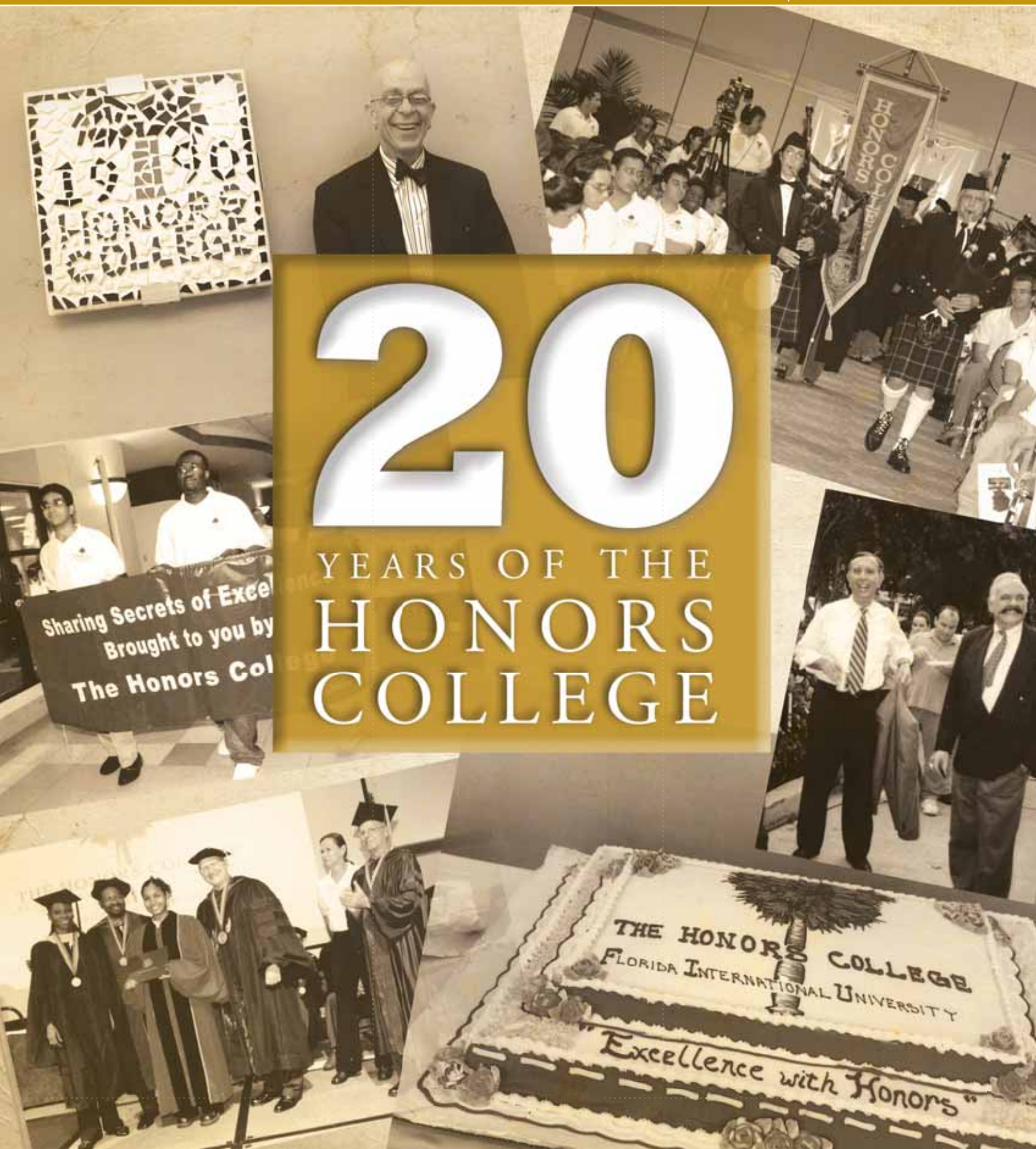
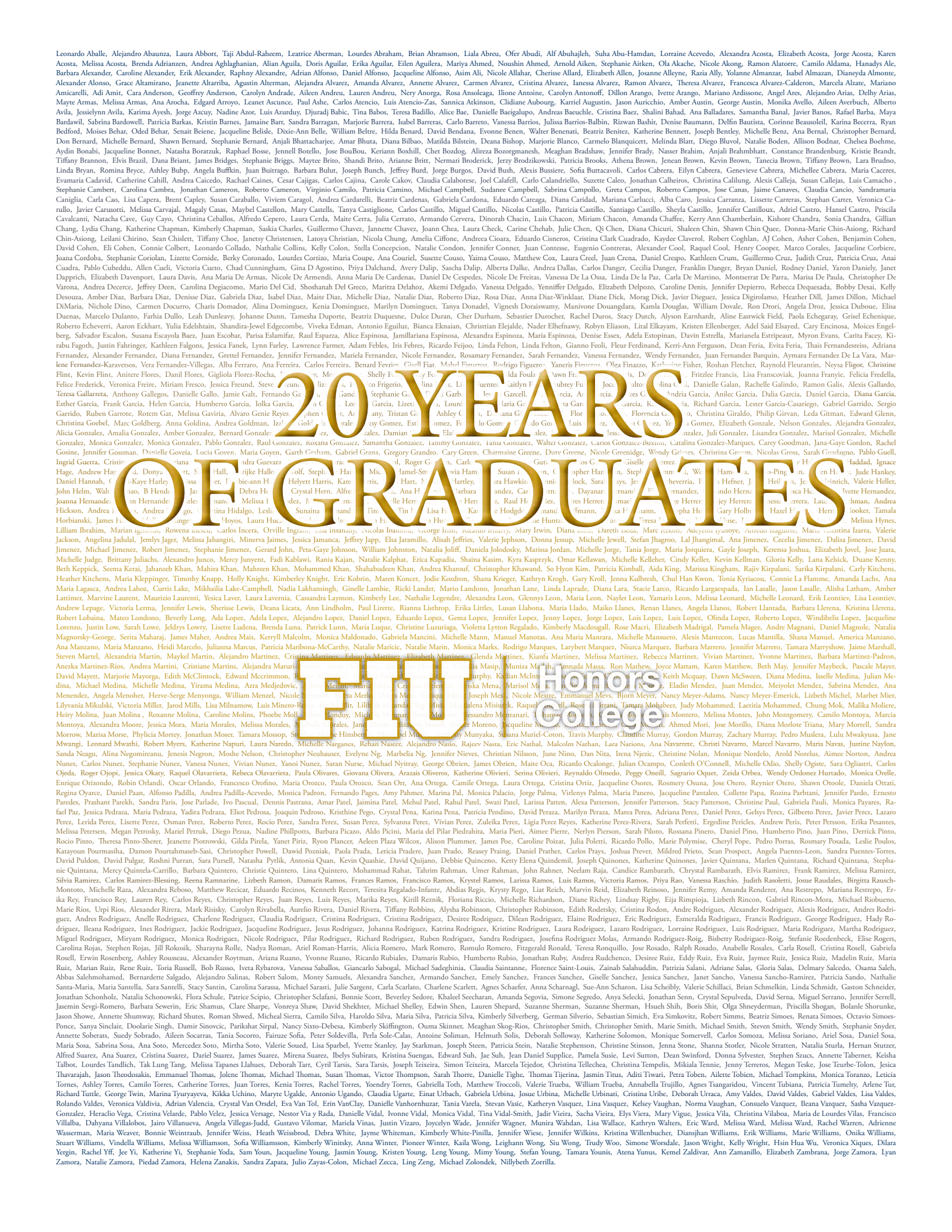
Florida International University Honors College Review

SUMMA CUM LAUDE

Fall 2010 | Volume 1, No. 1




20 YEARS
OF GRADUATES
FIU
Honors
College

Florida International University Honors College Review
SUMMA CUM LAUDE
Fall 2010 | Volume 1, No. 1

Welcome to *Summa Cum Laude!* The Honors College magazine will now come to you semi-annually in a new, expanded format. We hope that alumni will glimpse themselves in the promise of our current students, that civic and university torchbearers will be inspired to support these fine future leaders, and that the Honors community will be energized by the exciting achievements of its members.

