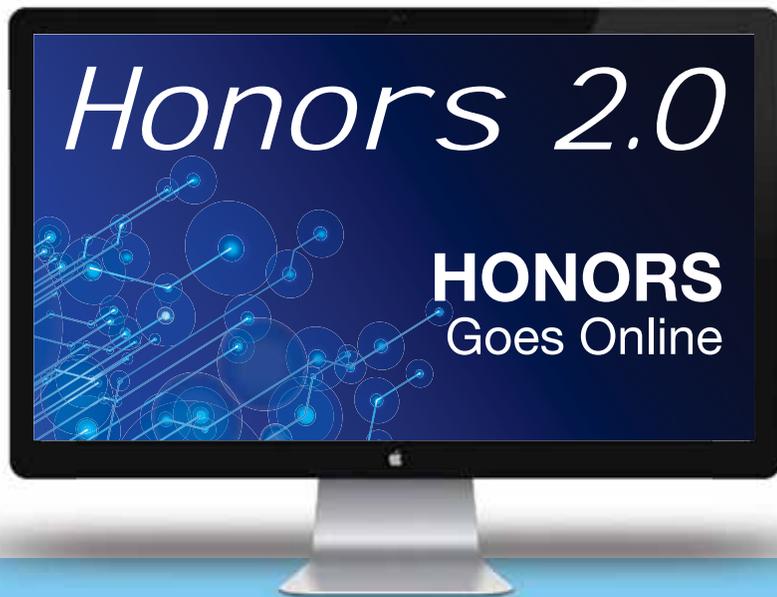


The Florida International University HONORS COLLEGE Magazine

SUMMA CUM LAUDE

FALL 2015





Online courses are traditionally considered antithetical to good honors education. To be truly honors courses, the collective wisdom asserts, classes need to gather students and teachers into intimate seminars for face-to-face, in-depth discussion. That cannot happen online, most honors professionals think. Consequently, no major honors program in the country offers online courses.



Oh, wait! Not so — the Honors College at FIU does. And we know how to do it to assure the same rigor and interactivity found in our campus classes.

For the past few years, the Honors College has experimented with a small number of online courses, working on their design, building faculty skills, and assessing their impact on students. These are not your father's online courses: they allow for small-group projects, chats, synchronous conversation with the instructor, and access to materials used in campus classes. As any online instructor will tell you, it's actually harder to teach online than in the classroom; courses must be meticulously planned, monitored constantly, and incorporate innovation and creativity. Anyone teaching online in Honors is prepared to do this. We make sure that nothing is lost pedagogically for online students.

These offerings are filled almost as soon as registration begins. Why? From a purely practical perspective, they offer students, especially those in their final year, a chance to complete their Honors requirements regardless of scheduling conflicts with work, family, and required courses. Just as importantly, they respond to FIU's new 20/20 Strategic

Plan, which aims to achieve a new balance in the mode of course delivery. With the rise in demand for online courses, the extensive advances in online interactivity and other teaching tools, and the financial realities of today's higher education, FIU plans to offer substantially more online opportunities. With a high percentage of students who work, are posted overseas, or have pressing family responsibilities, this should make a degree accessible to a large number of Floridians who otherwise cannot attend an affordable public institution.

As the number of online students rises, Honors needs to be part of that movement, both to support the university's goals and to make available the enormous value-added of an Honors education. To this end, we have recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with FIU 2.0, the office that manages fully-online degree programs, a rapidly growing field in public universities. With this agreement, all students taking fully online degrees can join and graduate from the Honors College.

We have made doing fully online Honors as easy as possible for this new constituency. Like transfer students

with an A.A., our online members will be expected to complete 12 credits of Honors, which can be achieved through any combination of online seminars, study abroad, or a thesis or capstone project through the Advanced Research and Creativity in Honors (ARCH) course. Application for admission will be simple and easy. Despite being off campus, these students will have access to a wide variety of Honors features, including our Career Center, video-captured special guest talks and informational Honors Hours, and individual advising. They can even participate in student organizations electronically.

In line with the university's strategic mandate, the College is committed to ensuring that these students are successful both academically and in their search for job or grad school placements. Availability of the Honors option should help these programs recruit and keep top students, and assist them in the timely acquisition of their degrees.

The Honors College is proud to be a national leader in including online in its high-quality, problem-based curriculum, and in providing access to an Honors education for every kind of FIU student. □



This issue of *Summa cum Laude* highlights several initiatives in the Honors College for our many pre-med students, showcasing the Honors students who have gone to FIU's Herbert Wertheim

College of Medicine (HWCOC), and our new suite of early assurance programs (EAPs), which will make med school decisions much easier for aspiring doctors. These are only two aspects of the College's efforts in this area. We have also instituted a curricular pre-med track that includes the EAPs; the highly active student organization STITCH (which, among its many activities, sends off multiple annual medical missions, this year to the Dominican Republic); a new study abroad program focusing on epidemiology in South Africa, led by HWCOC's Dr. Aileen Marty; and two courses on healthcare taught by HWCOC faculty. Our first group of students completed the new Healthcare in the U.S. course this spring (see photo above). The course offers a historical overview of medical practice, preparation for applying to med school and taking the MCAT entrance exam, and close mentoring. We also offer a class in Biomedical Ethics.

In addition, three outstanding Honors pre-meds were invited by Dr. Juan Zevallos to join HWCOC's Research Scholarship Course this summer, a unique opportunity to study alongside current med students. The course develops student competence to be lead investigators on major research projects. The lucky participants were Rebecca Joseph, a biology major with research experience with the U.S. Department of Agriculture; Erick Ramirez, a chemistry major concentrating on Biochemistry with minors in Biological Sciences and English; and Marie C. Desir, who has researched the impact of methane seepage in the Gulf of Mexico on the pelagic fish in the area.

Honors students are excited about these opportunities, lining up for more space than the programs and classes can accommodate. Working with HWCOC and the university's Office of Pre-Health Professions, Honors is making a huge difference in the lives of our aspiring physicians.

Lesley A. Northup
 Dean

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Introducing EAPS

Every year, dozens of brilliant Honors students endure an agonizing year of working, worrying, and waiting as they strive for acceptance into medical school or law school. Often, they take a year off after receiving their baccalaureate degrees in order to study for the notoriously difficult entrance exams. These standardized tests, studies show, are even harder for minorities and first-generation-in-college students—a large proportion of our FIU students. Into that gap year, students also cram low-paying jobs, internships,

and physician-shadowing that may enhance their applications. Then they wait, not knowing whether their dreams will be fulfilled or crushed.

The Honors College wanted to do something about that.

This year we are proud to announce a series of agreements with professional schools to establish pipeline programs that will allow Honors students interested in law, medicine, pharmacology, dentistry, and osteopathy to know by the end of their sophomore year that they will actually be able to attend med school or law school.

Heading the list of options are partnerships with FIU's Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine and the College of Law. Both have adopted Early Assurance Programs (EAPs) for Honors pre-professionals. In essence, these EAPs give students the chance to have their academic work, job training programs, and preliminary test results reviewed by Medicine and Law early in their undergraduate years; if their GPAs, scores, ability, and character pass muster, they will be offered acceptance into the school, pending continued academic excellence. In the meantime, both schools will offer training, enrichment, mentoring, and preparatory opportunities for EAP students.

What does this mean if you want to be a doctor or a lawyer? It means you can stop wasting energy worrying about your next step, and devote your energy to doing as well as possible in your remaining undergrad career. It

means you will have the best possible preparation for your professional studies.

A variation of the EAP is the 3+3 program with the College of Law. Students who complete their major requirements by the end of their junior year can, with good scores and grades, be accepted into the college beginning with what would be their fourth year of undergraduate studies. The courses they take in the first year of law school count toward both their law degree and their elective credits for the bachelor's degree, doing double duty. Hard-charging pre-law students can thus earn a J.D. in a total of six, rather than seven, years, and save some money in the bargain.

