

## **Center for Archaeological Materials/Center for Materials Research in Archaeology and Ethnology**

The mission of the Center for Materials Research in Archaeology and Ethnology (CMRAE), a consortium of eight Boston-area educational and cultural institutions, is to advance our understanding of prehistoric and nonindustrial societies through analysis of the structure and properties of materials associated with human activity. Plant and animal food remains and human skeletal material, as well as metal, ceramic, stone, bone, and fiber artifacts, are the objects of study, along with the environments within which these materials were produced and used. At the Center for Archaeological Materials (CAM) at MIT, investigators concentrate on the materials-processing technologies that transform natural materials into cultural objects.

At MIT, CAM is administered by the Office of the Provost. In 1998–1999, the Department of Materials Science and Engineering (DMSE) established a new undergraduate major in archaeology and materials, Course 3-C, as well as an interdisciplinary doctoral degree program in archaeological materials. These are the only academic degree programs of their kind in the United States. During AY2007, one graduate student was enrolled in the PhD program and two undergraduates majored in Course 3-C. All these students carry out their UROP and dissertation research in the CMRAE laboratory facilities.

By June 2007, seven students had graduated from the 3-C program. All seven students received the DMSE award for Outstanding Senior Thesis.

Archaeological Science, the CMRAE/CAM undergraduate subject introduced during AY1996 and offered jointly by DMSE, the Chemistry Department, and the Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences, continues to enjoy high popularity among students from CMRAE institutions. Of the 37 students enrolled, 29 were from MIT, one was from Boston University, one from Harvard, two from the University of Massachusetts-Boston, and four were from Wellesley College; eleven faculty members from five CMRAE institutions lectured in the subject.

During the spring 2007 term, undergraduate students in subject 3.094 Materials in Human Experience undertook a class engineering project supported jointly by CMRAE and DMSE. They built a 70-foot-long, Inka-style, all-fiber suspension bridge and installed it across the dry moat located behind the Stata Center complex. The May 8, 2007 *Science Times* section of the *New York Times* carried a full front-page article about their activities and achievement. Their bridge is the first fiber suspension bridge built outside of Peru after an Inka prehistoric model.

**Heather Lechtman**

**Director**

**Professor of Archaeology and Ancient Technology**

*More information about the Center for Archaeological Materials/Center for Materials Research in Archaeology and Ethnology can be found at [http://web.mit.edu/cmrae/cmrae\\_home.htm](http://web.mit.edu/cmrae/cmrae_home.htm).*