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This issue focuses on innovation in Honors. We have been in the forefront of undergraduate innovative and entrepreneurial activity at FIU for many years, and now that the university is building those crucial areas of education, we find ourselves at the center of the effort, as you can see in the lead article.

The "nova" in “innovation” is Latin for “new.” Honors has always been a lab for exploring the new, and to stay ahead of the curve, we must also keep re-creating the College. Shortly, the College will have something else new—a new Dean. When I step down this summer, Associate Dean J.C. Espinosa will become the new Interim Dean of the Honors College.

Dean Espinosa is ideally and uniquely qualified to carry on the vision that has shaped Honors into a vital force at FIU and nationally. When I became Dean ten years ago, he was my first and most critical hire. As Associate Dean, he has reshaped the curriculum, developed a keen eye for excellent teachers, and played a large role in policy and planning. A true scholar, he is the socratic genius our students seek out for meaningful conversations. Along with our remarkably dedicated, overachieving staff, he is more than prepared to take the College to the next level in preparing tomorrow’s young leaders.

When I was in college in the amazing ’60s, the Byrds had a hit with Pete Seeger’s song from Ecclesiastes—“To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.” Along with so many of my fellow baby boomers, I can see the season change and know that it is time to pass on what has been my purpose for over a quarter of a century. I have always said I have the greatest job in the world, and that it is remarkable that the State of Florida actually pays me to do it. I reckon the ledger now is even.

Please join me in giving Interim Dean Espinosa your best wishes and active support.
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN
We Need Your Help!

LEADING EDGE
Honors Innovates

HONORS AWARDS

ALUMNI PROFILES
Clair Scott Bacon
Tatiana Pandiani

REAL-WORLD HONORS
Internships Are Booming

ABROAD
One Health in South Africa
Making an Impact in Peru
Time Travel in South Asia

JOURNAL
One Student’s Path to the Light
WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Our 25-year journey has brought us to a pivotal moment as we prepare to move Honors housing and student support into an integrated, cutting-edge new living-learning community.
For the first time in its 25-year history, the Honors College has launched an ambitious—but critical—capital campaign. The $3 million+ goal is desperately needed for the College to take advantage of a key opportunity to strengthen its impact and advance student success.

As we announced in the last issue, we finally have a home for all our students in a unique and dedicated living-learning community in the MMC campus's newest residence hall. This represents the achievement of Phase 1 of our 10-year attempt to acquire an Honors College building, where students can live, study, collaborate, use labs, have easy access to advising and other support functions, and benefit from advanced programs.

For Phase 1 to succeed, however, students have to be able to afford to live there. Living on campus is a life-changing experience, but only for those who can afford it. Thus, about a third of the proceeds of the campaign will create an endowment to provide housing and other scholarship assistance for deserving students.

Phase 2 now presents itself as the possibility of building out the open area under the residence hall to move student services offices, study rooms, and other Honors functions into a fully integrated Honors College building.

The benefits of such a unified space are well known. For example, the National Collegiate Honors Council, the international professional organization for honors, says that a fully developed honors program should include "suitable, preferably prominent, quarters on campus that provide both access for the students and a focal point for honors activity...including honors administrative, faculty, and support staff." Phase 2 represents a chance for us to create this kind of dynamic, innovative, inspiring community of shared goals, mutual support, and creative ferment.

FIU as a whole benefits as well. The University of Massachusetts, Amherst, recently erected a new, fully integrated honors building. Its construction, said Dean Priscilla Clarkson, "is an effort to bolster the university's academic standing and national reputation. [It] raises the level of the university. It will be a visible sign that the university is investing in undergraduate excellence."

Finally, we seek support for our many unique programs: undergraduate research, the Honors Edge innovation lab, the robust pre-med program, study abroad, and education in the arts, to name a few. Sponsorship can be recognized as named programs. Likewise, a wide variety of spaces in and around the new Honors College Building are available as naming opportunities, as are scholarship gifts.

We hope you share our dedication to developing a new generation of young leaders who not only claim academic honors, but are also honorable people.