The Honors College is *Worlds Ahead!* Twenty years of evolution have produced one of the finest Honors programs in the country. From our hopeful beginnings as the Faculty Scholars Program, we have grown into a College with over a thousand students and a roster of Faculty Fellows that includes some of the university's most renowned teachers. Today, our students present their research at international conferences, publish while still undergraduates, issue critically acclaimed music CDs, start successful businesses and non-profits, produce gallery-quality art, and earn prestigious graduate fellowships.

A few highlights:

- Our annual A & V Art Exhibition, produced by John Bailly's class, for the first time was housed in FIU's respected Frost Art Museum, and draws in increasingly important members of South Florida's arts community.
- The Sweetwater partnership was fully subscribed by students the first day the available openings were listed. This year we added four internships, citizenship classes taught by our Pre-law Community, computer training for the elderly, and a major tree-planting program supported by a grant from the Arbor Foundation.
- We introduced a vibrant new first-year curriculum, with cutting-edge pedagogy and technology, incorporating response "clickers," film production, and the resources of the Wolfsonian Museum.
- Honors helped support the Miami visit of the Dalai Lama, enabling dozens of our students and supporters to hear this remarkable world leader "close up and personal."
- We instituted a new study abroad program to France that, in focusing on how war and revolution shaped northern Europe, goes far beyond the typical student travel experience.

Whether you are a faithful alum or a newcomer to the College, we invite you to read about our successes and join in the excitement. Share your story and your expertise with a small group of students through a Dinner with Future Leaders. Join the Community Advisory Board. Attend the fascinating Food for Talk. Come hear an Excellence Lecture. Consider joining our students on one of our high-octane study abroads. Share your news and stories with other readers. Join with the many others who are helping prepare FIU's best and brightest for key roles in the development of South Florida, our nation, and the world.

Lesley A. Northup
Interim Dean

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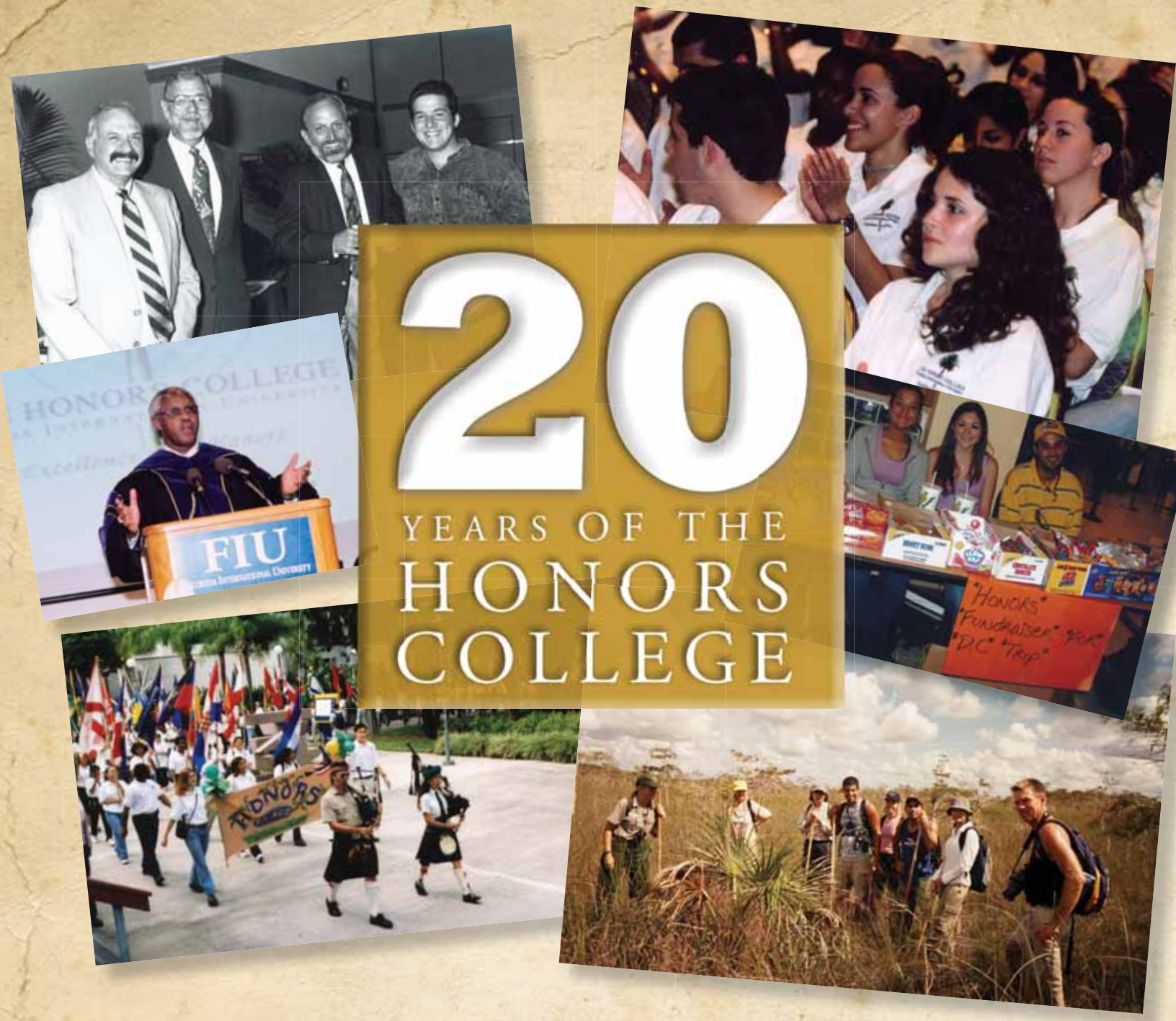


Has it really been twenty years? It may be hard to fathom, but yes, this year the Honors College is proudly celebrating its twentieth birthday! While the path we have traveled has not always been smooth and our road to success has had its share of detours, bumps, and hidden curves, we have still come a long way from our humble beginnings. We have grown and flourished, we have planted the seeds for success, and we have seen those seeds bloom and reach fruition. So, today, we look back on our accomplishments with pride and we look forward to our future with excitement.

Before the Honors College was a college, it was the Honors Program. The Program got its start in 1990 with an inaugural class of only 100 freshmen. Its initial mission, which has since been expanded in many new directions, was to "introduce intellectually curious students to a comprehensive view of the nature of thought, knowledge, and human understanding in order to broaden their vision of the world."

The earliest iteration of the Honors College, the Faculty Scholars Program, was formed in 1972 and became an integral part of FIU's newly admitted lower-division student body. The program brought together some of the best and brightest students and challenged them to think outside the box of the traditional university curriculum. As more and more students were admitted to the Faculty Scholars program, the need for it to evolve became apparent. And, when Liberal Arts courses were made a part of the

University's core curriculum, the seeds with which to grow a full-fledged Honors College were firmly planted.

Dr. Fernando González-Reigosa, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies in 1972, was at the forefront of the push to create an entire Honors curriculum. The Honors Program, housed in a cramped office space in Primera Casa, was initiated in 1990. Still, Gonzalez-Reigosa dreamed of an intellectual community in which outstanding students focused on critical thinking, personal and professional enrichment, and excellence working hand-in-hand with a group of dedicated teachers and scholars. This vision led eventually to the transformation of the program into an autonomous college within the university.

In 1997, after relocating twice, the Honors Program finally found a permanent home in the Deuxieme Maison building and became the Honors College. Invigorated by a new sense of its growing value to the University, and with a larger space in which to stretch itself, the College concentrated its efforts on providing students with a continually evolving interdisciplinary curriculum.

Recognizing that, in an increasingly globalized world, it was not enough for students to understand only their own culture, the College set about developing ways to give them the opportunity to get first-hand experience abroad. Its first move in that direction was to establish a partnership with the University of Alcalá de Henares in Madrid, which gave rise to the Spain Study Abroad Program. Students in the program travelled throughout Spain, taking in the architecture, art, culture, people, and food.