Honors is also proud to have established early acceptance partnerships with Lake Erie College of Medicine (LECOM), a respected institution that offers our students the chance to become dentists, pharmacists, or osteopaths—opportunities not otherwise available at FIU. *US News & World Report* lists LECOM as fifth in the nation for graduating primary care physicians, and *Academic Medicine* has cited the College's innovative and pioneering curriculum. With the second-lowest private school tuition in the country, retention and completion rates well over 90%, and a Bradenton campus, LECOM is uniquely positioned to serve our students. It offers multiple options including a fully online pharmacy program in addition to the traditional program in Bradenton. The dentistry program, whose graduates are ranked first nationally in terms of lifestyle and income, incorporates an innovative, project-based curriculum. Students interested in osteopathy, a holistic

approach to medicine, can earn a D.O. and practice fully as doctors. LECOM, the largest medical school in the country, will work closely with potential candidates before they even matriculate at FIU.

As part of these new opportunities, we are inaugurating Pre-Med and Pre-Law Tracks—two or more upper-division seminars dealing with health and legal issues, respectively; guaranteed shadowing opportunities for pre-meds; active student organizations for peer support and learning activities; specialized advising; and study abroad or U.S. trips geared to these fields.

These new pipelines to the professions will enable Honors students to plan efficiently for their schooling and careers, save time and money, and proceed with confidence. This, in turn, will help ensure the future of these vital services in Florida. ▣

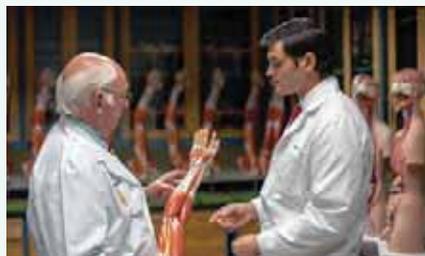


Honors to Doctors

When, in 2006, FIU achieved its dream of having a medical school, students in the Honors College were jubilant: Not only could they have an affordable college of medicine at home in Miami, but they were excited about its innovative curriculum which, among other advances, involved students in community family medicine right from the start.

Three years later, when the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (HWCOC) enrolled its first 43 students, half of its six-person FIU contingent came from Honors. Those three students and the four that followed in the next two years are now all M.D.s.

Dillon Arango, one of the first graduates, is now practicing orthopedic surgery in Philadelphia. A long way from his undergraduate days as a model with flowing Fabio-like hair, he now sports a standard professional haircut and an article in the top *Journal of the American Medical Association, Surgery*. Dillon's research displayed the interdisciplinary thinking he honed in Honors; it looked at the controversies surrounding artistic portrayals of anatomy since the Renaissance.



His classmate, Diana Morlote, is now a pathology resident at Mt. Sinai hospital in Miami Beach. Morlote, a 4.0 undergraduate and the daughter of a cardiologist, had already co-authored

a paper on "Genetic Insights into the Origins of Tibeto-Burman Populations in the Himalayas," published in the *Journal of Human Genetics*. Since then she has published, with her mentor, Prof. Rene Herrera, another article on tribal genetics. She chose HWCOC because of its emphasis on training community-serving and empathetic doctors.

Hanadys Ale, also in the first graduating class, tells a fascinating story of coming to the U.S. from Cuba halfway through her medical education, then starting fresh as an undergrad learning English. She wanted to be a doctor as a child, after seeing how compassionately a doctor treated her grandmother. Hanadys was thrilled this summer when her dear friend Zeimat Beiro, whom she had met in medical school in Cuba, received the white coat of the first-year medical student. "We cried, we both cried. It was very emotional," said Dr. Ale, a resident at Miami Children's Hospital.



Other Honors FIU MDs include Alejandra Alvarez, a member of The Gold Humanism Honor Society, recognizing medical students and others who exemplify excellence in clinical care, leadership, compassion and dedication to service. General practitioner Carlos Prays is completing his residency here in Miami. Like many Honors-to-HWCOM students, he distinguished himself in undergraduate research, studying factors associated with pressure ulcers in stroke patients.

Andres Rodriguez chose HWCOM because of its focus on primary care and location, like so many of his peers. He found the opportunity to pioneer in the innovative new school exciting and HWCOM an “oasis for fresh thought and experimentation.” He is in the FIU/West Kendall Family Medicine Residency Program, and is committed to practicing family medicine. And Franklin Danger, after serving as a transitional resident at St. Mary Mercy, Livonia, Michigan, is now serving a Florida Hospital Radiology Residency in Orlando.

Still coming up through HWCOM are 28 aspiring new physicians from Honors. These include serious researchers, like biomedical engineer Ailyn Rivero; biologists Janelis Gonzalez, Jacob Bruno-Friedman, Manuel Borobia Sanchez, and Andrea Roca, who conducted her research among the Yagua people in the Amazon; and chemist Kelley Dages. Many of these scholars presented their work not only at the FIU Undergraduate Research Conference, but also at the National Council on Undergraduate

Research, the country's leading forum for undergrad research, and some have published articles.



Their stories are diverse and impressive. Miamian Jenesis Negrón recently came across an old first-grade drawing she'd made titled, “When I am an adult I will be a doctor.” Yessenia Marquez helped plan and participate in JAMAICA Experience, FIU's first pre-med mission trip. Emily Geisler served as a CLUTCH Test Prep Student Advisor for FIU courses and continues as a student advisor. Yanel De Los Santos was valedictorian for the class of 2009 at St. Brendan. And Jose Roble has been a lab instructor for the FIU Biology Department.

Many Honors med students have participated in prestigious programs. Biomedical engineer Konstantinos Sebekos was part of the Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program and performed summer research at Stanford University. Richard Barrios, a MARC U*Star Fellow, worked on cancer research with Dr. Jeremy Chambers. Samora Dorismond was chosen for the ACS Project SEED program, which gives high school students an opportunity to do chemistry research at a university lab.

Another pattern among them is



Every year Honors sends many students off to medical school, and of course, they don't all attend FIU's own medical school. But with our new Early Assurance pipeline program with HWCOM, however, we expect the numbers of Honors alums to increase rapidly, helping to keep the best of the best here at home.



distinguished service to the community. Grethel Miro served as President of the Student Alumni Association and was also a part of the LEAD Team, ambassadors for the Center for Leadership and Service. She danced for 17 hours in the FIU Dance Marathon to benefit Children's Miracle Network Hospitals, and was also a Chemistry Learning Assistant. Joshua Sixon ran for Honors College Senator in the SGA. Angel Porras, who is undecided whether to be a pediatrician or an oncologist, writes in his blog about the importance of "bringing justice to our Appalachian brothers and sisters." And three of our alums, Julee Sunny, Lauren Puchades, and Alexandra DeQuesada, have been named to the HWCOC Medical Student Ambassador Program, a student leadership initiative through which they represent HWCOC and work directly with incoming students.



This year, seven more Honors grads are entering HWCOC. One of them, Ephraim Mansour, is a familiar face in the Honors College community. His resume gives a fair indication of the quality of the young women and men Honors is sending to HWCOC. Leading early, in high school he worked on Creating Authentic Responsible Empowering Engagement (Project CAREE), a partnership between FIU students and students at Miami Northwestern Senior High School. At FIU, as one of the leaders of the Honors pre-

med organization, STITCH, he went with Honors' first medical brigade to Nicaragua, an experience that solidified his conviction to become a doctor. His experience there taught him the importance of connecting with people in healthcare. Ephraim has volunteered over 400 hours to various health and environmental projects, serves as the Board Secretary & Youth Advisory Council Board Adviser at National Voices for Equality, Education & Enlightenment (NVEEE), a non-profit to prevent bullying, violence, and suicide; attended the 2015 Peace Ambassador Leadership Summit; has been a physics learning assistant; and is a peer coach for Panther LIFE, a closely mentored college experience for students with intellectual disabilities. A member of the FIU Academy of Leaders, he ultimately wants to work on interdisciplinary community development.



