Honors Giving

Honors Alumna and Board Member Gives $220,000

The Honors College is pleased to announce that Tina Vidal, the chair of the college’s Community Advisory Board, has donated a planned gift to the college that will total $220,000. As chair for the last three years, Vidal has led a revitalization of the board and substantially boosted fundraising efforts.

Vidal graduated from FIU’s Honors College magna cum laude in 2002 with a bachelor’s degree in international business and marketing. She subsequently earned a Master of International Business degree at FIU. The Honors College honored her with the FIU Alumni Torch Award in 2010.

Since graduating, Tina has served as Director of Corporate Operations for Pacer Health Company, which specializes in turning around financially distressed companies. She also co-founded ML Management Group, which manages the careers of mixed martial arts fighters. A serial entrepreneur, she has recently started a new company, Pooch Perks, a mail-order dog treats service.

Vidal credits the Honors College with educating her on how to effectively communicate with people from all over the world with different cultures, interests, and ideas. Through this knowledge, her entrepreneurial spirit was born. Tina’s planned gift to the College is a way of giving back and providing other students with similar experiences.
Our lead story in this issue announces something unique: The Honors College now has its own art collection! We’re not talking about a few paintings here. At present, the collection includes more than 30 pieces, together worth more than $150,000. And those numbers are growing almost daily. When we move into new quarters in a year, we will establish a true gallery for this robust assemblage of contemporary work, where students and visitors can both enjoy and learn from the artists and artifacts on display.

The collection fits well with our Honors Education in the Arts (HEARTS) program, another FIU Honors innovation. Through it, students are forming singing and instrumental music groups, and organizing clubs devoted to everything from books to fashion. At the same time, we are integrating the arts throughout our curriculum. As we confront an increased public perception that higher education is principally a form of job training, we want to ensure that our students graduate understanding the value of being broadly educated for their future careers. Having an appreciation of the arts is one key aspect of that approach.

With this issue of *Summa Cum Laude*, we begin highlighting the most recent and exciting news about the Honors College, discontinuing our earlier practice of devoting each issue to a theme. That was a good way to introduce the variety of the college’s activities—research, curriculum, engagement, globalism, entrepreneurship, and so on—but as the college and the magazine have come of age, it’s time to devote our publications to the constant stream of news we are generating. Whether it’s new programs, outstanding achievements, an enhanced university profile, or groundbreaking initiatives, there is plenty of Honors news for each issue.

Lesley A. Northup
Dean

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Letters to the Editor: Share your news, ideas and stories with us and our readers. *Summa Cum Laude* welcomes letters to the editor by e-mail to hcalumni@fiu.edu, by fax to 305-348-2118 or by mail to *Summa Cum Laude*, The Honors College, DM 233, Florida International University, 11200 S.W. 8th Street, Miami, FL 33199.
Honors Joins the Miami Art Scene

An honors college is expected to be many things—an advanced educational laboratory, a small community within a huge university, a factory for outstanding young leaders. No one expects it to be an art museum.

Beatriz Gerenstein, The Third Partner, 17” x 14” x 6”
Heberto Padilla 1932-2000
De su libro de poemas, Fuera del juego, 1968

"En tiempos difíciles"

A aquel hombre le pidieron su tiempo
para que lo juntara al tiempo de la Historia.
Le pidieron las manos,
porque para una época difícil
nada hay mejor que un par de buenas manos.
Le pidieron los ojos
que alguna vez tuvieron lágrimas
para que contemplara el lado claro
(especialmente el lado claro de la vida)
porque para el horror basta un ojo de asombro.
Le pidieron sus labios
resecos y cuarteados para afirmar,
para erigir, con cada afirmación, un sueño
(el alto sueño);
le pidieron las piernas,
duras y nudosas,
(sus viejas piernas andariegas)
porque en tiempos difíciles
¿algo hay mejor que un par de piernas
para la construcción o la trinchera?
Le pidieron el bosque que lo nutrió de niño,
con su árbol obediente.
Le pidieron el pecho, el corazón, los hombros.
Le dijeron
que eso era estrictamente necesario.

Le explicaron después
que toda esa donación resultaría inútil
sin entregar la lengua,
porque en tiempos difíciles
nada es tan útil para atajar el odio o la mentira.
Y finalmente le rogaron
que, por favor, echase a andar,
porque en tiempos difíciles
esta es, sin duda, la prueba decisiva.

But this is just what FIU's Honors College has become. Thanks
to the unflagging energy, enthusiasm and salesmanship of artist-in-
residence Leonor Anthony, we are now in possession of the first phase
of the Honors College Art Collection. To date, this includes some 33
paintings, sculptures and photographs representing the work of 28
different artists; currently they are appraised at more than $150,000. The
collection focuses on up-and-coming talent, largely but not exclusively
from Latin America. At the same time, it includes works by highly
acclaimed and well established professionals, such as the late Cuban-
American sculptor Tony Lopez.

For now, these provocative works adorn the walls of the Honors
College offices in DM, with two large pieces on loan to the City of
Sweetwater and the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine. However,
in 2016, when the college is slated to move into the fourth floor of
the stunning new Student Academic Support Center (now under
construction), there should be plenty of wall and floor space to display
the collection appropriately. When the Honors College building itself is
constructed, it will include a gallery to house the collection.

While Honors has long focused on the arts through our innovative
Honors Education in the Arts (HEARTS) Program, the collection now
allows us to incorporate an on-site teaching and learning opportunity
that we believe to be the only one of its kind among the nation’s
honors programs.

The next step is a professional catalog of the pieces in the collection,
with notes specifically designed to help observers, especially students,
understand the works and their place in the world of art. Our goal is to
use this unique tool as an entrée into the critical appreciation of art as
yet another value-added component of the Honors curriculum.

The collection is constantly growing and evolving. The university
and its extended community are invited to visit our offices in DM 233 to
review and enjoy this unique Honors acquisition.
A Dream Becomes a Reality
by Leonor Anthony

When I became the Honors College Artist-in-Residence in the summer of 2013, a Beacon reporter asked what I hoped to achieve in that role. My immediate reply was that I wanted to be able to obtain in-house works of art for the Honors College, even though this had probably never been done before. After a couple of meetings to make sure we didn’t break any rules, I was ready to start. With images of the Borghese and other famous collections in mind, I set out to forthrightly ask artists in exhibits all over the world to donate their pieces to what was to become our now amazing collection. It took a bit of selling skill at first, but it was not very difficult to convince them of the importance of the college and the value of their contributions.

My criteria for the collection were broad and inclusive. I wanted to feature high-stature artists from different countries whose work was recognized. Moreover, the works needed to represent the diverse styles of painting, photography and sculpture. Most importantly, they had to have the potential to teach and inspire the students.

The dream slowly became the reality that is now the Honors College Art Collection. The oeuvre includes artists from Canada, Argentina, Italy, Spain, Cuba (both expatriots and Cuban citizens), Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, the United States and more. Their styles range from abstract to pointillist, representation to surrealism, sculpture to installation, mixed media to photography.