$690,000 raised toward goal of $3 million

Our campaign website provides more information about our goals and our progress towards them. Please visit it at honors.fiu.edu/campaign
The Honors College by its very nature is a font of innovation. We have always been a laboratory for new ways of thinking, teaching, learning, and collaborating. Today, not surprisingly, we are at the leading edge of innovation at FIU. This shows up in many forms.

First, we have the leading undergraduate curriculum on campus in entrepreneurship, invention, and leadership. This fall, all freshmen will take a unit preparing them for a vocation to ingenuity. In the upper division, we are offering a record 9 classes in social innovation, disruptive technology, and design thinking. These include “Skunkworks,” a course that has produced competition winners and more than a few new companies. Leaders from Miami’s tech sector teach how tech and innovation affect urban areas, how to take a product from idea to prototype, and key background courses like law and entrepreneurship. Students can specialize in our unique Innovation and Entrepreneurship track.

Secondly, Honors pioneered classes in Social Entrepreneurship, led by business strategist and financial consultant Robert Hacker, former CEO of One Laptop per Child. Hacker’s work in Honors has blossomed into what is now StartUP FIU, a major initiative for developing entrepreneurship in the FIU and the South Florida communities. The staff at StartUP FIU includes at least two Honors graduates.

In addition, Honors has a leading role in implementing FIU’s prestigious Ashoka Changemaker Campus designation. Associate Dean J.C. Espinosa has been actively involved with the development of the Initiative, which stimulates innovation to foster transformational change in South Florida, and the Faculty Fellow who heads the program reports to the Dean of the Honors College in that role.

All this ferment has inspired Honors students to participate in competitions and workshops and to start their own enterprises. That same energy led them to create the Honors Edge Lab, where they prototype their ideas with 3-D printers, CNC laser cutters, and other leading-edge tech tools.

While Honors is rapidly innovating in other areas as well—for example, in pre-med education—the following pages provide a quick overview of our success in leading students toward a dynamic future as tomorrow’s inventors and entrepreneurs.
The Honors Edge

"Out on the edge you see all kinds of things you can’t see from the center." — Kurt Vonnegut

It has become a cliché to say that an honors education represents excellence. Things become clichés because they are generally true, and there’s no doubt that honors programs everywhere strive for excellence, and believe they have achieved it. Our Honors community is no exception: We know that we are constantly exploring, achieving and modeling excellence in our curriculum, our co-curriculum, our pedagogy, and our preparation of tomorrow’s leaders for the challenges they will face. But our students are not satisfied with being “excellent”; they are always pushing the edge of excellence forward.

“The winner’s edge is not in a gifted birth, in a high I.Q., or in talent. The winner’s edge is all in the attitude, not the aptitude.” — Denis Waitley

Our winning formula results because we do not simply admit smart students or students with high test scores. Rather, the most important attribute of an FIU Honors College student is attitude—grit, perseverance, and the embrace of risk. Many of our highest-achieving students have come to us with less-than-stellar scores, but with outstanding courage, enthusiasm, and tenaciousness. Consequently, most of what we do is student-driven, not imposed by faculty or staff. With the right tools, these young people imagine and create new businesses, new knowledge, new artistry, new applications, and new questions.

"Knowledge is an unending adventure on the edge of uncertainty." — Jacob Bronowsky

Honors students learn dangerously. They demand cutting-edge pedagogy, experimental courses that break the envelope, high-tech labs for inventing and creating, encouragement of their start-ups, opportunities to interact and shine in the larger community. They expect the unexpected, and they deliver it. To meet their demands, our courses incorporate problem-based learning, team projects, real-life scenarios, and extraordinary intellectual challenges. Our innovation lab—the Edge Lab—is an open, freewheeling, edgy space where students pursue their own projects. Powerful teams of Honors students have been regularly winning hackathons, shark tank pitches, and other competitions against graduate students and teams from top universities.