Manuel Borobia Sanchez along with Michael Dias, a workout buff and alumnus of the Honors Aesthetics and Values Art Exhibition; Tai Kwon Do enthusiast Edward Suh; double John Bailly alumna Natasha Llanes (A&V, French Revolution Reacting to the Past); class of '18 med student Chrisanne Roach, and class of '19 Ricardo Collazo, these amazing students may well be there to treat you when you need medical help. ▣

A FOUNDATION FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

By Hannah Batista



“I want to live an extraordinary life.”

For Ana-Paola Capaldo Escandell '10, who at 25 is one of the youngest compliance attorneys in the state of Florida, this aspiration is quickly becoming a reality. Precocious and driven, she graduated from high school at only seventeen, and within

five years had received her B.A. in English Literature from FIU, completed law school at Notre Dame, worked with the U.S. Department of State, and landed a position at the prestigious MDO law firm. Still not content, she continued searching for the perfect position and at 24, got her dream job as a compliance lawyer with Laureate Education, where she holds the position of Assistant General Counsel.

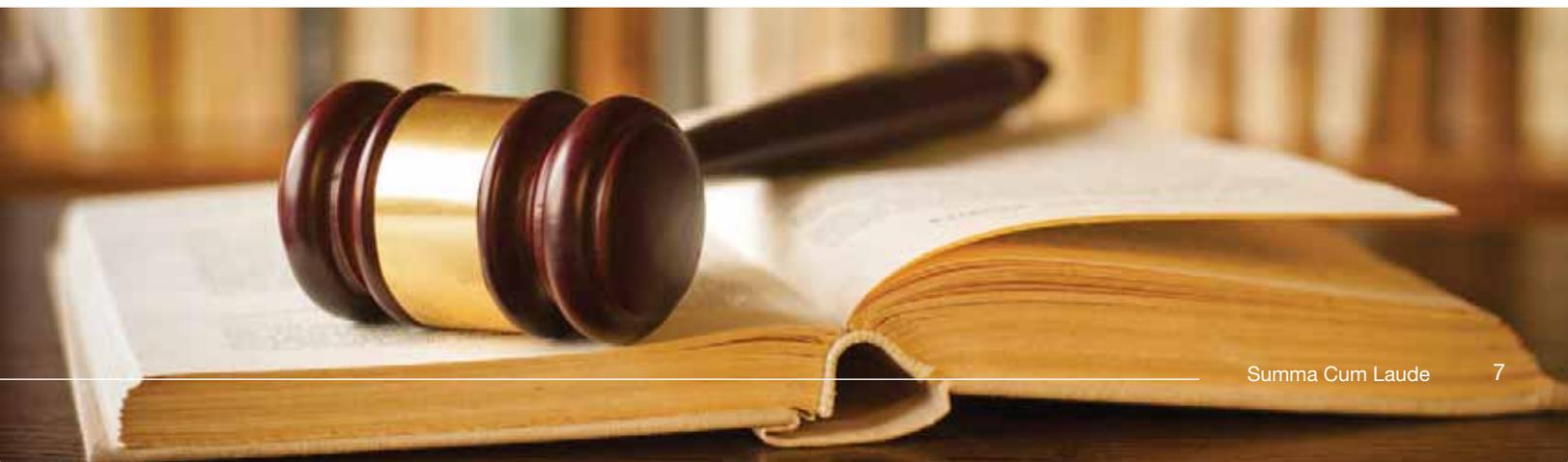
From a young age, Capaldo knew that she wanted to be a lawyer, but not a conventional one. A Miami Cuban-American, she had felt connected to the international community and planned to use her J.D. to prepare for a career in diplomacy. This path seemed set after her stint with the State Department for a year after graduating from FIU. However, after she finished law school her priorities shifted and she now holds what she considers her dream job. It allows her to do the things that she loves: travel the world, practice a unique type of law, and teach about ethics. “After I landed my first position [in MDO] as an attorney in the private sector I just never looked

back,” she remembers. She thrives at Laureate, where she represents the company globally and educates university partners on international and American laws.

Ana’s impressive record is a tribute to her diligent work ethic, intelligence, and drive. Capaldo has made a name for herself through hard work, a willingness to do the unconventional, and a helping hand from the Honors College, which she credits with teaching her to explore a subject deeply. The socratic and unconventional pedagogy encouraged her to learn by asking questions, participating in discussion, and thinking beyond what the textbook taught.

Ana also walked away with something far more valuable than academic skills: relationships. Indeed, her first job was in the FIU Office of Finance and Administration, courtesy of a professor she met in the Honors College. And as a young FIU graduate, Capaldo got the coveted position with the State Department through her relationship with a diplomat-in-residence at FIU. “Honors gave me the skills, but more importantly the connections, to help make me successful today,” she reflected with a deep measure of gratitude.

Having received so much from the Honors College, Ana already is giving back. She has participated in various panels and events, and was a keynote speaker at an Honors symposium. She is involved in the Honors pre-law club, and also mentors several students “I love meeting people, I love connecting people, I love helping people to meet others and get where they need to be,” she enthused, as she shared her vision to be a role model and stepping stone toward student success. The Honors College remains for her very much a thing of the present, a foundation that continues to play a role in her life. “In the end,” she says, “it all comes back to Honors.” ▣





OUT OF THE SHADOWS:

Gretchen Scharnagl Shines in Honors

By Adam D. Gorelick

Very young children take a primordial delight in making abstract marks on paper. Inevitably, however, the rationality police step in to compel youngsters to render objects instead. Such was the damage inflicted on kindergarten dropout Gretchen Scharnagl, whose teacher complained that while Gretchen was supposed to draw a fire engine, all she ever did was scribble. Family discouragement about pursuing art as a career also held her back, as did the demands of adulthood and parenting later on. Despite this circuitous path, Sharnagl went on to become a talented featured artist as well as an instructor at FIU for the Honors College and the College of Architecture + the Arts. But she still harkens back to that early discovery, the “ecstasy of creation...the purest moment of what it felt like to scribble as a child,” as the catalyst for finding her way to her true calling.

Scharnagl always had an inclination toward engaged creativity. She did two years as a biology major at the University of Miami, worked as a retail manager, and eventually became a full-time volunteer guru at her children’s elementary schools. Whether focusing on the intricacies of biology textbook illustrations, the ideal visual presentation of retail space, or scenery backdrops and bulletin boards for her daughter’s 3rd-grade class, Sharnagl eventually acknowledged the energy and concentration that these creative

activities brought out in her.

At 38, Scharnagl returned to school, this time for a master’s of fine arts at FIU. With the tuition for one course, a Christmas gift from her husband, she enrolled in a drawing course and found she relished the instruction of professors Bill Burke, Manny Torres, and, in religious studies, Lesley Northup, whose courses on myth and ritual Sharnagl describes as some of the “juiciest classes an artist can take.”

She went on to show many drawings and installation and performance pieces at South Florida galleries, and to become a sought-after member of FIU’s faculty. For Sharnagl, the aesthetic lines are blurred between drawing and installation, between art and pedagogy, and between representation and an engaged ecological ethic. For her graduate show, she arranged countless Christmas-tree trunks, denuded of branches, standing stark and vertical. Though this might qualify more as a conceptual sculpture installation, she approached the piece as a line drawing. She claims that her dislike for installation art actually led her to become an installation artist, as she challenged herself to approach the medium. Through her studies, she discovered the simple and precise expression of meaning that Japanese gardens evoke, and the transformative power of installation space.

For Sharnagl there is a synergy

between her artistic approach to social issues and her pedagogical strategies. In one class, for example, her students decided to invent their own project. They “liberated” abandoned shopping carts and converted them into mobile organic gardens, then donated them to homeless people. In another, she found that her students had an affinity for comic books, and she initially challenged them to abandon that style. However, an association with Miami Children’s Hospital (MCH) provided the perfect outlet for their preferred art form. Sharnagl’s class embarked on creating a comic coloring book. Instead of larger-than-life superheroes, the book’s heroes were pediatric oncology patients using the weapons of chemotherapy and other treatments in an epic battle against cancerous villains. These coloring books were given to MCH oncology patients, who loved them. Sharnagl’s students mobilized not only their artistic skills but also their networking, organizational, and altruistic sensibilities, creating a successful innovative project in service to the community.