With the support and advice of Carol Damian, then the director of the Patricia and Philip Frost Art Museum at FIU, the Collection began with the donation of a 14-foot statue of Jose Marti from my late friend and renowned Cuban sculptor Tony Lopez, which has been placed on permanent loan to the City of Sweetwater, where it now adorns the front of City Hall. The second piece was my own donation of a very large triptych that is on loan to the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine. From this seed, the Honors College Art Collection has germinated to fulfill my original dream—a collection worthy of our standards at the Honors College, representing diversity, commitment to the arts, ethical values, equality in diversity and imagination. My goal is a Collection worth more than $1,000,000.

As Miami becomes the art capital of the world, so is the Honors College becoming a leader in academically situated art collections.

For me, the most rewarding part of this journey has been the reaction of the students whose genuine interest and enjoyment of the art is apparent for all to see.

“My criteria for the collection were broad and inclusive. I wanted to feature high-stature artists from different countries whose work was recognized...Most importantly, they had to have the potential to teach and inspire the students.”
List of Works

Aguirre, Maggy, 35.5” x 27.5”, Broadway Anthony, Leonor, Infinite Dance Arguelles, Angelica, 31” x 39.5”, Silencio Tocamos Azucena, Maria Teresa, 30” x 30”, Revelation Bartolomes, Bartus, 27.25” x 39”, Icono-Graphyzines Burgoyne, Paul, 28” x 28” x 1”, Bandidos de Caramelo Camaduro, Alessandro, 27” x 5.5” x 3”, glass piece Comensana, Anny, 30” x 40”, The Memory Remains Coronel, Jose, 12” x 20”, Untitled Oil on Canvas Fuñes, Astolfo, 56” x 67.5”, Grey Portrait Garcia, Mario Adolfo, 33.25” x 28”, Romance del Caracol Gerenstein, Beatriz, 17” x 14” x 5”, The Third Partner Gonzalez, Katuska, 36” x 24”, Lectura de Geisha Gottschalk, Roxanna, 18” x 18”, Life Hernandez, Pedro, 16” x 23” x 6.5, Log Sculpture Lacau, Andres, 37.5” x 52”, Untitled Lopez, Oscar, 17” x 30.5” x 13”, Unconventional Fan Dress Lopez, Tony, Jose Marti statue Lopez Peralta, Ismael, 49” x 39”, Avenida Acosta y Calzada 10 de Octubre, La Vibora Moreno, Ana Carolina, 36” x 36”, Red Times, Black Dots Moreno, Ana Carolina, 18” x 24” x 12”, Ana’s Window, Blue Sky (Part I) Moreno, Ana Carolina, 18” x 24” x 12”, Ana’s Window, Blue Sky (Part II) Perez, Aimee, 19” x 14” x 8”, Free Fall Puppio, Paola, 19.75” x 30”, Downtown Yangon Rodriguez, Emilio Hector, 36” x 48”, Genesis 3 Rovira Ramirez, Josie, 40” x 30”, Alhambra Aqua Sasieta, Carmen, 37.5” x 36”, Vendimia Soca, Otalio, 12” x 18”, Red Sea Soca, Otalio, 12” x 18”, Yellow Fire Soca, Otalio, 12” x 18”, Purple Love Solorzano, Lissette, 31.5” x 21.5”, Malecon, Litoral Habenero
CAB Profile

A woman you can bank on

by Jenyer Paez

When it comes to helping those who work hard at turning their dreams into reality, Ruth Jimenez isn’t just a casual supporter. This dedicated FIU graduate is a shining example of altruism and perseverance. Those who have had the opportunity to spend even a few minutes with her know she has one clearly defined passion – she loves to help people.

Ruth Jimenez began her road to success with a bang. She graduated from high school at the precocious age of 16. After graduating from Miami Dade College, she began teaching elementary education as an intern for three weeks. However, like those of us whose first choices are quickly discarded, Ruth discovered that teaching was not where her heart lay, and she left her teaching internship to further advance her education.

At FIU, Jimenez switched from one major to another. At first, fashion design caught her attention, but this didn’t satisfy her unidentified yearning. She changed her major to business, where she discovered a deep interest in the banking industry. Still, she sensed that something was missing. Eventually, she transferred into Sociology/Anthropology, in which she finally earned her degree.

Considerable introspection led her to identify working individually with people as her real passion, and reawakened her interest in banking. She started at the bottom as a teller for AmeriFirst Bank, but felt impotent in that position, unable to relate to clients in the short span of time it allowed. She longed to work with and help each person she dealt with. After being recognized for her potential, she was promoted to customer service officer and, by the age of twenty-three, to manager at Florida International Bank Coconut Grove Branch.

Today, she is the Senior Vice President and Branch Manager of Coconut Grove Bank, where she oversees 16 employees. She has become known there not only for her exemplary leadership, but also for her proactive presence in her community, especially in supporting education.

“I love to build relationships and, in a highly competitive society, it is important to ensure that future generations form professional bonds with their predecessors,” Jimenez said during an insightful conversation about her 25 years of banking experience. Her desire to help students who want to transcend the boundaries of their education reflects what she gained from those who mentored her as she struggled to find her way in college and then rapidly ascended the ladder in banking.

“I want to give back to my community, and I think the best path is to reward students who have the same vision,” Jimenez says. To achieve this, she returned to her roots at FIU.

While at U.S. Century Bank, Jimenez reached out to the college after getting to know a few of its students, hoping to form a strong and productive relationship between the bank and the Honors College. “FIU’s Honors students always pull through. They are hardworking, determined, and committed. I believe in them,” said Jimenez.

In 2008, she established an award through U.S. Century Bank for Honors students who represented the ideals of excellence, achievement and leadership. She also became actively engaged in the Honors College and the wider community.

That very same year, the Honors College Community Advisory Board (CAB) named her as chair, recognizing her unwavering efforts in supporting the Honors community.

For nine years, Jimenez has nurtured the relationship between her banking profession and the Honors College, hosting exhibitions and fundraisers that helped Honors College study abroad programs, including two receptions for...
Costa Rican sculptor Jorge Jimenez Deredia. One of his works now adorns the entryway to the president’s house at Modesto A. Maidique Campus. She and her colleagues annually offer an Honors Hour to students, stressing what young people need to understand about handling their finances responsibly.

The longest-serving member of the CAB, Jimenez continues her efforts on behalf of Honors. She continues to believe that our mission and our students are worthy of the effort: “Coconut Grove Bank and I are convinced that FIU’s Honors College students are thirsty for knowledge and continuously demonstrate it through their community involvement – they are truly an investment that will pay off.”

Like George Bailey in the classic “It’s a Wonderful Life,” Ruth Jimenez is a banker for the people and someone whose caring touch in her industry would be sorely missed.
Development Notes

CAB Welcomes New Members

Sharon MacIvor has been a licensed veterinarian for more than 30 years and has opened six local veterinary offices. She currently owns and operates Dadeland Animal Hospital. Raised in Miami, she has a bachelor's from Barry University and earned her doctorate from Ross University. A humanitarian and social advocate, MacIvor has worked to teach respect for all living creatures and to provide guidance to the public in the quest to reduce the homeless pet population. She has done relief work throughout Miami Dade and serves on the Board of Directors for the Zoo Miami Zoological Society and the South Florida Veterinary Association.