“There is no honest way to explain The Edge, because the only people who really know where it is are the ones who have gone over.” — Hunter Thompson

Honors College students have gone over that edge—an empowering, enlightening, transformative experience that makes them extremely valuable in the post-graduation world. Because of who they are and the emphasis our program places on critical skills—interdisciplinary teamwork, great oral and written communication, a critical and analytical mindset, poise and maturity—they have a strong competitive edge for jobs and grad schools.
**Life on the Edge**

Honors students and teams have been amazingly successful in the kinds of events that demonstrate innovative and entrepreneurial skill. Here follows just a short list of some of the recent winners and their projects.

**Johns Hopkins MedHacks 2.0** – Jackson Fadely, Hassan Zock-Obregon, Angelo Saraceno, Joel Greenup, and Gabriela Rivera finished in the top ten nationally with a fully functional prototype exoskeleton prosthetic leg. [http://hon.fiu.edu/medhacks](http://hon.fiu.edu/medhacks)

**Global DataFest Hackathon** – Joel Greenup and Alastair Paragas won first place regionally and second place globally for their app, PTTR, which links veterinarians, animal shelters, and pet adopters. [http://hon.fiu.edu/globaldatafest](http://hon.fiu.edu/globaldatafest)

**FistBump (Florida State University)** – Alastair Paragas won for Best Hardware Hack, creating music that changes based on the speed of a fist bump using a Myo armband sensor. [http://hon.fiu.edu/fistbump](http://hon.fiu.edu/fistbump)

**SoundStrike (University of Miami)** – Third place went to Alastair Paragas, whose software turns your instrument into a live working Guitar Hero setup. [http://hon.fiu.edu/soundstrike](http://hon.fiu.edu/soundstrike)

**HeyCuba Hackathon** – Angelo Saraceno, Annabelle Santos, Kerlin Michel, and Alastair Paragas were runners-up (with a standing ovation) for developing a cross-platform web browser for Mac, Windows and Linux as well as a mail server that used POP3/SMTP instead of HTTP, along with asymmetric key encryption, to allow internet users in Cuba to bypass blocked ports on the Cuban intranet. [http://hon.fiu.edu/hey cuba1](http://hon.fiu.edu/hey cuba1) and [http://hon.fiu.edu/hey cuba2](http://hon.fiu.edu/hey cuba2)

**FTHacks (Florida Institute of Technology)** – Kerlin Michel, Angelo Saraceno, and Alastair Paragas took second place for a mobile app and backend API server that streamed music using websocket-based streaming torrents instead of the conventional server-client model. This allows anyone to stream music on someone else’s phone, which could be hooked up to a car audio port or a bluetooth speaker. [http://hon.fiu.edu/metroboom](http://hon.fiu.edu/metroboom)

**Ellery (Stetson)** – Alastair Paragas snagged first place with a very modern alternative to MyFIU—a web app and backend API server that runs statistical analysis on students’ grades and performance, and also allows them to autoschedule to be enrolled in a class ahead of time. [http://hon.fiu.edu/ellery](http://hon.fiu.edu/ellery) and [http://hon.fiu.edu/ellery2](http://hon.fiu.edu/ellery2)

**Roam (Miami Dade College)** – The second place WatchDogs Privacy Hack winners were Kerlin Michel, Annabelle Santos, Mark Fajet, and Alastair Paragas, who built an augmented reality game much like Pokemon Go, but set in a post-apocalyptic world. [http://hon.fiu.edu/roam](http://hon.fiu.edu/roam)

**PhaseDuo (Florida State University)** – The First Place winners at the FSU Department of Scientific Computing Favorite competition were Kerlin Michel, Annabelle Santos, and Alastair Paragas. They developed an auto-summarizer for videos that not only summarizes the entire video but also finds buzzwords and key concepts on the video on the fly. The same vocabulary words are defined and explained. [http://hon.fiu.edu/phaseduo](http://hon.fiu.edu/phaseduo)

**MangoHacks ’17** – Awards for Best Social Good Hack, Best Design, and Best iOS App went to Tara Demron and Eliana Alba, whose MunchSquad mobile app helps restaurants sell leftover food to college students at a discount, and donates the rest to homeless shelters. The team is also a semi-finalist in the *Miami Herald* Business Plan Challenge.