In everything she has done, Sharnagl has embodied what the Honors College is all about: integration of disciplines, perspectives, and contributors. The humility of the ephemeral and the invitation to collaborate highlight a body of work tailor-made for teaching that inspires new paradigms. □

Student Notes

Three of Miami's "Top of the Class" high school graduates listed in the *Miami Herald's* "Neighbors" section have joined the Honors College. These outstanding young people are valedictorian **Sabrina Gato** and salutatorian **Amanda Estevez (Salut)** from Archbishop Coleman Carroll HS, and valedictorian **Daniel Gonzalez** from Monsignor Edward Pace HS. □

Honors College Full Stack Developer **Alastair Paragas** and CEO of Stela, led a team of Honors students to an international competition aimed at solving community issues. After winning 1st place in the local completion, **Alastair, Joel Greenup, Kennet Postigo,** and **Xavier Thomas** advanced to the Global Hackathon, competing against 40 teams of students from around the world. Their idea, Pptr, a cloud platform/software app designed to help pet shelters share and collect data into a single database, won them second place. Pptr has been widely accepted by shelters and is currently in high demand. □



Adrian Rahimi has been hired as a branch apprentice at Raymond James Financial as of this June. Rahimi was handpicked out of an extremely competitive pool. □

Alexis Chamorro will intern at PricewaterhouseCoopers, the only FIU student to do so in their NY office. He graduated in May with a B.A. in Accounting and will work in the company's Banking & Capital Markets Department. □



Claire Scott-Bacon's prestigious Law School Death Penalty Internship has been renewed for another year. □

Rebecca Garcia spent her summer on the only academic archaeological expedition currently working in Jerusalem. Led by UNC Charlotte adjunct professor of archaeology Shimon Gibson, the dig on Jerusalem's Mount Zion has been investigating an early Roman mansion. □

Amanda Vaccarella, a Biology and Anthropology major, took first place in the undergraduate category at the 2015 FIU Biomedical and Comparative Immunology Symposium. Biology major **Lazaro Mesa** won first place (undergraduate) in the Oral Presentation category. □

Demetrius Villa heads up the High Speed Rail America Club, advocating, researching, and promoting high speed rail technology. The group plans to film a documentary funded by Kickstarter. "The American Train" will be set in Florida, a state that can owe most of its modern existence to rail. Watch Demetrius' message to FIU President Mark Rosenberg at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeYTHTP_oa0 or visit <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1682189695/the-american-train> □

Daniela Cadena has landed a fellowship with the Demeter Entrepreneurs Support Network, which helps entrepreneurs to build successful businesses that create and share value in low-income countries. □



Dana Mekler is now with Ashoka, the largest network of social entrepreneurs worldwide, with nearly 3,000 Ashoka Fellows in 70 countries. □

Darlene Ramos has been offered a part-time paid research position with Dr. Jorge Riera Diaz as a result of her ARCH project. □

Daniela Molina has won the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship. She will use the funds to study in France. The Gilman scholarship is a nationally competitive scholarship from the US State Department. □



Daniella Bernal was recently featured in an edition of *FIUSocial Media*. The 4.0 junior mechanical engineering Honors student started at FIU at age 16 and founded the Aerospace Engineering club, which came in 6th of 75 teams in a model rocket competition. She is now working as captain of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers NASA student launch competition team. □

Stephanie Sepulveda has been interning as the newsletter editor for the Miami-Florida European Union Center of Excellence. □

Veronica Plazas has landed a job with Royal Caribbean as a Financial Analyst. She was one of several “quality candidates” (in RCCL’s words) sent to interview with them by our Career Services Center. □



Lorraine Apolis and **Francesca Bocarossi** were among the first graduates in the university’s history to earn the Global Learning Medallion. Apolis earned hers working in the U.S. Embassy in the Philippines, helping people with immigration. She also traveled throughout Cambodia and Vietnam with the Honors College’s study abroad program. She plans a career in the foreign service. □



Jonathan Bursztyn, an Argentine exchange student in the College of Engineering and Computing, received \$1,000 after presenting the best innovative media business idea at the #PantherCage – a Shark Tank-style event hosted by the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Bursztyn’s idea

will be entered into the International Innovators Cup competition sponsored by the Scripps College of Communication at Ohio University, where student teams from around the world compete for a prize of \$5,000. His winning idea was a new messaging app. □

Know a brilliant high school student who should join the Honors College?
Contact Rachelle Metcalfe at: 305-348-4100 or Rachelle.Metcalfe@fiu.edu

THE KICKSTARTER

By Rodney Castillo



Of late, highly specialized knowledge seems to be the academic norm, and it is difficult to find individuals who, despite the unforgiving demands of life, are nonetheless able to excel in various fields. However, Renaissance man Jose Laphitzondo, an Honors College student who graduated this summer, has successfully linked academics, sports, and community involvement.

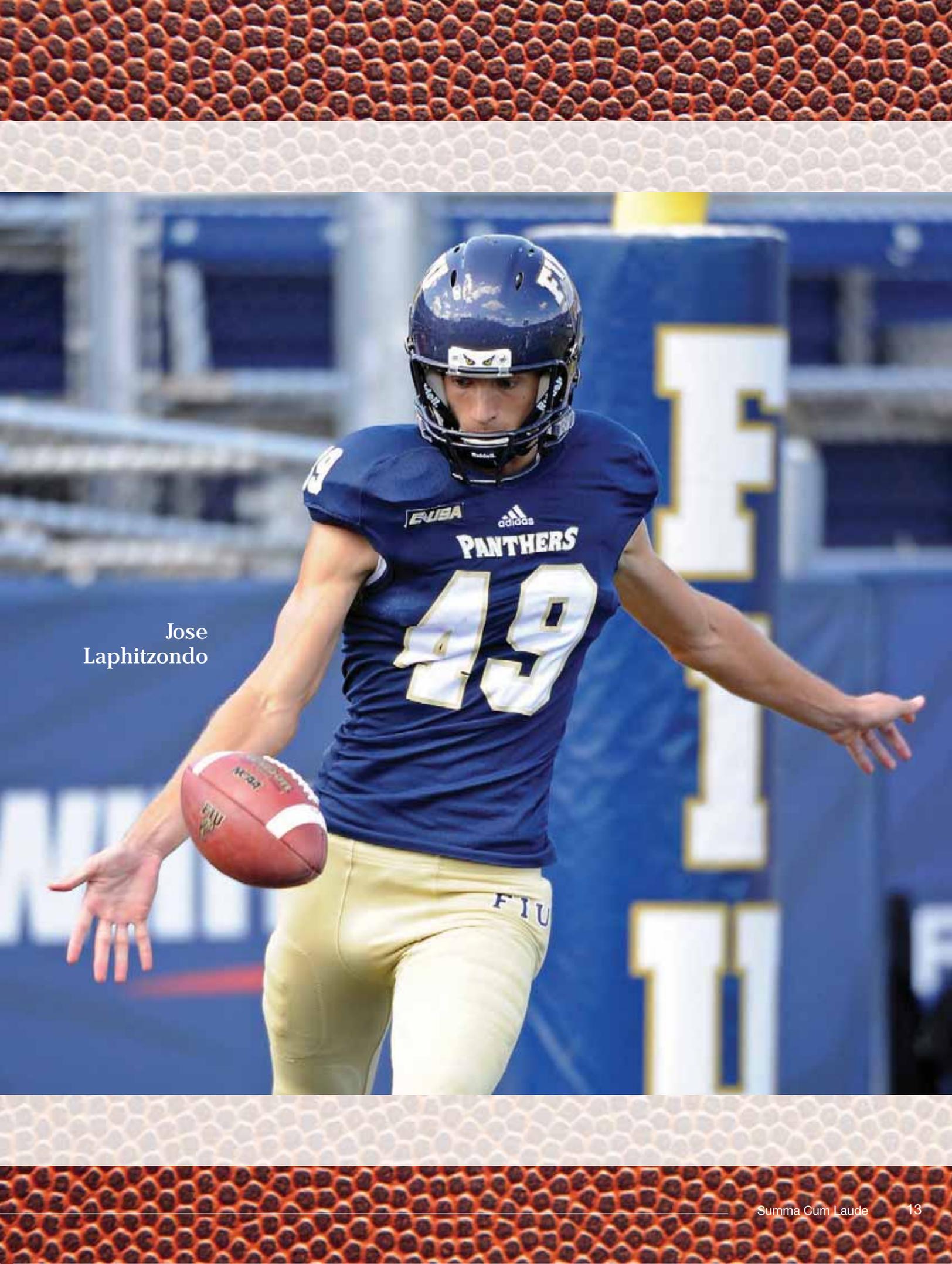
An international student from Argentina, Jose comes from a family with a passion for sports. His dad played rugby, so naturally Jose developed a passion for it. At FIU, he became captain of the rugby team. His drive to excel took him beyond intramural sports to the larger stage of college football--a sport he knew nothing about until he moved to the U.S. Last year, he handled the Panthers' kicking and punting.