Carlos Duart, CPA, is an entrepreneur and the owner and CEO of CDR Enterprises Inc. whose subsidiaries operate in transportation engineering, bridge fabrication, emergency management, insurance services and consumer retail. Duart is a proud alumnus of FIU, where he earned a master's in taxation and a bachelor's in accounting. He currently serves as a director of the FIU Foundation. He is also a member of the Dean's Advisory Council for the College of Engineering and Computer Science, is on the Steering Committee for FIU's first federally funded University Transportation Research Center, is an FIU Entrepreneur Hall of Fame inductee and is also an FIU Medallion recipient.

Dinners with Future Leaders

Dinner with Future Leaders brings professionals and students together for conversation and mentoring in a small, intimate setting. Recently, two Coconut Grove firms sponsored these events.

Kaufman Rossin

Kaufman Rossin hosted a lunch with twenty accounting and finance students in its Coconut Grove boardroom. Executives from multiple departments discussed a day in the life of a Kaufman Rossin employee, from the strict deadlines of the busy season to laid-back office get-togethers and events. Students participated in an engaging question and answer session that left a lasting impression on the firm’s CPAs. After lunch, the company’s human resources personnel asked to interview some students who were at the event for possible internships and full-time positions. One student, Martin Heid, whose interests lie mostly in hedge funds, has already been offered a full-time job when he graduates in May.

Coconut Grove Bank

The President and CEO of Miami’s oldest bank, Rick Kuci, hosted a roundtable lunch with aspiring business students from the Honors College. Kuci and a team of executives, including CAB member and former chair Ruth Jimenez, now Senior VP at the bank, shared their education backgrounds and personal experiences while finding their way into and through the world of banking. Students were inspired by the diversity at the bank, and the many different areas of studies it encompassed. Gift bags and business cards were distributed at the end of the events, and students were encouraged to reach out for advice and assistance throughout their education and careers.
New Honors Scholarships

Betty Reader Foundation
This generous fund, established in memory of Betty G. Reader (April 19, 1910 – May 20, 2009), a stalwart believer in the value of education, provides gap funding for students with demonstrated need. Recently, the undergraduate portion of the scholarship was designated for Honors students. This vital assistance will benefit up to 10 students from their first year through graduation. The awards are limited to Miami-Dade or Broward County high school graduates who demonstrate exemplary service to the community, preferably to the Jewish community.

Pamela Silva Conde Scholarships
Journalist Pamela Silva Conde established a scholarship to provide four first-generation, low-income business and journalism majors with the annual financial support they need to further their education. Silva Conde, the award-winning co-anchor of the TV news magazine, “Primer Impacto” (First Impact), is a six-time Emmy Award winner. Her afternoon show is one of the highest-rated programs in the United States and Latin America.

Alex Mantecon Scholarship
Alexis Mantecon, the owner and manager of MV Real Estate Holdings, graduated summa cum laude in 2000 from the Honors College and FIU’s School of Business Administration, with degrees in finance and international business. A member of the College’s Community Advisory Board, he recently commissioned Honors students to design a 30’x 60’ mural for the front of his new East Coast Building being constructed on the Miami River. His gift will benefit first-generation Honors students.

Honors First to 100%
For the third straight year, the Honors College was the first FIU unit to reach 100% participation in the Ignite Faculty-Staff campaign. The College was honored, along with several other units and individuals, at the annual Ignite breakfast in March.

Student Presents to the Community Advisory Board
In January, Noe Perrin Fontana attended the CAB meeting and talked about the Honors Investment Portfolio, a club that began by investing in a virtual stock portfolio, then raised its own money to open an active account. Noe, a sophomore majoring in finance, has been trading and investing since his senior year in high school. His approach focuses on macro-economic trends and technical analysis. His knowledge of market forces and trends impressed the board sufficiently that many stayed after the meeting to converse with Noe at length. Subsequently, he has been actively mentored by a number of board members.

Noe's goal is to educate and empower students to manage their own finances and become successful traders and investors. Currently, he works at the proprietary trading firm Fortress Capital as a Class A Trader. A multi-national citizen of the world, he brings a global perspective to his financial philosophy. He also enjoys reading, cooking, engineering and music production.

Noe began an internship with LUXE Properties in Coral Gables this February. When he completes three months at LUXE, the company will sponsor his real estate license course and state fees.
Alumni Profile

Hector Mujica...
In 2010, Mujica participated in the Google BOLD Immersion program, a special project designed to expose under-represented computer science and business students to the technology industry by providing them the opportunity to be immersed in a culture of diverse mindsets, cutting-edge technology and smart business. While building opportunities for leadership and development, Mujica worked alongside the Leadership and Development team, an internal crew focused on enhancing Google employees’ business skills and efficiency in advertising sales and user-friendly operations, marketing, and human resources throughout their roles and their general careers. After completing the program, he was accepted into the Google family as a Rotational Associate, meaning Mujica got a taste of every career opportunity within Google for 9 months. After being promoted twice, he now works as a social responsibility strategist, overseeing Google’s philanthropic engagement in the Pacific Northwest, Midwest, and Southern United States, as well as in Latin America. In addition, Mujica and his team also manage Google’s employee disaster relief activities, assisting responders by contributing layers of storm track and flood analysis, storm cloud animation, and on-the-ground imagery to Google Earth and Maps. As the public policy lead for Google’s U.S. Hispanic Outreach team, Mujica spearheads strategic partnerships with community organizations and policy groups and heads up access and digital divide initiatives.

Google has rewarded Mujica with the Global ERG Leadership Award for Community Impact. He is also going back to school after being selected last year to participate in the Executive Program in Social Entrepreneurship at the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

Mujica looks back on his Honors experience with gratitude, especially for Professor Steve Fain and his class, “Confronting America.” He considers it a life-changing experience: “That class really challenged me to go beyond the conventional ways in which we normally think of this nation and our foundation as a country. Dr. Fain really pushed us to explore, question, and critically consider questions about patriotism, justice, fairness and foremost, the American character. This was a theme that really resonated with me. It helped me identify aspects of my character that are intertwined with the American character—assets of patriotism that I, as a first generation immigrant to this country, hold true and dear. In my reflections on this course, I have come to conclude that America's character is resilient. It is just. And it can be reflected in each of our personal stories, regardless of our heritage or background.”

In his personal life, Mujica is committed to serving the underprivileged, particularly in bridging the digital divide and the education gap in many Hispanic communities. He serves on the global outreach board of Awakening Church. As an avid world traveler, self-proclaimed foodie, thrills enthusiast, scuba diver and aspiring kite surfer, he is always looking for the next adventure. One particularly big adventure is on his horizon: running for elected public office in order to serve the people of the United States. Few doubt that he will achieve this goal sooner rather than later.
Honors Alumni Run FIU!

Amazingly, almost a hundred Honors College alumni work at FIU, filling teaching, administrative, technical and executive positions. Clearly, our alumni are in demand! Our hiring authorities here at home have obviously recognized the intelligence, maturity, knowledge, and skills of the students who graduate from the college. In addition, some 50 of our students fill the ranks of FIU student and graduate assistants.