**MangoHacks ’17** – The Best Social Good Hack, Best Design, Best iOS App, Best Domain Name, Best Hardware Hack, and State Farm’s Favorite were all awarded to Karla Alejandra Montejo, Mark Fajet, and Alastair Paragas, who developed Night Watch, a mobile app that detects dangerous drops in muscle tension, breathing rates and heart rates in people with epilepsy, sleep apnea, and similar conditions. [http://hon.fiu.edu/nightwatch1](http://hon.fiu.edu/nightwatch1) and [http://hon.fiu.edu/nightwatch2](http://hon.fiu.edu/nightwatch2)

**Halcyon (University of Florida)** – The American Express Best Innovation Award at the Technology and Teamwork Hack went to Annabelle Santos, Alastair Paragas, and Kerlin Michel, who built a web browser and backend API server for blind people. A blind person can issue an audio command, interpreted by a Natural Language Processing-powered server. [http://hon.fiu.edu/halcyon1](http://hon.fiu.edu/halcyon1) and [http://hon.fiu.edu/halcyon2](http://hon.fiu.edu/halcyon2)

**HackDartmouth (Dartmouth College)** – Mark Fajet and his team created a game about Harambe, the gorilla at the Cincinnati Zoo. They won the prize for Best Domain Name, harambae.com
Cesar Villa García

From a very young age, I had a deep interest in computers and how to manipulate them. Through grade school, this interest evolved into a passion for programming and computer graphics. The excitement I felt then encouraged me to pursue a career in computer science. Coming to FIU, my goal was not only to continue learning and putting my skills into practice, but also to share this knowledge and give back to my community. I’ve been able to do this by establishing Upsilon Pi Epsilon (UPE), the honor society for the computing sciences, which provides students with a community that promotes learning, career development, and social involvement.

UPE has hosted many workshops involving different technologies and programming languages—for example, in web design, database design, hardware design, and graphic design. Students have learned how to use these technologies to create their own sites, manage databases, and assemble their first digital devices. UPE has also partnered with companies like Google, Ultimate Software, and Progressive to provide students information about scholarships, internships, and jobs.

Being involved in these activities has not just made me grow tremendously, but has also allowed me to give a helping hand to other students. Perhaps most rewarding is our work with elementary schools. I helped establish the Coding Outreach Program, which encourages children to learn coding. So far, we have worked in eight schools and are teaching kids from 1st to 5th grade. Watching the kids grasp these ideas and create their own programs is nothing short of amazing. I am extremely proud of the work we are doing through these schools and the difference that we are making in our community.

Honors Awarded Tech Fee Grant

The Honors College was awarded its fifth FIU Tech Fee grant in seven years to expand emerging prototyping, design, and collaborative technologies and software in the Honors Edge Lab.

The grant financed a large, portable 3-D printer to go with the smaller one already in the lab, and a computer numerical control (CNC) laser cutter and router. The lab also added a drill press and a variety of hand tools. These cutting-edge additions are already contributing to student entrepreneurial activities, and others will help faculty develop technological skills that can be applied in the classroom.

The lab benefits students in a great variety of disciplines, including 3D modeling (Engineering, Architecture), graphic design (Art, Marketing), visual modeling (Biology, Chemistry), and entrepreneurship (Business), and has interactive and educational uses in a variety of medical and other hands-on fields.
Early Acceptance Programs

The first Honors cohort of applicants for the Early Assurance Program with the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine rocked the house. Nine sophomores were accepted and will be working with HWCOM mentors until it's time for med school. They include Odalmy Ayala (Bio, Psych); Michael Blanco (Chem, Bio); Amanda Del Risco (Chem, Bio); Jorge Fleites (Bio); Chelsy Fraga (Psych, Chem); Kevin Guzman (Bio); Jason Kozarek (Bio); Brittney Pardinas (Bio); and Ana Sosa (Chem).

Likewise, our first cohort of dentistry students (all biology majors) has been accepted via the Early Acceptance Program into Lake Erie College of Medicine's Dental School: Zayda Hubert, Emely Pozo, Raquel Solorzano, and Anabel Tirado Torres.

We are proud to present the Fall winners of the Dean's Awards.