Laphitzondo joined FIU's Honors College as a sophomore, on the recommendation of a friend. He found that the emphasis on originality and self-expression made Honors courses a perfect match for his personality. He was elated to find himself among like-minded students who shared a creative approach to life and a passion for community involvement. In addition to his academic and sports responsibilities, he became heavily involved in community projects in Sweetwater, joined the Honors Investment Portfolio organization, studied abroad in China, and served an internship. He also loves music—everything from the Beatles to Andrea Bocelli.

With his heavy involvement in sports, service, and academics, we wondered if Jose had time for a social life. He smiled, admitting that juggling football practice and course work was tricky, but was clear that spending time with his family and friends was a priority in his life, saying, "I see my family as my most important asset."

He has learned a couple of important lessons along the way. From his father, he learned the importance of approaching everything he did wholeheartedly. Panther Camp taught him how to balance responsibilities. And football imparted discipline. "That" he said, "and never be late. You do not want to be late to football practice."

Graduating with a double major in Finance and International Business, as well as a minor in Hospitality, Jose is determined never to be complacent, and to always look for ways to improve: "Be proactive, get the most out of it. Time flies by and you should not waste even a minute of it. But above all, follow your passion." □



Jose
Laphitzondo



Amira Ishoof is this year's recipient of the Dean's Excellence Award, the College's highest honor. Amira has for years dedicated herself to empowering young people and providing a voice to minority communities. The first in her family to attend college and an engaged mother of two children, Amira has boldly managed balancing motherhood, education and a meaningful civic life. Her service in South Florida includes serving on the Miami-Dade Asian American Advisory Board scholarship host committee, and being a founding member of both GenerationEngage in Miami and EmergeUSA, a national organization helping new American communities engage as U.S. citizens. Clearly undaunted by being out in front, Amira also was a founder of the City Year Miami Women's leadership luncheon, an event that has raised over \$250,000 to help support the placement of more tutors, mentors and role models in the highest need schools in Miami-Dade. She was also one of the organizers of a unique memorial to Nelson Mandela at the Arsht attended by over 500. A top scholar, she is the first Honors student to enter the 3+3 program with the College of Law. □

Elizabeth Hanly's Creative Nonfiction class held a well-attended public reading, "Perspectives," in Everglades Hall on Tuesday, March 31. Students read powerfully moving stories of their own lives and of those from whom they had obtained oral histories. □

The Honors Investment Portfolio club (HIP) reports in its most recent newsletter that in the spring 30 new students joined the organization. Of those, 18 invested in the Honors Investment Fund, with individual contributions averaging around \$100. Unlike many investment clubs, HIP manages a portfolio of real, not virtual, securities. Members found the Wednesday Roundtable meetings, where the focus is on interpreting markets and developing trade ideas, particularly engaging. HIP is developing marketing and professional materials that were created thanks to the generous contribution of Roger B. Figueroa. □

Former long-serving FIU president **Modesto A. Maidique** is teaching an Honors seminar this year. Maidique is best known as the visionary leader who took FIU from its status as a small regional commuter school to a national powerhouse, but not as well known is his love of teaching and the impressive credentials he brings to it. Maidique, whose course is titled "Lessons in Leadership," is a 3-degree Phi Beta Kappa graduate of MIT; he has also held academic appointments at Harvard and Stanford. His expertise comes not only from his academic work, but is also rooted in his experience as co-founder of the Semiconductor Division of Analog Devices, Inc., as CEO of Collaborative Research, a genetic engineering company, and as senior partner in Harbrecht & Quist Venture Partners. Maidique holds three U.S. patents for semiconductor devices and his "The Art of High Technology Management" is one of the best-selling articles ever published by the *Sloan Management Review*. He has written or

co-authored numerous books and journal articles, including *Energy Future*, a New York Times Best Seller. □

Honors was well represented at the annual **Outstanding Student Life Awards**.

The Outstanding Service Award went to pre-med major **Francesca Bacarossi**, a consistent leader in the Honors College, the Global Living Learning Community, and Alternative Breaks. The **HEARTbeats A Cappella** group took home the Shining Star Student Organization Award. The group has also recently competed nationally--the first time FIU has been represented at the International Collegiate College A Cappella Competition.

HEARTbeats' student director, **Kamila Manzueta**, won the Spirit Award for her outstanding leadership of the group. Kami also received the Honors College Citizenship Award this past fall. The Sophomore Leadership Award was presented to broadcast media major **Amanda Guerra**, an Honors College Dean's Citizenship Award recipient, peer mentor, and Panther Camp facilitator. Anthropology major **Rebecca Garcia** won the Kaplan Prize. Rebecca volunteers as a note-taker for students with disabilities, assists with the FIU Career Fair, and helps struggling peers improve their writing skills. She also received \$1500 to work on an archeological dig last summer in Israel. Lest anyone think that Honors students are only geeks hiding out in the library, let it be noted that out of a total of 21 undergrad Spirit awards, Honors students won 29%. □

Again this year, four Honors students attended the Pan American Round Table of Miami, where they were awarded scholarships. The happy awardees were **Ana Moraga, Claudia Moraga, Giselle Garcia**, and **Yasmin Arias**. □



Students from **Professor Hanly's "Developing World" cinema course** took to the streets as they curated film exhibitions all over Miami. They chose films that they felt were particularly important and

found unexpected but welcoming locales in Miami to show them. Venues included churches, bars, Shake-a-leg students, a wall in the Design District, and an art center in Opa-Locka. "When will you be back?" the folks at Opa-Locka asked. An intimate bar in South Miami hosted a "Night of Columbian Comedy" and served Columbian food and drinks for the occasion. Some audiences were touched; others were outraged. At one event, an argument broke out after a showing of a film on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the end, critical thinking won the day as a participant acknowledged that his comments had been based on reflex rather than research. □



Students from four Honors classes spent an evening of participatory culture at Vizcaya recently as part of the "Ode to Your Zip Code" poetry contest created by WLRN; O, Miami; and the Knight Foundation. There, they took the least lyrical idea of home—the zip code—as the basis for Haiku-like poetry. Honors friend Richard Blanco chose the winners. In a second event, John Bailly's second-year City As Text Project encouraged students to use geographical spaces to consider culture by conducting a detailed exploration of Vizcaya and reflecting on the experience through poetry. The results of the project are available at www.fiuhcitaly.wordpress.com and www.fiuhcfrance.wordpress.com. □