The Honors College itself has always employed our alumni at a very high rate—almost half of our full-time employees are FIU grads, and a full third are Honors alumni. We also make a point of hiring our students and depending on them for serious work, to assist with our workload, to provide a form of financial assistance and on-the-job training.

Believing deeply in the importance of professional development, we also have an excellent record of helping our staff obtain advanced degrees. For example, of our current staff alone, six have completed (or are close to completing) an advanced degree at FIU while employed—again, about a third of our full-time employees.

In this and future editions of *Summa Cum Laude*, we will be featuring some of these talented and promising young professionals.

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**Brenezza “Breny” DaParre Garcia**

*’05, ’07, is the deputy chief of staff for the Office of the President at FIU. Her responsibilities include oversight of the day-to-day operations of the office, strategic development of President Rosenberg’s annual schedule, coordination of all special events for him, and management of all constituent issues. She also serves as the Human Resources Liaison for her division, helps Rosenberg manage all non-university boards of which he is a member, and serves as one of the university’s protocol officers. She previously served President Modesto A. Maidique in several capacities, lastly as his executive assistant.*

Believing that “a woman who serves is a woman who leads,” DaParre is highly involved within the university and the community. She is a current member of FIU’s Young Alumni Council and is an advisor to FIU's student leadership honorarium, Order of the Torch. In the community, she holds active memberships with NASPA, Omicron Delta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, Delta Epsilon Iota, Golden Key, Order of the Torch, Order of Omega, Phi Sigma Sigma International Sorority, and Janelle’s Wishing Well Foundation.

DaParre holds a bachelor’s in political science and an master’s in higher education, with a specialty in leadership management. Always the learner, she is currently pursuing an Ed.D in Higher Education Administration, with a research concentration in crisis leadership.

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**Eric Feldman ’10,** "created his own job" as Global Learning coordinator at FIU, and is also an affiliated instructor with the Honors college. Determined to stay at FIU after graduating, he emailed all the office directors at the university about a job while finishing his master's program in Higher Ed. He started as grad assistant at BBC, advising on a global learning activities, and quickly established the need for a full-time coordinator. In that role, he runs New York Times roundtable discussions, international chats, and student organizations. He is particularly interested in the use of deliberation as a vehicle for global citizenship, and is a collaborator on several pending publications on related topics. You can watch Eric discuss his career at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvC49Qzkcy0

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**Masako Kubota**

*’09, (M.A., Asian Studies), is adjunct instructor of Asian Studies and Modern Languages, teaching Japanese culture and language. A former advertising executive and founder of a non-profit organization, Masako is highly regarded for her student-centered teaching and pedagogy. Beyond the classroom, she is committed to participating in campus activities that enrich the university experience, such as Japan Immersion Day and the Florida Statewide Japanese Speech and Skit Contest at FIU. This summer, she will visit an Ainu village to continue research on Ainu women. In 2010, she received the Award for Outstanding Service in Asian Studies.*
Honors Alumni Run FIU!

Honors Students Score Law School Scholarships

When the FIU College of Law named its “FIU Law Scholars” for 2013, four of the 13 awardees were Honors alumni—30 percent of the total group of scholarship winners.

Receiving a First Generation Scholarship from an anonymous donor was first-year student Kirk Villalon, who graduated magna cum laude in history. His goal is to practice corporate and real estate law.

Jose Campins, a third-year law student, was the recipient of the C.A.M.P. Justice Foundation Human Rights Scholarship. Also a magna cum laude graduate, Campins majored in political science.

The Genovese Joblove & Battista, P.A. scholarship was awarded to first-year student Kathleen Prahlert, who was president of the Honors College Pre-law Community (PATH) and graduated cum laude. She plans to focus on victims of domestic violence.

Kristina Bado earned her magna cum laude degree in political science and philosophy. She is a member of the FIU Law Review and active in the Women’s Law Society. A Betty Reader Scholar and 5K competitive runner, she will be working at Fogel, Rubin & Fogel in marital and family law.

What are you up to?

Entrepreneur Eddie Sierra ’06, is President of SIMA Financials Group, Inc. in Coral Gables, and also of Cortadito 305 in Ft Lauderdale. SIMA specializes in health and life insurance, financial services and accounting. Cortadito 305 is the regional distributor of Organo Gold Coffees and Teas. □

Giselle Heraux ’13, became involved with the Artists in Residence in the Everglades Internship program through Professor John Bailly’s Aesthetics & Values course, and is now employed in that organization as a communications assistant. She is also pursuing a master’s at FIU in Global Strategic Communications. □

Qi Chen ’09, worked as a Teach for China educator for four years, and was promoted to supervisor. He left Teach for China in the spring of 2014 to care for his wife during her pregnancy, and they are now the parents of four-month-old Hannah. He has accepted a fellowship with the Bari Lipp Foundation, through which he returned to the classroom and has been engaged in a number of significant education projects. □

Guy B. Cayo ’07, is now assistant administrator at Kindred Hospital Medical Center. □

Mundofox news anchor Carolina Sarassa ’15, has co-authored a new book on the 2010 Las Vegas murder of a young female attorney working as a showgirl. Dancing on Her Grave deals with the real-life drama of Debbie Flores-Narvaez, a victim of domestic violence. □

Ana Paola Capaldo ’10, is assistant general counsel of Global Ethics and Compliance at Laureate Education, the world’s leading higher education provider, with more than 75 universities in 29 countries across the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Formerly she was with the Miami-based boutique compliance firm MDO Partners, where she focused on corporate law, global compliance, and business ethics. Prior to law school, Capaldo worked at the United States Department of State in the Office of Foreign Missions, where she assisted in coordinating logistics during the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti. □

Humberto Solano Costa ’12, has been hired to work for the Permanent Mission of Angola in the United Nations. Solano Costa was recently invited to a ceremony in New York celebrating Angola’s election to a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council. A leader of the Angolan community in Florida, Solano Costa met with the Angolan Ambassador to the UN and other officials. □

Daniel Yellin ’14, is now teaching music at Sweetwater Elementary School. □

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Entrepreneur Eddie Sierra ’06, is President of SIMA Financials Group, Inc. in Coral Gables, and also of Cortadito 305 in Ft Lauderdale. SIMA specializes in health and life insurance, financial services and accounting. Cortadito 305 is the regional distributor of Organo Gold Coffees and Teas. □

Giselle Heraux ’13, became involved with the Artists in Residence in the Everglades Internship program through Professor John Bailly’s Aesthetics & Values course, and is now employed in that organization as a communications assistant. She is also pursuing a master’s at FIU in Global Strategic Communications. □

Qi Chen ’09, worked as a Teach for China educator for four years, and was promoted to supervisor. He left Teach for China in the spring of 2014 to care for his wife during her pregnancy, and they are now the parents of four-month-old Hannah. He has accepted a fellowship with the Bari Lipp Foundation, through which he returned to the classroom and has been engaged in a number of significant education projects. □

Guy B. Cayo ’07, is now assistant administrator at Kindred Hospital Medical Center. □

Mundofox news anchor Carolina Sarassa ’15, has co-authored a new book on the 2010 Las Vegas murder of a young female attorney working as a showgirl. Dancing on Her Grave deals with the real-life drama of Debbie Flores-Narvaez, a victim of domestic violence. □

Ana Paola Capaldo ’10, is assistant general counsel of Global Ethics and Compliance at Laureate Education, the world’s leading higher education provider, with more than 75 universities in 29 countries across the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Formerly she was with the Miami-based boutique compliance firm MDO Partners, where she focused on corporate law, global compliance, and business ethics. Prior to law school, Capaldo worked at the United States Department of State in the Office of Foreign Missions, where she assisted in coordinating logistics during the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti. □

Humberto Solano Costa ’12, has been hired to work for the Permanent Mission of Angola in the United Nations. Solano Costa was recently invited to a ceremony in New York celebrating Angola’s election to a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council. A leader of the Angolan community in Florida, Solano Costa met with the Angolan Ambassador to the UN and other officials. □

Daniel Yellin ’14, is now teaching music at Sweetwater Elementary School. □

Honors Students Score Law School Scholarships

When the FIU College of Law named its “FIU Law Scholars” for 2013, four of the 13 awardees were Honors alumni—30 percent of the total group of scholarship winners.