Dean's Excellence Award
Joanne Ling is a junior majoring in Public Administration, with a focus on Asian language and culture and a 3.9 GPA. A first-generation student, she has cultivated an interest in social justice, public health, and international relations. A member of the FIU Model United Nations team, she is this year’s Director General of the FIU high school and middle school Model U.N. conference. She is one of eight inaugural Leaders of the Capital Leadership Experience, a cohort of Worlds Ahead students building leadership and solution-making with FIU’s Washington office.

ARCH Research Award
Joel Greenup is conducting research as an ARCH fellow, not only at FIU but also at the University of Miami and with a team from McGill University in Montreal, Canada. He intends to continue his current research on Alice in Wonderland Syndrome, a series of interconnected neurological conditions, by completing an MD-PhD.

Dean's Citizenship Awardees
(in order from first place)
Tia Decerbo
Daniela Silva
Melissa Alvarado
Katherine Tchir
Amro Alashi
Nicole Malanga
Bryan Diaz
Trevor Holden
Joaquin Van Thienen
Athena Watkins

Dean's Service Awardees
(in order from first place)
Amro Alashi
worked at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital in the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit. He also participated in a medical brigade trip to the Dominican Republic.

Erik Fernandez
served at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital as a Bedside Buddy.

Melissa Flores
was a Camp Counselor at Camp Boggy Creek.

Annalee Molina
worked at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital as an Urgent Care Volunteer.

Francisco Ramos
volunteered at the Early Childhood Behavior Lab.

Tannice Fogarthy
volunteered at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital as a Bedside Buddy.

Faith Sola
worked at Iglesia Bautista Emmanuel as a youth band co-director, children’s teacher, occasional youth preacher, decorator, and planner for youth events.

Stephanie Olaya
volunteered at various events in and outside of FIU with Phi Delta Epsilon.

Hassan Akram
worked at the Stollstroff Center for Children and Families as a Research Assistant.

Emily Mola
volunteered at the FIU Law Clinic and at the FIU Career Fair.
This year a record number of Honors students were among the “Worlds Ahead Scholars” singled out by President Rosenberg for special recognition at Commencement.

**Jackson Fadely, Mechanical Engineering**
Inventor, designer, carpenter, vocalist, sailor, and renaissance man, Jackson is not only a professor’s ideal student, but also is a volunteer with the disabled at Shake-a-Leg, a mentor for freshmen, and a founding member of the Honors College a cappella group, HEARTbeats. At the Honors College he led the team that put together the advanced entrepreneurship and prototyping Edge Lab. His work in aerospace design, culminating in the design and build of a high-endurance solar plane, has landed him 6 job offers at major aerospace and technology companies.

**Joel Greenup, Psychology**
Joel plans to earn a Ph.D. and study the neurological condition “Alice in Wonderland” syndrome, which alters perception of space, time, and depth. He already knows quite a bit about this strange affliction, because he suffers from it. Despite being wheelchair-bound and having endured over 60 surgeries, years in a dysfunctional family, and a long struggle with deep depression, Joel persevered to become a fine student and a member of an Honors team that has taken top prizes in numerous hackathon competitions. The team’s top-10 entry at the Johns Hopkins MedHacks was a computer-driven artificial leg based on Joel’s needs. Joel helped found the Honors Edge innovation lab, while mentoring other students.

**Kamila Manzueta, Political Science and International Relations**
Kami is the founder and arranger for the HEARTbeats a cappella group. She has earned the Outstanding Student Life Awards from FIU and an Outstanding Citizenship Award from the Honors Dean. She has arranged for the production of HEARTbeats’ first album, and for performances at many FIU events, the French Consulate, numerous charity fundraisers, and the “Pitch Perfect” international a cappella competition. Fluent in both Spanish and French, Kami has been on the Dean’s List every semester and is a peer instructor in the Honors College. She plans to attend graduate school in International Relations with a specialization in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Michael Perez, Chemistry/Biology**
Michael has earned bachelor’s degrees in both Chemistry and Biological Sciences. Under Dr. Jamie Theobald’s mentorship, Michael developed a technique to gauge mosquitoes’ ability to sense human odors in flight—a crucial step in developing next-generation repellents. Michael was a founder of the NeighborhoodHELP Service Corps, a volunteer program that involves undergraduates in the community outreach of FIU’s medical school. He also was vice-president of STITCH, taught lab for organic chemistry, and is Finance Director for the Chapmanville Leadership Development Program created by former FIU President Mitch Maidique.

