Roughly 400 new faculty members have been hired, and the University has seen a 33 percent increase in research funding. In addition, 14 deans have been appointed, more than five in any year since 2005. In that time, 14 deans have been appointed, more than 400 new faculty members have been hired, and the University has seen a 33 percent increase in research funding.

Daniel Dahlstrom, a College of Arts & Sciences professor and chair of philosophy, whose doctoral program placed well in the study, says his faculty’s continued excellence is evident in their many publications and awards. “Charles Griswold’s book Forgiveness, published three years ago, continues to be the centerpiece of conferences across the globe,” says Dahlstrom.

Solomon Eisenberg, a College of Engineering professor and chair of biomedical engineering, says his department’s funding has increased from just over $14 million in 2001 to $28 million this year; 77 percent of the funding comes from the National Institutes of Health. “We’ve had a big bump,” says Eisenberg. “One way to think about it is dollars per faculty member. We have 33 people on the faculty.”

Robert Kaufmann, a CAS professor and chair of geography and environment, says one PhD candidate was the first scientist to use satellite sensing technology to prove that parts of the planet were greening earlier each spring and another used the technology to document changing land use in China, as people were drawn to urban centers.

Because the NRC was working with data that are five years old, the new assessment does not address changes in academic programs that have been made since 2005. In that time, 14 deans have been appointed, more than 400 new faculty members have been hired, and the University has seen a 33 percent increase in research funding.

Even the most mainstream psychiatrists might agree that yoga is like chicken soup—it can’t hurt. But researcher Chris Streeter has gone a step further toward validating yoga’s potential to help treat depression and anxiety. In a recent study published in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, the School of Medicine assistant professor of psychiatry and neuropsychology scanned the brains of yoga practitioners and found that compared with that age-old stress reliever, walking, yoga brings a greater improvement in mood and decrease in anxiety.

In Streeter’s 12-week study, 34 randomly selected physically and psychologically healthy young men and women were divided into two groups: one that walked for an hour three times a week and one that practiced Iyengar yoga for the same amount of time. At four-week intervals, Streeter used a technique known as magnetic resonance spectroscopy to monitor subjects’ levels of a brain chemical called gamma-amino butyric acid, or GABA, elevated levels of which are associated with improved mood and decreased anxiety.

She found that the yoga group reported a greater boost in mood than the walking group, with GABA levels matching those improvements. Although the role of GABA still isn’t completely understood, her study is the first to demonstrate the GABA-mood-yoga connection by looking at actual changes in the brain.

Bostonia spoke with Streeter about the implications of the study and the future of yoga as a way of treating mood disorders.

**Bostonia: What is the main implication of this study?**

**Streeter:** This is the first study when we’re able to measure GABA’s relation to yoga. GABA is an important neurotransmitter, which is decreased in depressed people and increased in people who take so-called SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors), like Prozac, and it’s also implicated in anxiety disorders. It’s been reported for years that yoga helps people with depression and anxiety, but in this study we took people who didn’t have any experience with yoga and found that mood scales were higher in the yoga group, and so were GABA levels.

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**Why did you choose Iyengar yoga?**

The beauty of Iyengar is that it’s been around for a long time and it’s pretty rigorous, with really well defined postures. There are variations in it, but as far as yoga goes, it’s as consistent as you can get. I had the subjects do mainly postures because I could see them actually doing it.

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**Do you think yoga alone could be a viable treatment for anxiety or depression?**

It’s been suggested. I would say it’s not a substitute, but rather an adjunct to treatment. It’s an exciting behavioral intervention, but the results here are associative, not causal.

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**Why did you decide to compare yoga to walking?**

You need a control group. There have been a number of studies comparing aerobic and nonaerobic exercise that show exercise helps ease depression and anxiety. In this study, the walking group clearly had more exercise, and they were very active people. But the yoga group had more improvement in their mood than the walking group.

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**People might misinterpret these results to mean that yoga is better than walking. Can you clarify the comparison?**

In this study, in this population, walking didn’t prove to be as beneficial to mood as yoga. It doesn’t mean that yoga is better than walking in other populations and other situations.