In the summer of 1998, Associate Dean Stephen Fjellman led the next

phase of the Honors College international outreach with the Italy Study Abroad Program. Over four weeks, students got to explore Venice, Florence and Rome. Pairing the interdisciplinary cornerstone of an Honors education with the potential offered by study in another country, the Study Abroad programs have since blossomed into one of the College's most coveted experiences.

Dr. Fjellman also spearheaded the expansion of the Honors College onto the North Miami campus, currently known as the Biscayne Bay Campus. The presence of the College there enables even more students to take advantage of the special academic and cultural opportunities afforded by the College's programs and community.

In 1999, Honors Place was established. The idea was to create a residential living-learning community exclusively for Honors College students, where they could get to know one another, study together, and participate in special programs and events. Since 2000, when Honors Place consisted of a mere 5 rooms, the community has expanded to 70 rooms and been transformed into a community of scholars that was at one point named the "Best Living and Learning Community" in the state of Florida by *Florida Leader Magazine*. Honors Place has fostered a family on campus for College students and enabled them to grow together academically and socially.

The community that Dean González-Reigosa left in 2001 was nothing like the program he oversaw in its infancy. When he retired, Dr. Ivelaw Griffith became the second dean of the Honors College. Under his expert leadership, the Honors College doubled its enrollment and became an even more significant part of the university. Among other things, Dean Griffith added both the Student Research and Artistic Initiative (SRAI) and the Honors Convocation to the College's offerings. SRAI paired faculty with students who shared similar research interests. Opportunities for

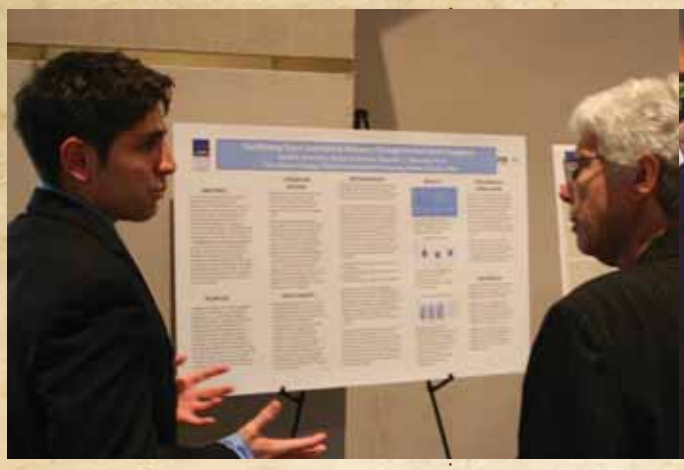
research in the program encompass nearly every academic discipline and artistic endeavor. The program, now renamed Advanced Research and Creativity in Honors (ARCH), gives interested students a chance to learn by doing, rather than sitting in a classroom in a seminar. It also enables them to do the kind of research more typical of graduate study, offering an opportunity for supervised research and formal creative projects. Participation in the program also increases student knowledge of opportunities within various disciplines, strengthens their resumes, and gives them a competitive advantage when applying for graduate school and the work force. All final research projects are exhibited at an annual research conference each spring at FIU.

The annual Honors College Convocation has evolved into an outstanding showcase of talent and dedication of the College's faculty and students. Students enter their original work, from poetry to short stories to painting, music, photography, and sculpture, in a contest, and all of it is on display at the Convocation. The day begins with a parade of nations that features the flags of each of the many countries from which both students and faculty hail. A bagpiper announces the entry of the parade to the Graham Center ballrooms, where the Convocation celebration continues. Once inside, the audience is treated to a variety of musical performances by students and the announcements of annual scholarship winners and awards for student artistic entries.

After 5 years of service to the College, Dr. Griffith moved on to become a college provost, leaving a greatly improved Honors College in the capable hands of Dr. Lesley A. Northup, the former associate dean. Dean Northup has overseen one of the most difficult evolutions in the history of the College. In spite of severe university-wide budget cuts, the College has continued to fulfill its original goals and reach into new areas. According to Dean Northup, this has been possible due "largely to the generosity and understanding of our great faculty Fellows, who have willingly accepted a reconfiguration of how they are compensated while continuing to teach with passion and dedication. We have also been able to eliminate unnecessary expenditures and use technology more efficiently, and everyone on staff has become a super-saver."

At the same time, development efforts have made rapid strides and opened up new possibilities for Honors College students. For example, "Food for Talk," an innovative event that mixes fine dining with discussions of timely issues led by a diverse group of university scholars, was introduced in the spring of 2010. Proceeds from the now annual event are used to enhance the Honors College's scholarship programs.

Today, Honors is providing some 1000 students with more advantages and opportunities than ever before. The last



few years have seen many new initiatives that have led the College into previously untapped areas. Such significant partnerships as the 3 + 3 program with FIU's Law School and a partnership with FIU's Athletics Department are now in place, strengthening the Honors College's ties with the university and helping Honors students advance.

The College has also begun to place far greater emphasis on outreach and service learning, as students are encouraged to take leadership roles and contribute to the community. The pioneering Sweetwater partnership impacts FIU and the surrounding community, as students tutor children, teach sports and hygiene, plant community gardens and trees, mentor seniors in computer use, offer citizenship classes, and put together events with the elementary school. Through the Sweetwater partnership, members of the Honors community can work together for common goals, perform an important service, and enjoy excellent learning opportunities through unusual and challenging internships.

The Honors College on the Biscayne Bay Campus has begun its own community service initiative. In 2007, Jayne Klein, the BBC Program Director, established a partnership with the Overtown Youth Center, recruiting students in Tau Sigma Alpha, the College's BBC Honors Society, to serve as tutors and mentors for the young people at the Center. This extremely productive and constantly evolving program now hosts an annual luncheon at BBC celebrating the Overtown students, and conducts a weekly SAT tutoring program and book club. It has also brought such exciting guests as Edwidge Danticat to the campus to speak.

Under Dean Northup's leadership, the Honors College continues to look to the future, while still keeping one eye on the past and both feet on the ground. The creative mix of outstanding faculty, students and staff continues to generate innovative curricular and service opportunities that help prepare students for productive and successful futures. □

Honors Giving

Education is a precious gift that keeps on giving for generations. There is no better way to make a difference in the life of a student than to provide him or her with the means to get a good education.

Over the years, many deserving Honors College students have benefitted from the generosity of the College's donors. Some of those fortunate students have already achieved their professional goals, and others are well on their way to achieving them. Today, many of those graduates, armed with the desire to serve as beacons of light on the path to success for new generations of students, are reconnecting with their alma mater so they can help build an ever-wider circle of giving. Most of you will remember, fondly, two key former staff members who speak here of the importance of your contributions.

CARYL GROF was a fixture at FIU from 1980 until her retirement last year. She worked with some of the University's best students. As an instructor and Associate Dean in the Honors College, she feels that Honors College students have taught her as much as she taught them. "The combination of an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning with a dedicated faculty who exemplifies this in their everyday lives, coupled with students willing to go beyond grades and look at life through a variety of lenses has been the Honors College's passion from its inception. Love of education, talent, passion, and creativity are some of the things the Honors College prides itself on. As we move into the future, we reach out to our alumni for support. We ask that you look back fondly on your memories of all the support you received from us. Many of you have told us how much the Honors College helped change your life. We can continue to provide the excellence that you all benefited from, but we need your help. And you can help by giving something back to the Honors College."

SHARON PLACIDE spent 11 years working and teaching in the Honors College. She remains passionate about the College's purpose and students: "We force students to think analytically about inhabiting others' lives, Not just through the humanities, but through the natural sciences as well. Some students are uncomfortable with that, but it stretches their skills nevertheless." Both she and professor Grof witnessed first-hand the Honors College's evolution from a program with only about 400 students to one with over 1000. While under Dean Northup, she said, "there hasn't been the same financial freedom [as under earlier deans], this Dean has still managed to creatively enhance the Honors programs and expand the extracurricular offerings for students." Those offerings are something that graduates will be able to hold onto as they grow in their careers and personal lives, shaped in part by their experiences with professors like Caryl Grof.