Receiving a First Generation Scholarship from an anonymous donor was first-year student Kirk Villalon, who graduated magna cum laude in history. His goal is to practice corporate and real estate law.

Jose Campins, a third-year law student, was the recipient of the C.A.M.P. Justice Foundation Human Rights Scholarship. Also a magna cum laude graduate, Campins majored in political science.

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Retiring But Hardly Shy

by Rodney Castillo

She describes herself as a mother, grandmother, friend and concerned citizen. Yet, to her students, Professor Mary Lou Pfeiffer, or just Mary Lou as she insists on being called, is much more than that—a mentor and an inspiration to thousands who have worked with her throughout the years, a visionary who defies the constraints of conventionality and definition.

A native of rural Ohio and a fierce Ohio State fan, early in life, Pfeiffer wanted to be an Olympic swimmer. In the 1960s, she explored her love for the water by surfing in California. She graduated from Stouder Memorial Hospital with training in radiological sciences, then obtained a magna cum laude A.S. in Biology, with a minor in Geology, from Tidewater College, Virginia. She was married for many years to a Navy pilot—an extreme learning experience in its own right—and raised two sons while living in a succession of fascinating ports, both foreign and domestic.

In 1976, Pfeiffer came to Miami, where she worked in mammography at Jackson Memorial Hospital and Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. In the 1980s, she helped set up four breast-care centers, and worked to raise awareness of breast cancer and other health issues, addressing the dangers of asbestos, for example, long before they became well known.

Restless and insufficiently challenged, Pfeiffer returned to school, receiving a bachelor’s and master’s from FIU in religious studies, a subject of deep personal interest for this very spiritual woman. Among her many memorable experiences, she particularly treasures having met His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Taking her concern for applied ethics another step further, she then earned an LL.M. (Master of Laws) in intercultural human rights from St. Thomas University School of Law in Miami. At the same time she pursued one of her many artistic interests, as a stained glass craftsman who had studied with masters of the form.

Knowing her multidisciplinary background and enormous success as an adjunct instructor in religious studies, the dean invited Pfeiffer, her former student, to become the college’s second full-time instructor in 2001. She was promoted to senior instructor in 2012. Experienced and enthused about online pedagogy, Pfeiffer pioneered online courses in Honors; like all her courses, they remain extremely popular and fill to capacity. She was also among the first to teach biomedical ethics at the university.

Pfeiffer’s interest in human rights was sparked by the poor treatment of Native Americans, which she investigated in her M.A. thesis on preserving and raising awareness about Miami’s Tequesta sacred sites, of which she has become a well-known and outspoken advocate. Ahead of her time again, Pfeiffer wrote about the Miami Circle and similar archeological finds before anyone else had declared them sacred. Her book on these sites is currently under review for publication.

Pfeiffer was also invited to work on the U. N. Sub-Commission on Human Rights and the Preservation of Sacred Sites. In that role, she met with Native American leaders fighting for indigenous rights.

As a long-time member of the Conch Republic, Pfeiffer developed an interest in the Truman Little White House in Key West, where she formed an excellent working relationship with director Bob Wolz and with Roy Gonas, of the Tweed Foundation. That organization has helped her bring Honors College students to the Harry S. Truman Symposium, where experts discuss such topics as the nuclear legacy, environmental crises, international conflict and human rights.

This summer, Pfeiffer will be retiring from full-time teaching, which will enable her to spend more time with her sons Scott and his family in Hawai’i, as well as with Chip and his three children here in Florida. However, she will continue to teach for Honors part-time.

For Pfeiffer, the best part of teaching has been the relationships she builds with her students. She counsels her students to always listen; to think before speaking; to be positive forces; and to always be advocates, not adversaries. Universally, her students cite her caring, involvement, and interest in their growth. Many of her students remain in contact with her years after graduation. Her most important legacy is the changes she wrought in their lives, inspiring them to develop as individuals, as learners and as citizens.
Honors Senior Instructor John Bailly was one of only 10 finalists for the fifth annual New Times “MasterMind” awards, presented in February by the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts. He was chosen from more than 120 nominees in the creative arts. The New Times applauded “Bailly’s semi-abstract paintings and mixed-media work [which] are his attempts to answer his own questions about cultural identity and origin.” For more information, see http://blogs.miaminewtimes.com/cultist/2015/01/mastermind_2015_finalists.php. Bailly also conducted an exciting visual art workshop in Wynwood, “Observe. Reflect. Create,” done first as a HEARTS event. The college is considering repeating the exercise for staff.

Pioneer Winter has been extremely busy. He was awarded a 2015 John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Arts Challenge Grant for his “Grass Stains” project. Said Winter, “Grass Stains seeks to provide a platform for South Florida-based performing artists to come together bimonthly to create site-specific work throughout Miami that is free and open to the public.” The artists will be able to work one-on-one with noted Guggenheim Fellow and Bessie Award-winning artist Stephan Koplowitz. The Pioneer Winter Collective has also co-produced with JUMP!, a Gaga workshop led by San Francisco-based choreographer/dancer and certified Gaga instructor James Graham. Finally, Winter’s dance on film, Heterodox, reflecting on the 1969 Stonewall riots, was featured as an outdoor wall projection at Inkub8 for the Screendance Miami Festival. In February, he and opera tenor Santo Martin performed “A Proper Marriage” at the Lightbox at Goldman Warehouse as part of the FilmGate Interactive Media Conference.

Elizabeth Hanly travelled to Cambodia and Vietnam with our last group of study-abroad students. She reports that “initially I had wanted to talk to those elder women who had managed to survive the genocide of the Khmer Rouge and were now teaching dances thousands of years old to young people, dances at the heart of Cambodian identity and history. I wanted to bring the stories of these women home to Honors. I did that, but I also learned of Phare Ponleu Selpak, a world-class art school started by a handful of artists who had become friends as boys in a refugee camp. They are doing this, as one said, ‘because we didn’t want any child to be as lonely as we were.’ Phare includes a music program and visual arts and theater programs. Most spectacularly, it includes a circus school. Nearly every child at Phare has been trafficked, orphaned, or abandoned, and now they are artists winning prizes internationally.” Hanly would like to try to bring the circus to Miami.