Gretchen Scharnagl's class "When Animals Are Not Animal/When Humans Are Not Human," participated in the "Plus One" art exhibition at the Deering Estate, presenting a consideration of human bodies combined with animal forms. Using costumes, masks, sound, performance and oral narrative, students momentarily transformed themselves, embodying the power of symbolic creatures in an intimate act of totem animals, animal guides, or chimera self-portraiture. The students considered as motivation the interpretive depictions of the fauna that historically resided and traveled through the Deering Estate. The festival also featured Honors instructor **Pioneer Winter** performing a non-traditional dance duet, EBB/FLOW, on a canoe in the Boat Basin with Marissa Alma Nick. Finally, Winter's 2nd-year students exhibited their approach to the idea of Inhabiting Other Lives through repurposed LEGO block installations. This project, guided by artist-professors, took students on several visits to the Estate to tour and interact with curatorial and naturalist staff. The students created abstract as well as representational manifestations of historical lore and natural elements. The resulting site-specific works can be found in unexpected places around the Estate. □



Ralph Rios

Holding Up the Other End of Medicine

By Jenyer Paez

The axiom “reach for the stars” rings with hope, inspiration, and possibilities motivating students to excel. Rarely, however, does a student take it literally. Ralph Rios, was an average Cuban-American kid, the offspring of two hard-working immigrant parents, and a dreamer with a vision and the will to persevere. Now, he is soaring the south Florida skies, if not the Milky Way, in his Beechcraft Bonanza. It’s been a long flight from his humble beginnings to his current role as Vice President of Professional Services at West Kendall Baptist Hospital.

Ralph knew early in life that he wished to help people and make a difference in their lives, but he had no idea how to put that into action. “Naturally, I adopted the pre-med track when I started at University of Florida, but I feared selecting biology as a major because I didn’t see myself isolated in a laboratory. I considered human nutrition as my major for a time but ultimately discovered and fell in love with physical therapy!” Rios said with a chuckle.

After graduating with his bachelors in Physical Therapy from UF, Rios began his career at South Miami Hospital as a physical therapist, where he embraced the life of a healer. But as much as he appreciated working with individual patients, he eventually came to care deeply about the challenge of facilitating excellent care for as many patients as possible.

“My mentor made a big impact on me. I took care of my patients one at a time, but he showed me how, as a leader, he improved the quality of individual care to forty patients simultaneously,” Mr. Rios recollected. “I truly believed I could achieve more providing quality healthcare on a larger scale if I was involved in Health Administration”.

Rios was soon offered a staff position in South Miami Hospital’s department of performance improvement, where he worked for three years. Still, his new role did not mirror his aspirations, especially with a position that could prove stagnant. Nevertheless, he proved quite the risk taker. In 2000, while serving as South Miami Hospital’s administrative resident, Rios became instrumental in the development of the hospital’s main services, planning hospitalization programs, and overseeing physician orientations.

At the same time, he earned his master’s degree in Health Services Administration from FIU. A year later, he became an adjunct professor in that program, discovering a true passion for teaching — another way to do good on a large scale. He also served on the Board of Directors of South Miami

Children’s Clinic, a free health clinic for uninsured children.

His dedication finally paid off when, in 2006, Rios was named Assistant Vice President at the hospital. In that role, he oversaw guest relations, respiratory and pulmonary services, and physician contracts. Before long, still young and passionate, he was named Vice President of Professional Services at West Kendall Baptist Hospital, where he lives his dream of serving the health needs of the community. He now directs clinical ancillary services such as laboratories, the pharmacy, nutrition services, rehabilitation, and the medical hospitalist program.

“West Kendall Baptist focuses on the needs of many young, hard-working families,” Rios said, comparing his goals with those of the hospital: “We aim to prioritize and improve the health care operations that respond to the needs of patients in our community.”

Few people have the opportunity to love their careers. Ralph Rios is one of them. He loves his career, and remains deeply committed to it. He also has a deep affection for his alma mater and joined the Honors College Community Advisory Board when one of his mentors in the hospital system, Javier Hernandez-Lichtl, had finished his term.

Hardly all work and no play, Ralph makes time for his friends and venturing closer to the stars in Miami’s tropical skies. ▣



Alumni Notes

Honors Runs FIU!



Birgitta "Gitta" Rausch-Montoto '00 is a proud graduate and employee of FIU. Her early career was in a local savings bank in her native Germany (Bankkauffrau). Arriving at FIU in 1995, she pursued her interest in global affairs by earning a Bachelor of Business Administration with a focus on International Business. Through the Honors College, she studied abroad in Spain, where she earned certificates from the Universidad de Alcala and Universidad de Santiago de Compostela. In 2013 she graduated from FIU's College of Education with an M.S. in International

and Intercultural Education. She is fluent in German, English and Spanish. Gitta was employed in 2004 as the Executive Assistant to Dr. Modesto A. Maidique, then was appointed Chief of Staff to the Provost. From 2009-2015 she served as Chair of the Commencement Committee for over 80 graduation ceremonies. This spring she assumed new responsibilities as Director of the Office of Faculty & Global Affairs (OFGA), where she can now focus on her passion for international affairs, coordinating a comprehensive internationalization plan for FIU. In her spare time Gitta sings with the Church of the Epiphany choir and early music groups. She is married to her Cuban-born husband Tony, with whom she enjoys playing mixed-double tennis. □



Lilian "Lili" Solorzano '04, '14, is the Manager of Advising in the Honors College at FIU. She oversees advising the College's 1600 students on course selection, career paths, and issues related to student success. She ensures that every student receives personal attention and

manages the College's accelerated and early assurance programs with the FIU College of Law and Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, and Lake Erie College of Medicine. An avid runner, Solorzano has run in both the Boston and New York marathons. She recently completed her M. S. in Physical Education. A life-long learner and researcher, Solorzano hopes to pursue a doctorate in the near future. She just celebrated her four-year wedding anniversary with her husband, Oliver, and together they are the proud parents of two sprouting panthers, Olivia (5) and Lorena (3), who attend the Children's Creative Learning Center at FIU. □



Andres Wu '13, is a musician/entertainer /event planner and promoter @ EYES Talent & Entertainment LLC - DJ_RA[W]. □

David Aviles '12, is now a purchasing consultant at Hospital Metropolitano Vivian Pellas in Nicaragua. □

Dana Miranda '14, has been interning in museum curatorship. The end result will be a display with artifacts, entitled "Five Defining Elections of American Political Identity: 1896, 1932, 1980, 2000." She was awarded certificates from the Hollander Collection for competency in collections management software, research, preservation, and display design. □

Andres Rodriguez '09, hesitated when it came time to open the envelope identifying his new, and unknown, residency assignment on "Match Day" at FIU's Wertheim College of Medicine. It turned into a double match as he formally proposed to girlfriend Meliza Frias, '08, who immediately accepted in front of the large, appreciative audience. □

Angelica Pizarro '13, is back in Miami after two years in Nevada and California, where she worked with veterans at the Navy base in San Diego. She is now pursuing a master's in Counseling, as well as certifications in Nutrition and Strength and Conditioning, taking a holistic and integrative approach. Her goal is a career helping vets in Miami by incorporating nutrition and fitness into her therapy practices, particularly as interventions to prevent suicide.

Kyle Weisenberg '11, is now an Assurance Associate at PricewaterhouseCoopers in Fort Lauderdale. □

Share your story at honors.fiu.edu/share



Valeria Paz '15, has been accepted into Dr. Mike Heithaus' lab for a Ph.D. in marine science. □



Robert Colom '13, co-producer and assistant director of "El mar y Él," had his film featured at the Cannes Film Festival.

Shortly before the screening, HBO Latin America made an offer on the film and it is currently available for streaming on HBO GO. □



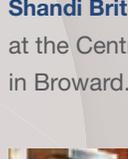
G. C. Murray, Esq. '08 received the "Charles E. Perry Young Alumni Visionary Award" at the Torch Gala this year.