"If I were an Honors alumnus, I would think about what my most meaningful experience in the College was and then find some way to contribute to that area," Placide said. "Our alumni can contribute in a number of ways: they can attend Honors College events, they can expose our students to the professional world, and they can help by sharing their experiences with current students."

Sharon's greatest passion is the study abroad program. She feels that it is a powerful means of opening students' minds by providing them with experiences "far beyond mere travel. It provides them with educational activities, enables them to actually experience a new civilization, a new culture, and everything in between." Those of our alumni who have been fortunate enough to participate in this program could help the College and its students a great deal by making a contribution, large or small, to a program that will lead them to discover new worlds of thought. □

INVEST in the FUTURE NOW!

We instill in all Honors students intellectual rigor, unwavering ethical standards, and leadership skills. To be leaders, they know they have to begin to give back to the community that has fostered their education and growth. Honors students have embraced this challenge to become leaders, investing their time, talent, and treasure in the Sweetwater partnership, the Overtown Youth Center, and numerous campus initiatives.

This is your chance to invest in them.

Our most crucial needs:

- A NAMING SPONSOR for either the College or its proposed new building. The Honors College is out of space, and the State cannot provide it! We need a building with classrooms, labs, advising offices, and community spaces to house our students and bring them together. This is your opportunity to make a meaningful, values-driven, and lasting contribution to the future.
- STUDY ABROAD SCHOLARSHIPS to help deserving students experience another culture and be better citizens of the world.
- OUT-OF-STATE (and country) SCHOLARSHIPS to bring the world to Honors, defraying the high costs of tuition and housing for non-Floridians.
- GENERAL SCHOLARSHIP assistance that we can use discretionarily to help those in most need.
- UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS to advance the skills, knowledge, and passions of students from the beginning of their academic careers.

For information on any aspect of giving to the Honors College, please contact Juan Carlos Espinosa at 305-348-4100 or email espinosj@fiu.edu.

SPRING 2011

FOOD for TALK

QUENCH your intellectual thirst
SATISFY your hunger for meaningful dialogue

Discover the intellectual treasures at Miami's burgeoning public institution of higher learning. Food for Talk is an intimate opportunity to eat, drink, and converse with university scholars on a wide variety of topics. Whether you're interested in fine wines, U.S. foreign policy, particle colliders, sports or the human psyche, you'll find a discussion table of fascinating companions.

For information, please visit **http://honors.fiu.edu/F4T**

FIU | Honors College

Does my dog really love me?

What happens if you fall into a black hole? What is art? Is Fidel Castro already dead?

These were just some of the thought-provoking questions that FIU scholars discussed during "Food for Talk," the College's first fundraising dinner. The event, which was so successful that it is slated to become a regular annual feature of the College, was held at the Wolfe University Center Ballroom on the Biscayne Bay Campus on February 18, 2010. It featured fifteen intriguing faculty members leading discussions on such topics as religion, sex, wine and global warming.

One of the evening's most popular discussions was led by Psychology Professor Bennett Schwartz, who shared the latest scientific information on the mental and emotional lives of animals with his fellow diners. At another table, diners seated with Barry Gump from the School of Hospitality Management learned about wine – and got to taste several different ones, as he brought several bottles to the table with him. Guests seated at the "What is Art?" table enjoyed their experience with John Bailly so much that they immediately reserved the same table for this year's event.

Food for Talk was organized by the Honors College and its Community Advisory Board (CAB) in order to raise money for the Honors College Scholarship Fund. CAB member Orlando Gonzales spearheaded the planning and Barefoot Wine and Bubbly and Aguilar beer donated their wares. The guests who gathered to attend this fun-filled evening included CAB members, prominent community members, alums, and other friends of the Honors College. One alum waxed nostalgic, musing that the various discussions brought back memories of her days as a student in Honors College seminars.

Amidst plentiful Italian food and non-stop wine and beer, the discussions went on late into the evening. The event closed with a poetry reading by the world-renowned poet and FIU alum, Richard Blanco. Through his poetry, Blanco, a Cuban-American, explores the ways in which cultural identity is negotiated. The entire audience was captivated by his poem, "Thanksgiving Dinner," dealing with the way that many ethnic families celebrate Thanksgiving by mixing the traditional American meal with their own cultural specialties, be it spicy curries, pork fat, or stir fry.

If you wonder if your dog really loves you, or whether men and women are really different, just make plans to come to the next Food for Talk event this spring, and you just might get some answers or provide them. Eat, drink, network, and enjoy a great evening! Stay tuned over the next few months for the announcement of the Second Annual Food for Talk this spring. ◻

Emma V. Lopez

Emma Lopez, senior, majors in environmental engineering with a minor in earth science. She is actively involved in the Society of Women Engineers and the Catholic Student Union at FIU. She also participated in Alternative Spring Break (ASB), helping patients with AIDS and HIV. This summer, she participated in the study abroad program to the Peruvian Amazon. As her project, she constructed rain water collection systems in three schools for indigenous mestizo communities so that the children could have clean drinking water.

Emma has also worked at the Engineering Dean's office on various projects such as the Solar House and the Motorola Engineering Expo. She currently works as a physics learning assistant. In 2006, she interned with the Department of Earth Science, where she assisted graduate students with such research activities as collecting sediment samples from Florida Bay, analyzing peat samples from Australia, and collecting data on South Florida hurricanes. She was also a DOE Fellow, doing research at FIU's Applied Research Center on a mercury project analyzing data from a creek in Tennessee.

Emma enjoys dancing flamenco and has performed for children at local schools. She has also been a guest speaker for Career Day. Emma loves travelling and has been to many European countries, India, China, and Turkey.

Richaud Pack

New Honors College member Richaud J.F. Pack is more than just a scholar. In his native Michigan, he made headlines with his athleticism. He recently graduated magna cum laude from Ernest W. Seaholm High School in Birmingham, Michigan, where he broke the single basketball scoring record with 56 points, and holds the school record for most total points. ESPN named him the USA Midwest player of the week. In Michigan he was the only player this century to score over 100 points combined in two consecutive games (45+56). Richaud also earned the President of the United States' Gold Award for Community Service in high school. Given his achievements, it is not surprising that FIU offered him a full athletic scholarship. Richaud plans to pursue a career in medicine because he is passionate about helping people. Perhaps this comes from his experience growing up: "The one thing I appreciate about my family is my parents' commitment to each of us academically and athletically. They have given me and my siblings a great spiritual foundation to build upon. I admire the closeness that my siblings and I share." He is excited to be a part of the Honors College: "I joined the Honors College because I wanted a smoother transition into higher education, which will be easier due to my instant affiliation with a small group of students and professors that have similar capabilities and aspirations." The College looks forward to Richaud's ongoing achievements.

▲A&V Exhibition

The A & V installation is the culmination of an Honors College seminar taught by artist and Honors College fellow John Bailly. The class examines the role visual art plays in the social dialogue over controversial issues. This year the exhibition moved to the Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum at FIU, a testament to the exceptional quality of the work by the students and the growing prestige of the exhibition.

▲FIU vs Rutgers Tailgate

Honors College students, the Provost and Dean Northup were among the enthusiastic tailgaters on September 11th at the FIU vs. Rutgers game. Smart people do love sports!

▼Smart people love sports

The FIU Honors College and the Athletics Department have undertaken a long-term partnership designed to offer student athletes the best of both academics and athletics at FIU.

The Honors College seeks to recruit scholar athletes into our community, where they will be recognized equally for their academic and competitive excellence.

This partnership also encourages Honors students to support and appreciate FIU athletics. Students participate in “Honors College Nights” at various games and meets, sponsor tailgate parties and become involved with sports-oriented community service projects through the Honors College – Sweetwater partnership.

Honors College – City of Sweetwater Partnership

We are making a difference.

What do you know about Sweetwater? Perhaps you have breezed through this compact city on your way down 107th Avenue to FIU, or stopped at one of its shops or restaurants. But you probably don't know much about our neighbor to the north. The Honors College is doing something about that.