Affiliated Instructor Evan Northup has been named Major Gifts Officer for the FIU Libraries, where she will develop fundraising strategies to support the library system.

Janet McDaniel is being nominated to serve on the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Superintendent’s District Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities. McDaniel, the mother of two children with autism, is a recognized advocate for children with special needs. McDaniel also supports FIU’s EMBRACE program (Embracing Comprehensive Health Care for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other Neurodevelopmental Disorders) http://hcn.fiu.edu/resources/programs/fiu-embrace/index.php.

Gretchen Scharnagl’s exhibit, “Wall Piercing,” was featured at Miami’s Pyramid Studios. The exhibition included four ephemeral installations evocative of loss, growth, nature and pain.
NestGen Rocks
Environmental Art

This fall, the Honors College collaborated with artist-in-residence Leonor Anthony to kick off Art Basel with an original and fresh ecological art exhibit. The NestGen project, hosted on the grounds of the Frost Art Museum and toured by President Mark B. Rosenberg and his family, took flight as Honors College students assisted more than 30 internationally established contemporary artists to set up the exhibit. The goal of the project was to raise awareness of environmental preservation through creative interpretations of “nests” that convey the precarious phase the Earth is now entering.

Anthony and artist Bartus Bartolomes, who curated the project, and curatorial associates Katiuska Gonzalez, Astolfo Fuñes and Paola Puppio Zingg, felt that the bond between artists and students was a major factor in developing the project. “Each one of us has created our own beautiful piece of music to the best of our ability, individually. Yet, together we created the most beautiful of all symphonies!” said Anthony, mixing metaphors a bit. Their collective endeavors landed a four-page article in Florida’s ARTDISTRICTS magazine, a top publication promoting the visual arts.

In addition to the curators mentioned above, participating artists included Alessandro Camaduro, Othon Castaneda, Ivan Castillo, Giovanny Ciucci, Carlo Marcello Conti, Torhasa de las Casas, Domingo DeLucia, Sandra Garcia Pardo, Rebeca Gilling, Ismael Gomez Peralta, George Goodridge, Roxanna Gottschalk, Sylvia Heisel, Rudolf Kohn, Allison Kotzig, Maura Lucchese, Belen Moreno, Nila Onda, Aimee Perez, Cesar Rey, Miguel Rodez, Emilio Hector Rodriguez, Ricardo Sanchez, Ruben Santurian, Scott Taylor, and Patricia Thrane. “Helping these artists voice their ecological concerns through art is more than just an act of service, it is supporting education by creating an interaction between academics and the environment,” said student Adrian Suarez Avila.
A freshman in FIU’s Honors College, I am majoring in international business. I was born in Paris, France, and both my parents are from Istanbul, Turkey. Being raised in Boca Raton most of my life, I felt estranged from my Turkish heritage. While I often visited my family’s native land, at home I would rarely interact with other Turks and the chances of meeting one was next to none. The only opportunity I had to speak Turkish was at home or when I visited Turkey, as I did all of summer last year.

The only local place I would be with other Turks was during the few cultural festivals hosted by the Florida Turkish American Association (FTAA), where I began to volunteer for several years. In September, I received an email from the president of the FTAA about a Youth Leadership Congress program being held by the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA). Although one of the requirements for acceptance was to be an upperclassman or a graduate student, she still insisted I apply. I have always been interested in politics, even though it is not my major, so I completed the application. This included several prompted essays about my views on Turkish-American relations and, additionally, a statement as to why TCA should make an exception by admitting a freshman to their program.

I was delighted to find that I had been chosen to attend the 1st Annual Turkish American Youth Leadership Congress. This exclusive event took place in Washington, D.C., for four days, with thirty other Turkish-American delegates from across the country. The participants I met and came to know attended Harvard, Cornell, Columbia, Penn, and several other universities. As I was one of the youngest participants (most were 22-30 years old), it was a particularly enlightening experience to be surrounded by ambitious people who shared my culture and were already taking on the world.

The Youth Congress included discussions and meetings with members of the U.S. congressional staff and the Department of State, American and Turkish diplomats and scholars, representatives of Turkish-American community organizations, and leaders in U.S.-Turkish relations. During the program, we were given briefings, video chats, Q&A sessions, and lunch with various officials and professionals. These included the White House correspondent, Chief of Staff members, lawyers, the Democratic Staff Director, renowned professors, Congressmen from Tennessee and Virginia, and a North Carolina Representative. We actually had a Capitol Hill briefing room reserved for us! We were also able to visit the Turkish Embassy and have a discussion with the diplomats there. A TV crew from the Voice of America arrived on the last day to interview us for international broadcasting about our experience.

During our government briefings and D.C. Think Tank briefing, we discussed Turkey’s position in history and the critical position it is in currently. Stressing the upcoming year, the speakers focused on how they believe U.S. and Turkish relations can be strengthened. In the U.S., Turkey doesn’t have a strong voice in politics. As an American and a Turk, I felt it was important to recognize both countries’ political stances and views. Reviewing both sides of the heated debate about Turkey’s actions and position in the Middle Eastern conflicts, I had a chance to gain a much deeper understanding about the complications of foreign relations.

Overall, this wonderful opportunity allowed me to get an insight into the political relations between different nations and to gain a stronger understanding of my heritage. I was particularly impacted when the President of TCA advised us to “think globally, and act locally.” As a Turkish American, I believe that change occurs at the grassroots and we need to take small steps initially, as this opportunity has done for me.

The past decade has had ups and downs for Turkey, and being able to witness them led me to increase my involvement, getting involved locally and applying to a D.C. program to examine the political relations between Turkey and America. I have volunteered annually at cultural fairs hosted by the Florida Turkish American Association. I also believe I have impacted some of my non-Turkish friends. Even my Colombian best friend’s favorite dish to cook is Turkish and she is applying for a study abroad scholarship to go there!

This experience has helped me understand my cultural identity and grow my passion for learning about culture with an open mind—the reason why I am majoring in international business. I plan on interning in Turkey during a summer while I’m still in college and also studying abroad in China as a way of immersing myself in a completely new culture.

Lest you think my only interest is in my native land, I also assist with Special Olympics and its promotion. After I graduate, I envision myself continuing to travel a lot and taking up a career that involves intercultural relations on both the business and educational levels.
Student Notes

Traditional Japan came to FIU on Dec. 15 in the form of the 14th annual Japan Immersion Day. The event was hosted by the Asian Studies Program and the Department of Modern Languages. Students were offered a variety of workshops, including origami crafting, sushi making, martial arts and calligraphy. The swordsmanship portion was hosted by the Institute of Budo Studies in Miami, under the direction of Frank Nieves, an FIU alumnus. Assisting Nieves sensei was the treasurer of the FIU Alumni Association Benjamin Sardiñas, and two Honors College students, Rodney Castillo and Jenyer Paez, senior students at the institute—who have been practicing Iaido, the art of drawing and cutting with the Japanese sword, and Kendo, a combative style of Japanese fencing, for several years. In addition to practicing at the institute, Castillo and Paez started the Honors College Kendo Club, through which they aim to expand cultural and academic relations between other university kendo clubs in the U.S. and Japan’s International Budo University.