Murray, Deputy General Counsel for the Florida Justice Association, was Homecoming King at BBC and received the Medallion of Distinction for his Civil Engagement. He has been selected as the youngest Fellow of the Florida Bar Leadership Academy, and is the youngest president-elect of the Tallahassee Barristers Association. □



TV reporter **Carolina Sarassa '05**, covered the crime beat in Las Vegas and has now co-authored *Dancing on her Grave: The*

Murder of a Las Vegas Showgirl, about Debbie Flores-Narvaez, who left a career in finance to hit the stage, then was murdered by an ex-boyfriend. Sarassa is a three-time Emmy Award-winning journalist now working as a news anchor and correspondent for MundoFOX National Network News in Los Angeles. □



Shandi Brito '08, is now working at the Centre for Internal Medicine in Broward. □



Humberto Bernardo Solano Costa '12, has been appointed an Angolan diplomat with the U.N. Security Council.

Arriving from Angola in 1999 with "\$800 in my pocket and a million-dollar dream in my heart," he earned his A.A. from Palm Beach State College, then earned a B.A. in International Relations and Political Science from FIU, receiving certificates in National Security, Latin America and Caribe, and European Studies. Shortly after completing his M.A. from the School of International and Public Affairs, Humberto was recalled by his government and trained in diplomacy before being sent to the UN. He is currently pursuing French studies at the Alliance Francaise in New York City, aiming at a degree in Public Administration. Humberto also is having a book published this fall on civics and social behavior entitled *Não Faça Isso* ("Don't Do This" in Portuguese). □



Jessica Meszaros '14, is now the Southwest Florida reporter for National Public Radio. □



Vignesh Doraiswamy '10, has graduated with an M.D. from USF. □

Yanet Ruvalcaba '15, has been accepted into the McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, and also for the University of Notre Dame's Graduate School Summer Research Opportunities Program. □

Raphael Bosse '09, has graduated from the University of Florida College of Medicine with a Ph.D. in molecular cell biology. Raphael was one of the first students in the USF-FIU Honors College pre-med program before FIU built its own medical school. □

Jessica Riggan '15, was accepted at both the University of Michigan and the University of Massachusetts into their Japanese Language and Literature M.A. programs. She has chosen UMass, which has offered her a teaching assistantship. □



Chavely Valdes-Sanchez '14, will be attending Penn State College of Medicine in Hershey, PA. She particularly wants to thank Professor Mary Lou Pfeiffer for helping her with her med school application. □

Raul Gonzalez, '97, now an associate professor of psychology, psychiatry, and immunology at the FIU Center for Children and Families, heads a research team investigating the impact of substance abuse on adolescent brain development. The team was just awarded a \$12.7 million grant from NIH, FIU's largest single grant ever from that agency. □

Know a brilliant high school student who should join the Honors College?
Contact Rachelle Metcalfe at: 305-348-4100 or Rachelle.Metcalfe@fiu.edu

HEARTS Notes



This summer, **HEARTbeats** was selected by President Rosenberg and FIU External Relations to record the Welcome Back video for FIU's 50-year anniversary. They transformed "Uptown Funk", and created "Panther Funk," a 90-second music video that exemplifies the Panther spirit. HEARTbeats plans for the school year include singing at the 25th Honors College Convocation, the Faculty Convocation commemorating FIU's 50 years, various FIU Commencements, and the Walk to End Alzheimer's in November.

The HEARTS Dance Club had its inaugural meeting in October. Led by student Luz Rodríguez-Basavilbaso Cubillo and sponsored by professor Pioneer Winter, the club comes at the perfect moment as FIU re-establishes its Dance minor program in the Spring 2015 semester. In addition to weekly student-led dance classes, club members also have the opportunity to learn from professional choreographers and scholars in the South Florida community. The HEARTS Dance Club also offers monthly university-wide symposiums, the first of which is Thursday, November 19 focusing on African dance and cultural imperialism. □

Palate is a student-run, interdisciplinary Honors College magazine dedicated to highlighting Honors students' skills and talents in every field, from the arts to the sciences, from business to engineering. Students may submit their work to the magazine and become published authors/artists. Students can also apply to become a part of the Executive Board/Editorial Staff if they are seeking to challenge themselves and develop their leadership abilities. □

The HEARTS saxophone quartet, now in its third year, is an audition-only group currently consisting of two Honors students, Jacob Erstling and Justin Merwitzer, along with one Honors Alum/Ph.D. Student, Garrett Pierman and another, non-affiliated student, Hernan Bustamante. Drawing influences from rock, funk, jazz and classical music, the ensemble is a flexible, experienced, and formidable musical force. With combined experience of nearly half a century, the HEARTS quartet pursues music as a truly Worlds Ahead, interdisciplinary musical experience. □

The HEARTS Drama Club is collaborating with the Wolfsonian Museum on their exhibit 'Margins of Error.' They are also working on a shadow-play performance of 'Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog.' Dedicated to fostering an appreciation for theatre in the Honors College, the club's activities include producing small performances, developing improvisation, and providing an information hub for theatre events in the community. Meetings are Fridays at 11:30am in EH 150; no drama experience is necessary. □

John Bailly's exhibition, "Cities I Don't Remember: Recent Works by John Bailly" was presented in July at the Chez Grace Gallery in Paris. The body of work for this exhibition was started as a project for Tigertail and the French Consulate in Miami at Vizcaya Museum and Gardens. John has also been appointed Artist-in-Residence at the Deering Estate, where he has a studio and a show in February. He will lead workshops roughly once a month, many with FIU students, using a "Deering as Text" project. □

John Tsalikis was named Best Teacher by students in the Masters of International Business program, a year after receiving the same honor from the Corporate MBA students. □

Artist-in-Residence **Leonor Anthony** has been featured in the *Contemporary Art of Excellence Book 2015*. The book launch, in collaboration with InVogue Art Gallery, was held at one of the Mayfair clubs, which promote contemporary art to their VIP members. □



Professor **Aileen M. Marty, M.D.**, of the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, will be

leading the Honors College's newest study abroad program, *One Health, Global Communicable Diseases: An African Exposure*, in South Africa next summer. Dr. Marty was recently given one of *Insight into Diversity* magazine's 100 Inspiring Women in STEM Awards, recognizing her recent work fighting Ebola in West Africa, as well as her 25-year service in the Navy and as a specialist in tropical medicine and infectious diseases. She also was a co-winner of the President's Council Worlds Ahead Faculty Award, the highest honor a faculty member can achieve at FIU. □

Mary Lou Pfeiffer has been named to the Advisory Council of the Vice Provost of BBC, where she will work on issues related to that campus and to the Honors College. □

Janet McDaniel has been named a member of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools' Superintendent's Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities. □

Pioneer Winter was selected to be part of WPBT2's popular series "10 Artists Under 40," and is being profiled by filmmaker Tabatha Mudra. With Jared Sharon, Winter wrote, produced, and recently premiered *Sirens in Space* — a "transmedia dance theater work" — at the Miami-Dade County Auditorium. The show offered the audience a chance to "enjoy an offbeat celestial "manhunt." In addition, Winter's show, "Pie Solo," his first solo work, was reprised this fall, blending video, tap dancing, and stripping into an intimate audience experience exploring religion and culture. □

Instructor **Tom Pupo** and **Daisy Nodal**, both Honors alums and architects, were featured in "Neighbors" on September 7, with their Wynwood start-up, "Moonlighter," a makerspace with high-tech equipment for creative collaborations. Previously, they had been finalists in the *Miami Herald* Business Plan Challenge. □



Saif Y. Ishaof, named by Poder Magazine as one of the "100 Most Influential People in

Miami," has been named FIU's Vice President for Engagement after serving as executive director of City Year Miami, a non-profit organization partnering with low-resource schools to keep students on track towards graduation. □



Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education **William "Bill" Beesting** retired from FIU last fall after 31 years of service. Beesting had been a Fellow of The Honors College since its precursor, the Honors Program, was first created in 1990. He taught Honors courses for over 20 years. He particularly enjoyed teaching freshmen because of their eagerness to learn and to express fresh ideas. He was also an exemplary mentor to many of his former students, including Honors College Alumna Kelsey Vaughan, who became FIU's first-ever Truman scholar. At Undergraduate Ed, he coordinated major scholarships, fellowships, and internships for Honors and other FIU students. He was also instrumental in developing FIU pre-collegiate programs for local high school students, such as Dual Enrollment and the Academy for Advanced Academics. His laid-back and easy-going spirit and willingness to pitch in on any project will be sorely missed at the Honors College. □

Gretchen Scharnagl has taken her project on comic books for seriously ill kids to the next level. The Super Health Heroes Community Comic Coloring books, produced by students in Scharnagl's classes, help young children understand and come to terms with the treatments they must undergo. This fall, there will be a "coloring event" in which anyone can participate, celebrating the second book in the series, which addresses the difficult lifestyle issues faced by children with diabetes. □

VOI SIETE QUI: The Grand Tour Redux

By Stephanie Sepulveda



This journal reexamines the concept of the Grand Tour in a contemporary and personal way as I traveled with other Honors students through Italy. As a 22-year-old Latin American woman, I in no way fit the conventional description of a Grand Tour participant. But this gave me the opportunity to use tradition and history to generate personal reflection and development.