In October 2009, the College initiated an innovative partnership with the City of Sweetwater. A true example of university-community engagement, the partnership brings members of the College together with Sweetwater residents to provide a range of high-impact community services and exciting educational opportunities for our students. This past spring, ten students served in internships in the mayor's office and with community leaders, learning how a small city is governed, funded, and improved. At the same time, dozens of other students ran a sports program for 4th-grade girls, tutored youngsters after school, and conducted a news literacy survey of Spanish-speaking citizens for an Honors seminar. In a few short months, the partnership is enabling the College to become an integral part of the urban community that has been FIU's home.

As you might expect, Honors students have been particularly drawn to working with children. At Sweetwater Elementary School, they have been running a program sponsored by the Women's Sports Foundation that teaches young girls about exemplary female athletes and healthy nutrition and lifestyle choices, along with the fun of playing basketball. After the first few tentative girls came to the early sessions, word of mouth guaranteed a stream of enthusiastic participants for the rest of the spring.

The school was also the site for a wildly successful "Artistic Evening," put together by students in one of the College's first-year leadership classes. These ambitious folks planned an event where young artists from both the elementary school and Honors displayed their work and performed musical selections. Some three hundred people attended this joyous cultural initiative, for which local restaurateurs, solicited by members of the class, provided a reception. Honors instructor John Bailly spoke at the event, talking about feeding a child's thirst for learning by experimentation and experience.

Youngsters were not the only focus of the partnership, of course. This summer, at the request of Raul Rodriguez, owner and benefactor of Li'l Abner Mobile Home Park—home to almost a third of

In 1938, a group of expatriate performers known as the "Russian Midget Circus Group" settled in what was then called Sweetwater Estates.

Sweetwater's residents— Honors senior Tania Santiago ran an exercise program for women several days a week. This proved to be such a hit that the women have prevailed upon Rodriguez to pay her to stay on for the fall.

At Sweetwater's Senior Center, Honors students have also begun a regular visiting program that brings them into one-on-one relationships with residents. This fall, they began teaching these senior citizens how to use the Center's computers to send and receive email and to surf the Net, linking them to their families and the world.

Coming this fall, in addition to the continuation of past successes, are several new programs. Expanding into environmental concerns, the partnership will be giving elementary students trees to be planted and cared for in conjunction with the Reclamation Project and the Arbor Day Foundation. Also on the sustainability front, students from Dr. Brian Peterson's first-year Honors class are working with the elementary school to create a student-run vegetable garden on the grounds.

Throughout all this activity, Honors students have served in dynamic internships in the Sweetwater Police Department, the Office of Social Services, the Office of Economic Development, the Finance Office, the Office of the City Clerk, and the Office of the Assistant to the Chief of Staff. These opportunities have been invaluable. Interns have learned how to write grants, prepare legislation, plan for an election, run governmental meetings, and deal with constituents. One intern was given a paying job for the summer. The ten current City internships were expanded to fourteen and formalized in the fall, accompanying two others sponsored by Raul Rodriguez.

Sweetwater is no longer a mystery to the people of FIU. Our students have learned, for example, that in 1938, a group of expatriate performers known as the "Russian Midget Circus Group" settled in what was then called Sweetwater Estates. Formed in Russia in 1907, the Circus had rapidly become famous. With the Russian Revolution in 1917, the group gave up its home country and, in 1930, after having traveled all over the world, arrived in America at the Port of San Francisco. After performing for almost three decades, the group members became U.S. citizens. Their retirement destination is now home to what Chairman Al Dotson of the university's Board of Trustees calls the Finest Institution in the Universe—FIU! ◻

summer in the Amazon

THE HONORS COLLEGE IS *Worlds Ahead*

THE HONORS COLLEGE IS GEARING UP FOR ANOTHER EXCITING SUMMER STUDY ABROAD TRIP TO THE JUNGLES AND VILLAGES OF THE PERUVIAN AMAZON. The trip is part of a two-semester service-research program, begun 3 years ago under the guidance of Dr. James Riach and Dr. Devon L. Graham. The students will be working to continue the various student initiatives, studies, and projects that others began in years past and to create new ones.

During the spring semester, students learn about the features of the Amazon rainforest and its natural and cultural history. The studies will focus on the current challenges to the environment and the region's indigenous people. Faculty directors will encourage each student to choose a project about which he or she is really passionate, which the students will implement while in the Amazon during the summer.

The program works largely in tandem with Project Amazonas, Inc., a Peruvian-American non-profit organization that focuses on humanitarian, educational, research, and conservation work in the Peruvian Amazon and operates four field stations there. It is dedicated primarily to the conservation of Amazonian wildlife and to the livelihood of the peoples who live there.

In previous years, the partnerships formed between Honors College students and Amazon residents spanned a wide range of topics and disciplines, reflecting the interests of each student. Some worked to address community needs for health care,

sanitation, and potable water. Others focused on programs to help revitalize and chart the culture of the people in the indigenous Yagua communities. Still others documented the biodiversity of the region and the human and natural factors influencing it. One significant student project involved collecting information on the medicinal uses of plants, a knowledge that has long been an integral part of the rich tradition of natural medicine in these communities.

One major project dealt with water filtration and latrine systems. It has already resulted in an increased ability of the local communities to stave off diseases. As an integral part of that project, an educational campaign on hygiene and sanitation was conducted.

In the area of cultural revitalization, two members of this year's group – Ernesto Alfonso and Jennifer Tovar – are striving to find common ground between the younger and the older generations in the Yagua community in order to revitalize their language and culture. The Yaguan traditions, like many other indigenous traditions, are fading quickly. Not only does this represent an impending loss of their knowledge and culture, but it also points to a more serious practical problem since the granting or retraction of land rights and other benefits to the people is based at least in part on the preservation of their culture. What will happen if there is no longer a traditional culture to preserve?

Alfonso and Tovar plan to document on film some of the elements of the Yaguan culture. They hope to track individual attitudes toward the importance of preserving the culture and at the same time help preserve it. They are also working with the teachers in the area in order to produce a play based on folk storytelling using the Yagua language, in an effort to have the children and their elders working together in their native language and cultural idioms.

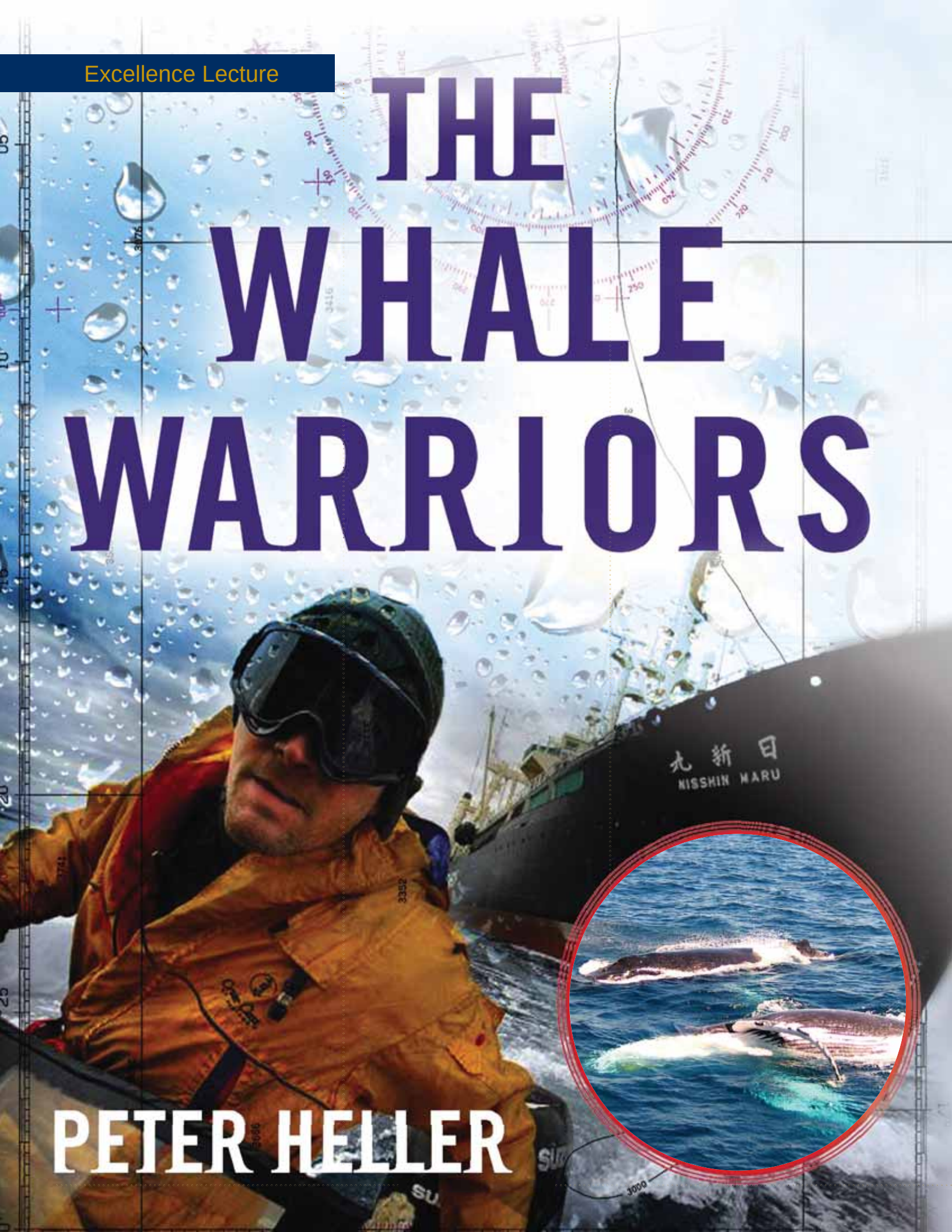
"Staying in the Amazon, away from civilization and having very limited communication with the outside world, was an unforgettable experience, truly once in a lifetime. ... But besides everything I physically experienced, it was also a time in which I was able to reflect upon many things about my life. This experienced helped me grow as a person in ways I never thought of before." — Jenny Tovar (2010)