**Ari Sernik, International Business**
Ari is a world traveler with a purpose. A former Israeli paratrooper and global backpacker, Ari has started a non-profit organization to help orphans in desperately poor Cambodia. His enterprise, Ten-Yad (Give a Hand), created with a group of students from his social entrepreneurship class, prints T-shirts featuring the sophisticated drawings made by the students and donates the profits back to them. His presentation on the project was declared the winner during a shark-tank session with members of the FIU Board of Directions. Ari is currently working with a non-profit called the Nyah Project.

**Sophia Younes, English**
A 4.0 student, Sophia is moving on to an accelerated M.A. in Linguistics. She has held several positions with the National Society for Collegiate Scholars, through which she organized the annual March for College, serving Upward Bound students. As a writing consultant at FIU’s Center for Excellence in Writing, she encourages first-generation students to apply to college, informs them about resources such as scholarships and application waivers, and helps them choose their majors. This position has allowed her to empower students as writers.

**Cortney Zamor, Sociology/Anthropology**
With a minor in social media and e-marketing analytics, Cortney has been working for a number of years in Haiti to combat the trafficking of women and girls, an intense effort against an intractable problem. She also transliterates books from Creole into English and vice versa. This work inspired her to switch from her chemistry major to be better prepared to continue this mission after graduation.
CLAIRE SCOTT-BACON

Claire Scott-Bacon, '16, has just been awarded a National Science Foundation (NSF) Fellowship, in addition to the Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Fellowship, which will enable her to pursue her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, specializing in personality and pathology. Her research focuses on "the Dark Triad," a subject in psychology that focuses on three personality traits: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy; Scott-Bacon seeks to find its application to gender in prison populations.

The Honors College has spotlighted Scott-Bacon's remarkable achievements in the past (for more, see http://hon.fiu.edu/csb). The NSF reviewer was equally, if not more, impressed. The report judged hers a "truly excellent application," noting her "outstanding academic credentials" and that she "has chosen a research project that is extremely important albeit often not appreciated." Remarking on the roadblocks Scott-Bacon has overcome, it stressed that "she has achieved extraordinarily despite early life abuse, and being an immigrant and a non-traditional student." It went on to say that her "intellectual journey is inspiring and her presence in the field will be inspiring to others as well." The reviewer concluded that "I do not think I have seen an application more well-suited and deserving of the NSF GRF fellowship program. The applicant is just the kind of scholar we are trying to put into service for our profession and for the nation." There seems little room for higher praise.

As an example of her prowess, Scott-Bacon recently co-authored an article on "Courtroom Semantics: The Impact of Ebonics," published in the American Psychological Association magazine, The Monitor. The article explores whether people who speak African-American vernacular English are perceived as less credible. Her conclusion: "Because the structure of Ebonics differs from the typical English vernacular, those who speak it may be judged as less intelligent."

Scott-Bacon has been accepted into Notre Dame's graduate school, where she will work on her Ph.D. and continue her research in personality and criminality and legal psychology in jury decision-making. She will no doubt achieve the kind of "broad impacts that distinguish a NSF Fellow," in the words of her NSF evaluator, and "carry those results into the broader community, specifically the legal system and public policy."

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Tatiana Pandiani, ’13 (BFA, Performance, summa cum laude), the daughter of Argentinian diplomat Gustavo Martinez Pandiani, a former member of the Honors College Community Advisory Board, has always been very clear about her career goals. After graduating, she moved to New York, where she studied in the highly selective MFA Directing Program at Columbia University. It didn’t take long for her drive and talent to put her where she yearned to be—in the middle of New York’s legendary theater scene.