Voi Siete Qui, or “You Are Here”—to me this phrase, which kept popping up every time I looked at a map, was a guide and reminder to appreciate where I am and what I am doing. Knowing where we are mentally and physically allows us to see ourselves in a larger context. I wanted not only to understand the history of each place, but also to see where I fit into those contexts — just like that dot on the map tells you where you are when you are lost.

FIRENZE: Feminism

She

You put her in a box.
You glued her to a stand.
You showed her to others.
You taught her to spin.
You forced her to follow the music.

She's not what you thought.
She won't let you stop her.
She'll dream bigger.
She'll work harder.
She does it for her, for them, and for you.

Reflection: I came into the trip thinking I would explore the representation of women in Italian art. But it wasn't until Florence that I actually got excited about it. At the Uffizi Gallery, we saw the traditional representation of women in art—the Virgin Mary, upper-class portraits. Strong women, who were a constant subject in classical Rome, were no longer subjects of serious art. It was not until Botticelli's "Birth of Venus" in the 1400s that representations of women started to change. And if women were underrepresented as subjects of art, they were even more absent as artists. In all of the museums and churches we visited, we had not seen a single piece by a woman—a testament to the historical, continuing exclusion of women. But finally, in the Uffizi, we saw works by Artemisia Gentileschi-- art by a woman, beautiful and powerful work that showed not only talent, but the ability to persevere and succeed in a world of constant gender discrimination. Is the inequality that women experience now as blunt and violent as what Artemisia endured? Not necessarily, at least not in the Western world, but it is still very much a problem. Women continue to be underpaid, to be sexually harassed, to be refused jobs, and to be denied equal rights. I see Artemisia as an inspiration. Her story and her talent highlight the ability of women to overcome obstacles. She is the only woman artist in that museum and her work is good enough to be hung next to a Caravaggio. Hundreds of years later, her story is an inspiration to all who are still victims of unequal rights.

ROMA: History and Permanence – Ancient Stone

My body isn't what it used to be,
My weathered skin with creases and cracks betrays me.
The scorching sun hits my back,
as I carry my brothers and sisters.
I've seen the others fall,
I've seen what the elements can do.
I know failure and I know permanence.
I've been robbed, and hurt.
I've been used, abandoned, and found again.
I watch you pass like I watched those before you.
You have changed, but you haven't.
Time has passed, but it hasn't.
I can't speak out loud,
But I let my appearance tell my story.
I see you today and I'll see the others after you.

Reflection: It would be hard to find a city more appropriate than Rome to study the passage of time and the relative permanence of cultures. That these ruins continue to stand within a modern city is a testament not only to the permanence of Roman architecture, but also to the permanence of Roman innovation. Every time I visited a new site, I was struck by the immensity of the structures. The Baths of Caracalla, for example, made a deep impression on me; although the place is in ruins, its sheer size is enough to stir the imagination. The thick, strong walls are dramatically contrasted with the intricate and delicate mosaics. Just a short time here takes me briefly back in time. From the Colosseum to the Forum to the Circus Maximus, the past becomes present in Rome, and you can live and breathe history.

VATICANO: Religion

A Wednesday at the Vatican: The early morning sun is scorching and the sky is perfectly blue. You can feel the tension in the air as St. Peter's square fills with people. We are there two hours early to secure a good seat. The plastic chairs that had been neatly assembled were still mostly empty. Men, women, and children from all parts of the world walk slowly, sleep still fresh in their faces, and take their seats in front of the imposing facade of St. Peter's Basilica. Suddenly, the entire square is full of people craning their necks to see if there is anything to see, taking selfies, and waving flags. A booming voice on the speaker system welcomes different groups in their respective languages. People clap and cheer. Pope Francis zooms into the square. Gone is the bullet-proof glass used by previous popes; it is just him—him and the people. The masses move like a wave, pointing and shouting, standing on chairs for a better look. His image is shown on giant screens on either side of the square as he stops to kiss babies and bless children. I cheer along with the others and try frantically to get a photo. Then the service starts, and the crowd becomes silent. Pope Francis speaks evenly and easily and I can somehow make out what he is saying in my very precarious Italian. He speaks of love and commitment, simply and openly. I cry, not just because of the words, but because of the ambience in that special place. Thousands of people had come countless miles to be there at that moment. Participating in a ritual that so many Catholics long for creates a moment in which to understand how religion and faith move people.

Reflection: “But, you aren’t even religious,” someone noted as we rode the bus to the Vatican to pick up tickets for Wednesday’s papal audience. I took a moment to consider why I wanted to go so badly. Was it to say I saw the Pope so it wouldn’t enter my some-day bucket list? Maybe. Was it for my mother who would have loved to attend? Also a possibility. But really, it had more to do with the idea of community and of the power that faith has to move people. I wanted to be part of that energy, to be part of this ritual that has united people for centuries. Oddly enough, that Wednesday at the Vatican was one of the highlights of my trip. The bond of love and excitement there was undeniable and contagious. We stayed after Pope Francis said his goodbyes and people started making their way out of the square. We stood there in silence for a while.





VENEZIA: Art

Reflection: Art is such a pervasive influence throughout Italy that you experience different artistic moments as you travel through it. But it was in Venice, the last leg of the trip, that we were able to see the connection between the history of art and art in the present day. For the Biennale, Venice becomes a city of art. Exhibitions from around the world gave us an opportunity to experience contemporary art after our long sojourn with tradition. Contemporary art installations set up in a 1000-year-old church were art in and of themselves. Art is not just something beautiful or personal to the artist (or the observer), but a window into moments in time and place. The multiculturalism that has been historically characteristic of places like the Roman Empire or Venice or our own Miami is now permeating cities everywhere. And it was in Venice where this became most evident.



CINQUE TERRE: Nature

It's still and clear, you can't see where it ends or begins.
It's silent and cool, you walk with your heartbeat and breaths.
It's uneven and treacherous, you look down and measure your steps.
It's hot and arduous, you stop to wipe your face and catch a breath.
It's long and painful, you keep trekking, step by step.
It's vast and infinite, you stand on the edge and take it in.

Reflection: Our days in Cinque Terre were a mental time-out, a moment to quietly reflect on our experiences on the trip. After weeks of studying history and art, we took a breather. From there, the horizon was a blur, and the blue of the sky melted into the blue of the ocean. It was silent. It was unlike anything I'm used to, particularly in Miami, where city life makes it difficult to spend solitary time with nature.

The hike was the hardest thing I've ever done, but it was also the most rewarding. We spent nine hours with ourselves and with nature. We did it together, but for long stretches there was nothing but silence as we focused on making it through the trail. We swam in the Mediterranean and explored small towns that have maintained their traditions while embracing tourism. In such close contact with the vastness of nature, you can truly know "you are here." ▣

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At **West Kendall Baptist Hospital**, we believe you shouldn't have to leave your neighborhood to receive world-class healthcare. That's why we provide state-of-the-art diagnostic, surgical, maternity and 24-hour emergency services for children and adults, all closer to home. With the most advanced technology and specialized services, we're showing our continued commitment to elevating care in our community.

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**West Kendall
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