Christopher Gillette, who took part in the 2008 Peruvian Amazon program and is a student in FIU's Environmental Studies Program and an amateur photographer, documented some of the Amazonian wildlife. He described his excursion into the Amazon as "the experience of a lifetime, honestly, something that has changed my life forever." His work made such an impact on him that he plans to go back during the next winter break to continue it.

Although there will always be more work to do, the program offers much hope for the future. Dr. Riach has said that "when things change enough so that it is us on the outside who are visited by native Amazonians and asked what our needs and interests are, then we have made real progress. People must first realize that the Amazon is important and indispensable, not just because of the resources and services it provides, but also because of the different ways of thinking and types of knowledge held by its human residents. The Amazon and its people need to be allowed to evolve. It has been said that the one constant in the universe is change. We just need to change in a manner that is not unhealthy and that will allow for continued well-being for future generations." □

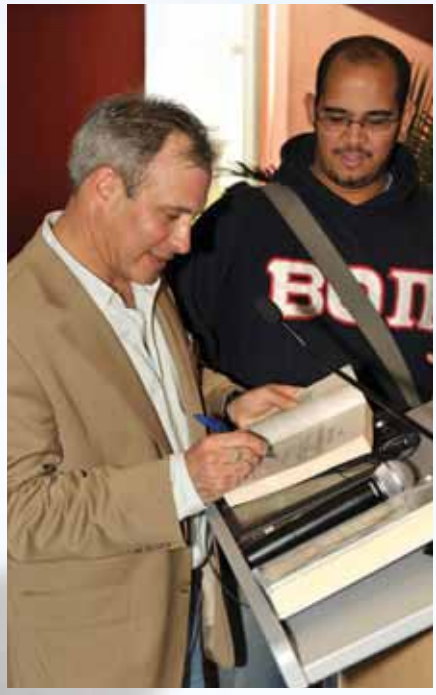
Excellence Lecture

THE WHALE WARRIORS



PETER HELLER

A Journalist's Voyage with the Eco-Pirates of Antarctica



Last spring, the Honors College Excellence Lecture series featured Peter Heller, an award-winning adventure writer, sea life activist, and author of the best-selling book, *The Whale Warriors: The Battle at the Bottom of the World to Save the Planet's Largest Mammals*. In his lecture, he detailed the hair-raising, often shocking, experiences he had over the course of the two months he spent aboard the eco-pirate ship Farley Mowat as it hunted an illegal Japanese whaling fleet in the stormy Atlantic waters off Antarctica. Heller vividly described how, after weeks of enduring heavy seas, dodging icebergs, and playing cat-and-mouse with various authorities, the Farley finally found the Japanese fleet.

Heller shared story after story about his shipboard adventures with a fascinated audience of over 300 people. He read other excerpts from the book and answered a seemingly unending number of questions posed to him by the audience. Everyone present found it painful to hear the chilling stories he told of how these beautiful, intelligent creatures were routinely and cruelly slaughtered for no legitimate reason.

The Farley Mowat is owned by the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, a radical anti-whaling group led by Paul Watson, the man who founded Greenpeace in 1972, but has since left it. The group is constantly in pursuit of Japanese whalers, and when it finds them, it often takes extreme measures to stop the killing that follows inevitably in their wake. Toward that end, the Farley is armed with water cannons, a catapult for flinging garbage, a reinforced bow for ramming, and a weapon called the "can opener," a giant blade mounted on the bow of the ship used to rip open the hull of any commercial whaling ship. Its 44-person, all volunteer crew is fearless, dedicated, and passionate about its common cause — each one ready and willing to give up his life if to do so would save the life of even a single whale.

Heller told of how, when the ship was in Taiji, Japan, which is known primarily as a whaling town, a group of world-famous surfers and activists joined the crew and formed "surfer's circles" in the water to help prevent any more whales being killed. His description of the scenario was heartbreaking: "Fourteen or fifteen of the little whales pressed in panic against a far net stretched across the cove. They huddled together as we got close. Small babies nosed out of the water to peer at us. They calmed down. Half of their group had just been butchered in this water, many crying for a long time before they died."

Heller explained that, in 1986, the International Whaling Commission (IWC), a group of 66 nations that makes regulations and recommendations on whaling around the world, enacted a moratorium on open-sea commercial whaling in response to the rapidly-declining numbers of the Earth's largest mammals. The Japanese, who have been aggressive whalers since the end of World War II, exploited a loophole in the law that allows signatories to kill a certain number of whales each year for "scientific research." Their flaunting of the law is one of the many justifications cited by Watson for stopping the Japanese fleet from engaging in its illegal commercial enterprise, which provides whale meat for restaurants.

In answer to the question, Can the commercial killing of whales be justified? Heller asserted that biologically, ecologically, economically, logically, morally, and ethically, the answer is emphatically "no." "Nothing in their makeup has prepared them for the new perils we humans impose on them: depletion of their food sources, pollution of the waters they live in, disruption of their social structure, and most obviously, killing them outright … If the oceans are dying in our time, and we kill them … we should have committed a crime so heinous we shall not ever be redeemed." □

Heller's latest book is *KOOK: What Surfing Taught Me about Love, Life, and Catching the Perfect Wave.*

HONORS COLLEGE Community Advisory Board

Four dynamic South Florida business and community leaders have joined the Honors College Community Advisory Board (CAB). Jonathan Cameron, Leonie M. Hermantin, Ralph Rios, Raul F. Rodriguez and Tina M. Vidal-Smith join a vibrant board of leaders who work to support the students, mission and programs of the FIU Honors College.

Jonathan Cameron

Jonathan Cameron is an FIU Honors College graduate (2007) and works for the investment management firm Morgan Keegan in Coral Gables. He has worked in the financial services industry for 4 years and currently manages the business operations for three financial advisors as a Registered Client Service Associate. In this role he helps establish and maintain relationships with high net worth clients, and trades stocks, bonds, options, and other investment vehicles. He is also actively involved with the Honors College Alumni Chapter. In addition, he enjoys reading, camping, and following the Florida Marlins.

Leonie M. Hermantin

Leonie M. Hermantin's career reflects her commitment to Haiti and the Haitian diaspora community. She is the Deputy Director of the Lambi Fund of Haiti, a community foundation supporting grassroots initiatives in Haiti's rural communities. Formerly the Director of Research and Strategic Planning at the Sant La Haitian Neighborhood Center in Miami, she has over ten years of non-profit management experience. As part of her contribution to the CAB, she will forge a partnership between the Lambi Fund and the Honors College.

