milanovic. “Then I bring my results back to the classroom and share them with my students.”

While at the Glenn Center, Milanovic was investigating the vortexes that form when a jet of air encounters a cross-flow of air. Tornado-like strands occur between the bottom layer of the wind tunnel and the jet itself. According to Milanovic, jets in cross-flow have practical applications in industry, such as film and effusion cooling, mixing, aircraft performance and stability, and the dispersion of pollutants.

Thanks to a technology grant from the University, she has purchased three workstations where students use computer simulations to validate her results and create their own experiments.

Milanovic, who began her teaching career at the University of Belgrade in Serbia, devotes much of her time and energy to teaching.

“In Serbia,” she explains, “classes are quite large, and the professors give lectures before a hundred students and more. Here the classes are small, and students and professors get to know each other and work together.”

In addition to the papers and articles she writes about her research in aerodynamics, Milanovic also writes articles about higher education. Using her own experiences in the classroom, she shares techniques that have worked, and those that have failed, to successfully convey complex engineering concepts.

“I am still learning and improving as a teacher. When I see that certain things are not working, I learn from my mistakes. I want to share that information with other professors because teaching well is not something that just happens.”
When you know that Donald Ellis is interested in communication issues related to conflict resolution, intractable conflicts, and intercultural communication, it’s no surprise that much of his research involves the Middle East.

A professor of communication in the School of Communication within the College of Arts and Sciences, Ellis spent the month of July teaching a course, Communication Issues and Political Conflict, at Ariel University. The school is located in an Israeli settlement on the West Bank, the contested territory along the Jordan River that is at the heart of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

Ellis and his summer students talked about how the media presents the issues behind the conflict. They also discussed cultural differences between the two groups and what their cultures taught them about how to communicate.

“I learned from them, what they thought, what their insights were,” Ellis says of the students at Ariel University. “That was the best part about teaching over there.”

Back on campus this fall, Ellis is taking those lessons and passing them along to students in his course, Persuasion. One topic involves the problem of how to convince a very religious person to change his or her mind on a thorny issue.

“You’re probably not going to succeed really,” Ellis explains. “But there is one way you might succeed. One theory of persuasion is called “foot in the door.” If I start with small steps, if I get you to change a little bit, I can get you to change more. How you persuade different audiences that have rigid beliefs is an interesting issue.”

Students in Ellis’s first-year seminar, Media and Politics, are also benefiting from his time in the Middle East. He shares what he learned about the Israeli media, then asks his students to compare those traits to what they know about media in the United States. Ellis says they find many differences but not as many as they might have predicted.

“Israel is a very technologically sophisticated place, like the United States, so blogs and wikis and the Internet are increasingly used by citizens,” says Ellis. “Newspapers are falling off in terms of their readership, just like in the United States.”

Ellis admits he has some liberal Jewish friends who are opposed to the West Bank settlements and did not think he should be teaching there. But he says he wasn’t interested in transforming a situation or dramatically changing any minds.

“My argument was that education is by nature liberating and democratizing,” he says. “My goal was simply to raise issues and have the students think critically about them.”

And he encourages his UofH students to do the same.

Editor’s note: Ellis recently established the Donald G. Ellis International Summer Research Scholarship, which provides funds for undergraduates to travel internationally for research and study. The scholarship, open to all students in Arts and Sciences with a GPA of 3.0 or better, is the first of its kind at the University.
Five students from Shandong University of Finance (SUF) in China are among the hundreds of first-time students who moved onto campus this fall. The students, all seniors, are taking classes for the academic year and are the first to take advantage of a 2008 agreement for student and faculty exchanges between SUF and UofH. Just like UofH students who study abroad to benefit from exposure to international classroom culture and student life, these students arrived with to-do lists as well.

Haoping Yu, a finance and banking major from Linyi who likes to cook, says she hopes Japanese friends in the University’s Asian Student Association can teach her how to make sushi.

Shaoting Jiang, from Qingdao, studies English at SUF, “but here I am enrolled in the Barney School because my friends are in Barney. I would like to learn dancing—performance dance maybe and hip-hop is good, too.”

Long Huang, from Lin Qing, says he would like to see Wall Street. “I am a finance major, so, of course, that’s the place I’d like to see.”

Also part of the group are Yujie Jiang and Wei Yi, both international economics majors, who are from Jinan.

Samuel Skinner, director of international admission at the University of Hartford, says that the Chinese students are here largely because of Professor Hongwei Jin of SUF. Jin, an associate professor of English, spent the fall of 2009 as a visiting scholar in Hartford. “She promoted the University among her students at SUF.”

In reciprocal fashion, Susan Coleman, a finance professor in the Barney School of Business, was the first faculty member from the University to travel to SUF. On a second trip last spring, she lectured and met with SUF representatives to establish a collaborative entrepreneurial finance course. In the summer of 2011, she will teach a study-abroad course that will take UofH students to China.

“We will visit Beijing, Jinan, and Shanghai,” Coleman says. “I hope our students bring back a tremendous appreciation for Chinese culture, Chinese people, and Chinese business.”