Honors students Alastair Paragas (lead) and Joel Greenup headed up a team of four students that won the Smart City Hackathon locally and will now compete at the global level. They won in a field of professional developers, hackers and domain experts, as well as other student entrants. The team represents Pttr, a web hub service that helps connect shelters, adopters and stray animals throughout south Florida. Visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pttrapp.

In February, Pamela Lopez presented at the 13th annual Alumni of Color Conference, hosted by the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Lopez was the first applicant from FIU ever selected to participate, and one of only a few undergraduates. Lopez’s contribution to the conference, the theme of which was The Other Narrative: Celebrating Untold Stories, was a 45-minute lecture that included case studies and original poetry concerning the culture of violence in ostracized minorities. Lopez’s attendance was made possible by a generous gift from an anonymous Honors supporter. Evan Burr has made a video of Lopez’s fabulous slam poem about the Honors College. View it at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIcDQs0XY8I.

Yunet Garcia, Lianet Garcia, and Nico Pasquariello have all secured internships with Castellon & Company, Certified Public Accountants & Consultants. Originally looking only for one intern, the company was so impressed with the candidates that they hired three. Said Carlos Castellon, “I wanted to thank you for your help with the process. They were all amazing.” Yunet and Lianet are twins, with the same major (accounting), the same career goals and even the same GPA.

Helen Rivas interviewed FIU alumna Nicole Fernandez on-air on FIU’s Radiate FM. They discussed FIU’s Homecoming festivities. A video of the interview with FIU’s student-run advertising agency, BOLD, can be found here: http://youtu.be/GqTCk81hEFM.

Leyamis Diaz, who will be studying abroad in Cambodia and Vietnam this summer, has been named the Hiliary Echo Douglas Memorial Scholar by the Fund for Education Abroad. She also received an FIU Office of Study Abroad scholarship for the trip. Diaz a senior broadcast media major, says, “I can’t wait to make a difference in the lives of others by teaching students at a local school. I can’t wait to experience the culture, the people, the food and get it all on camera.”

Alexandra “Ally” Mayhew and Julianna Pettinger are proud members of the FIU Swimming and Diving team, which recently won the Conference USA title. Swimming and diving is the first athletics program to win a conference championship since the university joined Conference USA in 2013.

20 Summa Cum Laude
This summer, Daniel Irigoyen will travel to Vero Beach, Florida for a full-time internship with Kimley Horn and Associates, a leading engineering firm with more than 60 locations in the United States, specializing in civil engineering design and development projects. The company has regularly appeared on Fortune magazine’s yearly list of “100 Best Companies to Work For,” placing No. 25 in the 2015 rankings. Irigoyen will work with experienced engineers on several roadway projects on the Treasure Coast, where he will have the opportunity to improve the transportation needs of his hometown community. He was also a finalist for the FIU Student Employee of the Year award.

Jenyer Paez has been awarded the Miami Bayside Foundation Scholarship for his academic achievements and support of education at the City of Miami. At the Freedom Tower, Paez spoke on the value of education and the importance of providing students the financial opportunities to achieve their dreams.

Three Honors College students—Daniela Blagoeva, Alisa Pazos and Corey Ryan, spoke at a panel presentation by the FIU European Studies Program on “FIU Students’ Experience in France.” They discussed their expectations before doing study abroad in France and their experiences while there. The program was attended by the French Consul.

Clair Scott-Bacon is part of Professor Stephen Harper’s death penalty legal clinic, where she works every Monday for about 4 to 5 hours. Says Claire: “Having such an opportunity at the undergrad level is a once in a lifetime opportunity. I believe that I am the first undergrad student to participate in the clinic.”

Kristine Perez of Aesthetics & Values 2015 and Marilyn Loddi of A&V 2013 installed the Art Store exhibition at the Center for Visual Communication. Kristine is volunteering as part of the A&V Service Learning Project. Loddi is currently employed at the CVC. Photo by Barry Fellman.

Honors students score 2 of 4 top P&G internships
Honors students Monica Calderon and Barbara Calderon were among only four finalists for prestigious Proctor & Gamble internships. After a final round of interviews in Cincinnati, Monica was offered the position. Said P&G’s representative Eduardo Moreno of Honors’ participation, “We noticed a remarkable improvement year over year in the quality and quantity of students. This could not have been done without the Honors College’s excellent collaboration.” The students were introduced to P&G at a “dinner with future leaders.”

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 Spring Break trip to New York

Over Spring Break, HEARTS offered its inaugural trip to New York. Appropriately, the trip was all about arts and culture. The nine students experienced their first trip to New York, and the excitement was palpable. They packed as much as was humanly possible in the trip’s short five days: private guided visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (voted favorite place), the Guggenheim, and the Modern Art Museums; two Broadway shows (Matilda and Les Miserables); visits to the New York Public Library, Grand Central Station, the Empire State Building, Times Square, Central Park, Lincoln Center, Radio City Music Hall, Rockefeller Center, the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, the New York Stock Exchange and the 9/11 Memorial. Even the weather was on their side—highs in the upper ‘50s and lows in the mid-‘30s. Some students managed to build a snowman, while others had a meal in Chinatown. As for food, they might want to abstain from hotdogs for a while. The travelers came back exhausted and exultant. HEARTS hopes to offer this wonderful trip on a regular basis.

Fashion Club

Yashodhara (Yashi) Suri and Nishita Aswani have started FIU’s first Fashion Club, part of the HEARTS program. Within a month, they had more than 130 followers on Instagram. The club will help its members apply for internships and attend networking events to get them involved in the high-paced and very competitive world of fashion while they are still in college. They have been invited to this year’s Brickell Fashion Market, which brings together independent retailers, fashion designers, craftsmen and artists from the city of Miami. They plan to collaborate in 2015 with fashion shows, and are collecting clothes for charities. In Spring 2015, they hope to make club trips to attend Miami Fashion Week, the Art Deco Weekend Fashion Show and Style in the City.

HEARTbeats

HEARTbeats, the Honors College a cappella choir, recently performed at a dinner for the FIU Foundation Board. The HEARTS Sax Quartet also played. The performers were introduced by President Rosenberg, who noted that FIU has one of the top Honors Colleges in the country and highlighted the college’s uniqueness in adopting Honors Education in the Arts as an important ideology. He made special note of the fact that none of the performers are music majors. He introduced faculty mentor Janet McDaniel, who then introduced the student performers individually. The group received numerous compliments from board members, and a $1,000 donation from the Foundation. The HEARTbeats also performed recently for the Friends of the Uffizi museum, and for their president, Contessa Maria Vittoria Rimbotti. Their new logo was designed by member Jackson Fadely. To view HEARTbeats in action, visit go.fiu.edu/heartbeats.
“If an honors student lived even one semester in that [honors-only] residence hall, he or she was far more likely to finish the honors curriculum than a student who had not had the honors residential experience. The statistical differential was stunning, more than 60 percentage points.”

Honors Has Its Own Residence Hall

The quote above, by the founding dean of the Barrett Honors College at Arizona State University, starkly highlights the value-added of exclusive honors housing. Still, until this year, Honors students living at FIU were spread out among several halls—Lakeview for freshmen, Everglades for other undergrads, Biscayne Bay at BBC, and randomly in other dorms. But this past year, Everglades Hall became the first campus residence to house only Honors students. Living there are 340 Honors College members, along with 20 global residents. This is a major step forward.