Ralph Rios

Ralph Rios is West Kendall Baptist Hospital's new Vice President of Professional Services. He is on the board of the South Miami Children's Clinic, which serves needy kids in the City of South Miami. Rios graduated from Florida International University with a master's degree in Health Services Administration in 2000. Rios also served as an adjunct instructor in FIU's Health Services Administration program from 2001-2008. Rios takes over on the CAB for Javier Hernandez-Lichtl, who is now CEO of West Kendall Baptist Hospital. Rios will be instrumental in the continued development of relations between the Honors College and Baptist Health South Florida (BHSF), including event organization and student professional development.

Raul F. Rodriguez

Raul F. Rodriguez was born in Miami and is a graduate of Belen Jesuit Preparatory School. He attended the *Real Colegio Universitario Escorial Maria Cristina* in Madrid and Florida International University. A successful businessman and community leader, Rodriguez has a varied set of business interests. He is the founder and president of Agua Dulce Investments, LLC, a private investment and family wealth management company; chairman and vice president of NAS Homes, an importer and exporter of home products, with offices in China and Mexico; and founder, chairman and president of Luar Entertainment, with ownership interest in Segafredo Brickell and Irish Pub. He is also the managing director of Lil' Abner Mobile Home Park, a community of about 3,500 residents in Sweetwater. His other interests include breeding Paso

Fino horses and martial arts.

As president of the Rayni Foundation, he has provided over 100 scholarships for immigrant children. Rodriguez was instrumental in the creation of the Sweetwater Project, a multi-faceted collaboration between the FIU Honors College and the residents, government and other institutions in the city of Sweetwater.

Tina M. Vidal-Smith

Honors College alumna Tina M. Vidal-Smith is currently vice president of business development at Pacer Corporation, a company that acquires and turns around financially distressed businesses in several industries. Vidal-Smith graduated from FIU with a bachelor's degree in international business and marketing in 2002 and a master's degree in international business in 2004. She is also the 2010 recipient of FIU's prestigious Torch Award, recognizing alumni who have made a positive impact on their profession, the community and the university. ◻

THE HONORS COLLEGE COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD 2010-2011

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Frank & Ana

One great achievement of the Honors College has been the happy couple who met in the Honors Program 18 years ago— Ana and Frank Ramos. Their courtship and marriage have made them the proud parents of two boys, David, 12, and Michael, 9. Frank and Ana are regular visitors to the campus and are dedicated to serving and helping their Honors College.

After graduating in 1993, Frank attended the University of Miami Law School. He now works for Clark Silverglate & Campbell, where he was recently elevated to administrative partner. He's been the president of the Florida Defense Lawyers Association and the inaugural president of the 11th Judicial Circuit Historical Society. Frank also serves as an Honors College Community Advisory Board member and Alumni Association Board member.

We have experienced Frank and Ana's special love for their alma mater on many occasions. We asked them to share with us a little bit about the importance of Honors in their lives.

Do you remember your first encounter?

Ana: "I was working on an Honors assignment. We were given a questionnaire to answer anonymously and then hand in. They were redistributed with only our social security number on it, and we had to analyze the person who had answered the one we were given. I had seen Frank in our small discussion group, and I was very curious if the questionnaire I had to analyze was his. So I walked up to him during Honors and asked him for his social security number. He seemed confused, but he rattled it off anyway. It wasn't him, but it finally gave us a chance to meet."

It seems that Frank had been admiring her for quite some time before Ana approached him: "I first saw Ana during the first break-out session when Honors. Prof. Weitz was discussing the finer points of "Back to the Future" with Michael J. Fox, and Ana seemed to have an answer for every question while I sat silently admiring her. The following week Ana approached me about a questionnaire we'd filled out for class. That conversation sparked a series of dates."

Ana recalls working on the Honors College annual projects, which were always intense but also very satisfying. Frank and Ana collaborated on both projects they presented. They spent countless hours researching, conducting interviews, and writing the 50+ page reports. As Ana humorously noted, "It actually showed us that we complemented each other very nicely and that we could spend an inordinate amount of time together without killing each other, very important things to know when you're engaged. Turning in those completed projects and knowing that we had accomplished them together was always a cause for celebration."

Do you think the Honors College contributed to your success?

Ana: "The Honors Program brought me to Frank, who is my partner, best friend, and the love of my life. I can't imagine what life would have been like without him, so for that I'll be forever grateful to the Honors College. Aside from that, the Honors Program strengthened my faith in everything I believe in. They challenged us to question everything, and in the process of questioning what I believed, what I had been taught, I discovered that I truly did believe it. Not just because I was told to, but because I had confronted it, tested it, and found it to be worthy. The Honors College strengthened my faith and my moral compass simply by challenging it."

Frank: "I met my wife through the Honors Program, and I would not be successful without her."

Currently you are very active with FIU and the Honors College. Why give back to the Honors College?

Ana: "I am a huge believer in the importance of higher education. I am the daughter of Cuban immigrants and a first-generation college student. The education I received at FIU and in the Honors College were a crucial part of making me who I am today, and I feel indebted to our alma mater."

Frank: "It was such an integral part of our lives; we thought it was important to give back to a program that gave so much to us."

Any advice for the current students?

Ana: "Take advantage of every positive opportunity you are offered. Enjoy your time in college and pay attention to the life you're living right now, not just the life you hope to one day live. Above all, know what you believe and why you believe it, and then be faithful to that."

Frank: "Figure out what your dreams are and pursue them wholeheartedly." □

What are they up to?

As an example of a committed, lifelong Honors learner, alumna **Janet L. Dapprich (1998)** completed her master's in education degree on April 26, 2010, the day of her 58th birthday. Her graduate studies focused on the areas of cultural diversity and competency. These are issues she deals with on a daily basis in her position as Health Education Coordinator at the Department of Veterans' Affairs in Miami.

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The research, writing, and communications skills that he gained at Honors College classes have served **Larry Fleurantin (2000)** well in his law practice for the past six-and-a-half years. After graduating summa cum laude from FIU in 2000, he moved to Gainesville to study at the UF Levin College of Law, from which he graduated, cum laude, in 2003. He has put his communication skills to use while arguing cases before the Florida Third District Court of Appeal and the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit and applied his research and writing abilities as senior research editor for the *Florida Journal of International Law* in 2002-2003 and as author of publications such as *Immigration Law: Nowhere to Turn—Illegal Aliens Cannot Use the Freedom of Information Act as a Discovery Tool to Fight Unfair Removal Hearings.*

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Joel Gandara (2003) was such a busy and hard-working undergrad that you'd think he wanted to be sure he could get a job that would allow him to lounge around in his underwear all day. That would have been a prophetic thought, given his career path. Starting a small operation he literally ran out of a spare bedroom in his condo, Gandara is now President of Underwear Station, Inc., a wholesale distributor of men's and women's intimate apparel, specializing in high-end and high-fashion underwear. Gandara developed his work ethic during his time at FIU, where he was not only an Honors College student but also served as President of the FIU Chapter of the American Marketing Association, served as a consultant for FIU's Athletic Department working on alumni awareness, and continued to work on building his business in whatever spare time he had. After graduating from FIU in December of 2003 with a B.A. in International Relations, Gandara was able to dedicate his energies exclusively to developing his company. His business has recorded more than a 100% gain year after year and despite the recession, under Gandara's direction the company has found new markets and brands that have helped increase sales.

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Sometimes it only takes one life-changing experience to set your career on a new path or reinvigorate your life goals. For **Jacqueline Alfonso, (2000)** one such experience was her trip to Italy in summer of 1998 as part of the Honors Italy Study Abroad Program. Following this experience, she decided to pursue a doctoral degree in psychology, partly inspired by her distinguished, PhD-holding Honors professors. Jacqueline graduated *summa cum laude* in 2000 from FIU with a B.A. in Psychology. She went on to earn her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at the University of Central Florida, where she concentrated her research on substance abuse prevention and intervention. After completing a predoctoral internship year at the Greater Hartford Internship Consortium, in August of 2008 she joined the Emmanuel College faculty, where she currently teaches in the Psychology Department and works with undergraduate students in her on-campus laboratory.