Coleman is one of a group of professors involved in bringing Chinese students to campus. Andy Hao, assistant professor of marketing in the Barney School, and Clara Fang, associate professor of civil engineering in the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture, were in Beijing and Shanghai this summer speaking with recruiting agents and prospective students.

In addition to her efforts in China, Coleman has revised her business-and-finance course in the Barney School to include an international component. Students now examine Baidu, China’s version of Google.

“As we move forward, China will be a very important part of the world’s political and economic picture,” Coleman says. “If we can help our students learn about China and establish relationships with its people, we will all be better prepared for the future.”
University of Hartford head men’s soccer coach Dan Gaspar ’77 is no stranger to travel, whether for competition or recruiting. Yet, his 30-hour, roundtrip journey to South Africa this past summer to serve as goalkeeper coach for the Portuguese Football Federation’s national team is one adventure that he will forever cherish.

When he accepted an invitation from Professor Carlos Queiroz, Portugal’s head coach, to join his staff for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, Gaspar, who was born in Hartford to Portuguese parents, became the only American-born collegiate soccer coach to be on a World Cup national team’s coaching staff.

It was a dream come true for the Hawks’ sixth-year coach, who has plenty of stories and lessons to share with his team this season. “From my World Cup experience I realized the incredible importance of leadership and how it affects performance” Gaspar says. “It’s about team above individual. There were absolutely no excuses, only a solutions-oriented attitude from us all. Everyone was engaged and interconnected in supporting the cause, which was to win.”

The exciting World Cup quest for Gaspar and Portugal ended with a 1-0 loss to Spain in a June 29 match. It was the first and only goal that Portugal allowed in its four World Cup contests. The team battled to scoreless ties with Ivory Coast and Brazil, and recorded a decisive 7-0 victory over North Korea.

The knowledge Gaspar brought back to the University of Hartford goes far beyond the scoreboard. “I am sharing with my players the intense focus on commitment to mission that I experienced, and I believe that lesson will have a positive influence on their development both on and off the field.”

Gaspar also sees the achievement of his dream to coach in the World Cup as an important lesson for student-athletes. “It shows that you must have confidence and pursue your dreams,” he says. “Anything is possible if you are prepared, ambitious, passionate, and surround yourself with quality people.”

The benefits of having coached on an international stage are not lost on Gaspar. “I have always had international student-athletes on the Hartford Hawks roster. That diversity is extremely beneficial for our athletes both on and off the field. We live in a global society and the more our students are connected to the world, the better their future successes will be.”

Editor’s note: Can’t be there for the games? Watch Hawks sports online at www.hartfordhawks.com/showcase. Select Media Archive to watch previous games free of charge. The fee to watch a game live is $4.95 for a 24-hour access or $9.95 for monthly access. Season packages are available for some sports.
It all began with a 40-foot-long drawing of a collage made of Helvetica vinyl lettering.

In 2008, Carol Padberg, an associate professor in the Hartford Art School, had a solo show at Real Art Ways in Hartford, Conn. Her work, which explored the concept of coded information, involved a collage made of Helvetica vinyl lettering that was then cut into strips and reassembled. The finished work was an enlarged reproduction of the adhesive vinyl applied directly to the gallery wall.

Someone who saw her show suggested that it looked like African kente cloth, which dates back to the 12th century in West Africa. Kente cloth is handwoven in strips measuring about four inches wide on treadle looms. Weavers then sew the strips together to make larger pieces of cloth for clothing. The symbols on the cloth are a visual code that refers to African proverbs, fables, oral history, and other topics.

Around the same time, Padberg went to an exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York that featured the work of West African artists whose contemporary art was inspired by ancient textiles.

“I suddenly knew that I had a lot to learn from West African artists and cultures, and that somehow I must go there,” says Padberg. She began to plan a trip to Ghana soon after.

For three weeks Padberg traveled throughout Ghana and met with artists. She returned to Ghana for a month this past summer to conduct research for her own work and to teach a five-day workshop at the Foundation for Contemporary Art, in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. Funding for both her trips came from an HAS faculty development grant funded by Renée Samuels, sabbatical funds, and a grant from the University’s International Center, among other sources.

“The workshop was on professional practices. It’s a course that encompasses topics like networking, grant writing, legal issues, and other practical subjects,” says Padberg. “This is a class I teach every spring semester at the Hartford Art School, and now when I teach it here, I can bring my knowledge of art business in Africa to the course.”

Padberg’s international art career also has taken her to Asia and Europe, and from these travels she has developed an extensive repertoire of international and non-Western examples to use in her studio art teaching.

“After many years of bringing world art to the classroom, now I am finding ways to bring my students into parts of the world they have yet to experience,” says Padberg.

“At the Hartford Art School, we have a long tradition of educating artists-citizens by teaching the whole person,” says Padberg. “My new study-abroad course, Sustainable Art Practices, will bring the students outside what they already know and introduce them to the developing world.” The course will be offered in 2012 at the Kokrobitey Institute in Ghana.