Educators have conducted significant research on the advantages of dedicated honors housing. Their conclusions highlight Honors-specific reasons for developing a unique, stand-alone, honors housing community. These include the proven rise in student success for students in dedicated living-learning communities, especially at very large universities and especially for first-generation-in-college students. Indeed, one study revealed that, across the country, living with more experienced members of Honors is also a major advantage for first-year students.

A key factor in this success is the sense of community and commonality established among students in the same residence, where they can work on class projects together, help each other with tough courses, interact with faculty, form organizations, and enjoy Honors-specific programming.

At the same time, establishing dedicated housing demonstrates the university’s commitment to the Honors community and can serve as a model of excellence for other living-learning communities. Parents like it, too!

When asked whether they would be interested in living in Honors-only housing, 75% of FIU Honors College students were enthusiastic about the idea, citing community and convenience as their top reasons. Others noted that it would make them feel recognized for their accomplishments. One just said it would be “awesome.”

Honors students demand unique learning and social opportunities. Programatically, they have repeatedly asked for more Honors housing events, which had been difficult to schedule under the past model. They also require more study space. In Everglades Hall this year, we have been able to provide many co-curricular activities that were not possible in the old, disconnected system. For example, Resident Life coordinator Jason Atherton and Honors College coordinator Umer Rahman have created a cross- departmental collaborative lecture series at Everglades that includes the Center for Leadership and Service, Global Learning and Student Affairs. “Honors Hours”—frequent workshops, colloquia, and information sessions—can now be efficiently conducted for larger groups of students in their own living spaces.

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Our experience this year has proven the effectiveness and value-added of an Honors residence, where students continue their learning beyond the classroom. The students endorse it enthusiastically. This is a particularly beneficial experiment as we look forward to eventually obtaining an Honors College building of our own that will include housing, administrative and classroom spaces. The outlook so far looks extremely promising.
Wish Book Series

In March, the FIU Magazine published an article highlighting the Honors College’s outreach to students in the Miami Herald’s Wish Book series, which calls attention to South Floridians in need of assistance. The article outlined our success in helping three students spotlighted in the series over the last three years. It’s a story with many happy endings.

Three years ago, the dean noticed that a young woman featured in the Wish Book was a high school senior struggling to complete her assignments on her guidance counselor’s office computer. Her wish was for a laptop so she could write and conduct research at home. Stephanie Flores was an excellent student and, to the dean, a fine candidate for the Honors College. The gift of the laptop and a small amount for connectivity solved Flores problem and brought her to FIU and Honors, where she is now an FIU Golden Scholar.

The following year, Wish Book participant Jazzmin Peluchette was set on attending UM, but when she was suddenly stricken with a rare, crippling autoimmune disease and its accompanying expenses, she turned to FIU. Accepting our offer of entrance into Honors and housing in our residence hall, Everglades, the finance major has now settled into our more accessible campus and high-powered academic community.

This year, a young robotics expert named Nathan Hagood appeared in the Wish Book and immediately stood out as yet another excellent Honors candidate. Strongly recommended by the On It Foundation, Hagood was seeking money to pay for college applications. His top choices were Florida Polytechnic and the University of Florida, but after the dean approached him with a scholarship offer, he quickly chose to be a proud Honors Panther next fall.

Part of the Honors College’s mission is “fostering integrity, responsibility and civility in tomorrow’s leaders,” as well as “mentoring and inspiring students to excel and flourish.” We like to think that our partnership with the Wish Book has helped us fulfill that mission by leading by example.

New Honors Application System

After much endeavor and hard work, the Honors College admissions application finally went live on my.fiu.edu. Now, current and incoming FIU students will have access to the Honors application from one location, and will experience a faster and more direct application process. Thanks are due to the PantherSoft team, working under Carlos Varona, that made this a reality.

2014 Dean’s Citizenship List

Tidjan Simpson
Karla Montejo
Kamila Manzuela
Melany Freiria
Amanda Guerra
Olivia Napper
Maia Zock-Obregon
Helbert Canales-Rojas
Rodney Castillo
Gabriela Balza

Homecoming Tailgate Winners

Out of FIU’s many colleges and units, the Honors College was chosen this year’s winner of the Homecoming Tailgate competition. The judges cited the open, welcoming character of our booth and the atmosphere of spirit and fun that it exuded. The prize was lunch for 10 students and staff with President Rosenberg at the Reagan House. It was a privilege and opportunity enjoyed by all.

Honorsnews
Aesthetics & Values

Recently, Professor John Bailly took his Aesthetics and Values class to the Deering Estate to work directly with artist Gerry Stecca, whose elaborate creations with clothespins have established him as an important South Florida creative force. The students discussed the creative process with Stecca and made their own clothespin structures as part of their study of art as social dialogue.

Honors Alternative Break

Melany Freiria, the site leader for the recent Honors Alternative Break in New Orleans, reports that the group of nine worked with the United Saints Recovery Project there. As volunteers, they tackled multiple projects aiding post-Hurricane Katrina recovery, a process that is still not all complete. They painted a home, gutted a house damaged by fire, painted colorful murals to brighten up a neighborhood full of boarded-up homes, and spent a day with Animal Rescue New Orleans, helping with their daily tasks of cleaning kennels and cages and walking and feeding the animals. Undaunted by bad weather, they learned how to use power saws, build up the courage to ascend extension ladders, and swing a sledge hammer, as well as the joy of helping others.

Elizabeth Hanly’s Creative Writing class held a public reading event, Perspective, at Everglades Hall on March 31st, 2015, where they showcased their literary talents and skills as writers of the creative nonfiction genre. To watch the student readings, please go to http://honors.fiu.edu/perspectives

Honors Hosts Two Events for MLK Celebration

Phyllis McEwen as Zora Neale Hurston

On Jan. 29, we were taken back to the time of the Harlem Renaissance. This year’s MLK program presented an opportunity to meet Florida’s most famous African-American writer, Zora Neale Hurston. The Chautauqua-style presentation featured actor/scholar Phyllis McEwen, enacting the author in full costume. It was followed by a 15 minute Q&A in character, and then questions to McEwen personally. Phyllis McEwen is an award-winning poet, actor, scholar and librarian who has resided in Florida for more than 27 years. This event was part of the 24th annual commemorative celebration of Martin Luther King day at FIU. The event was a great success, and the room was filled to capacity with more than 200 students and faculty.

Of Ebony Embers

On Jan. 21, the college hosted “Of Ebony Embers: Vignettes of the Harlem Renaissance” at the Wertheim Performing Arts Concert Hall. The chamber music theatre work included a musical score introducing jazz legends such as Duke Ellington, Jelly Roll Morton, Billy Strayhorn, Thelonius Monk and Charles Mingus, as well as concert music by Jeffrey Mumford and George Walker. With the assistance of master organizer Kalai Mathee, the college co-sponsored the event with FIU’s College of Law, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Architecture + The Arts, Undergraduate Education and Student Affairs.
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