Honors alumna **Nicole Stratten (2005)** is also an Honors College office staff alumna. After working for Honors for 4 years as a program assistant and subsequently as an academic adviser, Nicole left Florida shortly after completing her M.A. in Liberal Studies at FIU. She is currently the Assistant Front Office Manager for the Holiday Inn University Plaza in Bowling Green, Kentucky. She supervises five Guest Service Representatives and two bellmen.

Jerzy Brodzikowski (2007) was an active and dynamic Honors student leader, serving as President of Tau Sigma Alpha, the Honors Biscayne Bay Honors Society. His interest in politics and international issues has been further explored in his graduate studies. He is currently working as a project assistant and analyst at demosEUROPA - Centre for European Strategy, a think tank in Poland. In this position, Jerzy examines Polish and other European economies and their prospects for a low-carbon future. He will publish a report based on his findings by the end of this year. To further broaden his already globally-minded educational horizons, Jerzy will be applying to PhD programs in the fields of political ecology and energy policymaking.

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Richard Garcia (2007) graduated from FIU with a Bachelors in Psychology. He recently completed his Masters degree in Sexuality Studies from San Francisco State University. His thesis explores the ways gay and queer trans-men (female-to-male transgender) negotiate sex, risk, and pleasure when engaging in sexual activities with other men (including trans and non-trans men). Richard is currently working as Program Coordinator for the National Sexuality Resource Center at SFSU, and will be applying to PhD programs next year in either health promotion or sociology.

Shortly after graduation, budding visual artist **Rosemarie Romero (2009)** has already curated shows and exhibited her own original artworks at Art Center South Florida and the Black Mangrove Collective in Miami, receiving press and success. She is currently at the University of Florida pursuing an MFA in Creative Photography. To that end, she participated in the Florida Board of Education (BOE) Summer Fellowship program for professional networking as well as taking classes, thanks to the teaching assistantship and 100% tuition waiver she was awarded. She also has a solo show of her artwork coming up at the World Erotic Art Museum in August in South Beach and an exhibition called Parapraxis at the Bakehouse Art Complex in October.

During his time as an undergraduate biology major, Honors gave **Jonathan Moser (2008)** the opportunity to travel to Jamaica as part of the Honors Jamaica Study Abroad program. This allowed him to step outside the classroom and learn about a different environment and culture by experiencing it first-hand. Learning about Jamaica's ecology and geology also gave him the experience of what being in an unfamiliar environment would be like—something that helped prepare him for his graduate research work. As an FIU grad student in the biology department, Jonathan has spent over 2 months this summer in Alaska, participating in an intensive 4 -week Arctic ecology course and researching water relations and carbon flux of Arctic tundra vegetation.

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Ever-industrious alumna **Rocio Perez (2008)** is maintaining the work ethic that made her such a dynamic and productive Honors student leader during her time at FIU. As if currently attending law school at Duke University were not enough, she also serves as president of the Duke Women Law Students Association and Co-Chair of the Immigration Education Program and worked last summer at the U.S. State Department. Keeping busy last summer, she worked at the law offices of Carlton Fields in downtown Miami, while also campaigning for Republican candidate for Congress Paul Crespo and working on bringing Duke Law's Southern Justice Spring Break program to Miami.

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Ever since graduation, Sociology and International Relations double major **Vanessa De La Ossa (2010)** has immersed herself in public service. She earned a Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Public Policy Fellowship, working both at the Department of State and then at the Office of Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (R-NY) for her second placement. Vanessa continued working with Congresswoman Maloney as a full-time staff member in Washington, D.C.

Are you a member of FIU's

"BEST AND BRIGHTEST" NETWORK?

If you are not a member, come join the **Honors College Alumni Chapter**

As a member, you will

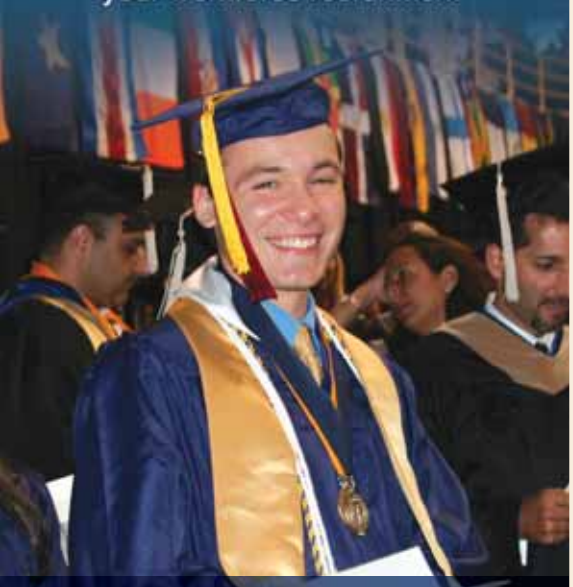
Support the mission and students of the Honors College

Have an opportunity to meet and network with other FIU alumni

Receive invitations to alumni mixers, concerts, exhibitions, lectures, tailgate parties and other special events

Receive *Summa Cum Laude*, the Honors College magazine, with news of the College's initiatives, current students, and alumni

Have access to a pool of bright, prepared young leaders to enhance your workforce recruitment



To Join the Honors College Alumni Chapter visit **http://honors.fiu.edu/alumni**. For more information about the Alumni Chapter or the Honors College Community Advisory Board, please contact **Kanchana Marapana** at **305-348-4100** or email **kmarapan@fiu.edu**.

Alumni Notes

Being a true Honors College student means balancing both scholarship and citizenship—in other words, not always having your head buried in books and research but sometimes looking up at the world around you and seeing how you can play a part to make a difference. Alum **Zeke Romero (2009)** seems to have found a way to meld both in his post-grad occupation. He received a paid internship with the National Republican Congressional Committee, working as a Hispanic Outreach Communications intern. This fall he will be attending the Indiana University- Bloomington Maurer School of Law, with a $15,000 per year scholarship. He is also an Associate of the Council on Legal Educational Opportunity (CLEO), a program designed to promote diversity in the legal profession by providing academic, financial, and mentoring programs to minorities and low-income individuals.

Savvy entrepreneur and business graduate **Justin Vizaro (2010)** already has his own business up and running successfully. He started his company, Local 10 Card, in his hometown of St. Petersburg, but he plans on expanding it to other cities, including Miami, this fall. Its main product is a discount card that is only valid at locally owned businesses. After being operational for only about a month, Local 10 already offer discounts at over 100 businesses. Check out the website for more information: http://www.local10card.com.

IN MEMORIAM

Veronica Allais
Class of 2010

Igor Mata
Class of 2013

We are all eager to know what you are up to! Send in your news, updates, and other interesting tidbits to Kanchana Marapana at kmarapan@fiu.edu. Any and all stories are welcome-be it news of jobs, fellowships, weddings, births, travels, promotions, and other significant milestones in your life.

▼July Honors College Alumni Happy Hour

About 30 Honors College Alumni gathered at the Happy Hour at Grimpa Steakhouse in Brickell on July 2010. Our special thanks to Frank Ramos for helping us arrange this event.

▼September Alumni Happy Hour

Honors Alumni network at Segafredo Brickell, made possible by Community Advisory Board member Raul Rodriguez.

FALL SEMESTER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 14	Excellence Lecture – Anya Kamenetz	3:30pm	CBC 255
November 1	Colloquium BBC – Michael Heithaus	2:00pm	BBC/TBD
November 9	Colloquium – Lettie Bien	3:30pm	DM 100
November 13	L'il Abner Foundation Thanksgiving Bash	10:00am-2:00pm	L'il Abner Mobile Home Park 11239 Northwest 4th TER, Miami, FL 33172
November 20	L'il Abner Foundation Gala	TBA	Belen Jesuit Prep School (Tentative) 500 SW 127th Avenue, Miami, FL 33184
December 3	Honors College Awards Assembly	6:00pm	GC 243

For more information about upcoming events,
please call 305-348-4100 or visit http://honors.fiu.edu

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