Although she graduated from Columbia only last spring, she has already directed or co-directed some 20 productions, including 187 at the Atlantic Theatre Conservatory; East 140th and St. Anne’s at Teatro SEA; Everyday Afroplay at the Bushwick Starr; Sondheim’s Assassins at the Princeton Summer Theatre; and The Glass Menagerie at Toneelgroep Amsterdam.

Tatiana is now developing Nora, a new musical based on Ibsen’s A Doll’s House, as part of a Jerome Foundation Residency. Currently in residence at the Habitat Theatre, she is developing a musical there inspired by Ruben Darío’s short stories. She also writes for the stage, and her new play, 1989, set in Argentina, will tour Miami this year. In her “spare time,” Tatiana teaches at the Atlantic Theatre Company.

Tatiana notes that “story is at the center of my practice, beginning at the personal and traveling towards the political. I direct in English and Spanish and combine high culture with mass entertainment. I am inspired by musical theater, pop culture, news, live music, and teatro criollo. Influenced by my ancestors’ journey from Europe to South America in the early 1900s and my parents’ journey to the U.S. in the 1990s, my work draws on 20th century history, especially as seen through the lenses of womanhood, gender politics, media, and fashion.”

Among her plaudits are the Drama League Residency, the Columbia Shubert Fellowship, an International Peace Scholarship, the FIU Leadership Award, the Sherri Ann Graham Scholarship, and the What Works Community Award.
Elie “Elias” Bardawil ’94, is the Director for the Wellness and Recreation Center at FIU. He also worked in the Office of Campus Life and for the Wolfe University Center. As an undergraduate, he was a member of Tau Kappa Epsilon, and was the first Student Government Association President. He is also a graduate of the Education Leadership and Enhancement Program, Chair for the Division of Student Affairs’ Staff Development Committee and New Professionals Group, and a member of the University’s Actuate Next Horizon Capital Campaign 2020 Steering Committee. He is married to fellow FIU Alum Theresa (’97, B.A. in English), with whom they have two amazing, future FIU Panthers: Eloise (5), and Eva (2). He thanks the Honors College for allowing him to access a computer lab (a rare space at that time) and to ferret out a “secret study hall.”

Daniela Cadena, ’15, majored in marketing and international business. She currently works for StartUP FIU as the Social Entrepreneurship Coordinator, providing resources for projects focused on identifying unjust factors that exclude communities lacking financial means or political clout. During her four years in Honors, Daniela studied social entrepreneurship and design thinking, was a research fellow for Demeter Network (MIT & Harvard MBA Grad Social Entrepreneurs), and interned at Google and Johnson & Johnson. Daniela has founded two of her own startups and currently has an online business.

Umer Rahman, ’10, Senior Coordinator of Housing and Student Programs in the Honors College, and his wife, Iqra, welcomed a new baby boy into their family, Zidaan, this past year. Learning to be a new father has been one of his greatest but most rewarding challenges. Shortly after, Umer graduated from FIU’s Leadership Advancement Program (LEAP). As an Honors undergraduate, Rahman majored in International Relations with a minor in Geography, and earned his Phi Beta Kappa key. His interest in South Asian culture and history led him to pursue a Master’s in Asian Studies, which he completed in 2013. Rahman currently works in the Honors College housing and external relations. He also teaches a section of the first-year seminar that focuses on the historical divide between India and Pakistan. One of the most dynamic and student-oriented Honors staff members, he plans to continue his career in higher education.

Simone Worsdale, ‘10, currently serves as the associate director of marketing and communications for the Office of Alumni Relations & Annual Giving. There, she generates and strategizes print, web and social media content to increase engagement, build brand awareness and enhance FIU’s reputation among the University’s largest constituency base, our 215,000 alumni.

Simone entered FIU as a freshman in 2006. She was an active Honors College student throughout her undergraduate career, and also was a general senator for SGA-BBC and a member of Phi Mu Fraternity. After receiving her degree in Mass Communications in 2010, Simone worked at Worth International Media Group, a publishing company in Miami Lakes, FL, for two years. During that time, she rose from marketing assistant to circulation and marketing manager. Still, Simone realized her heart was pulling her back to FIU.

In 2012, she came to FIU as assistant director of communication for the Office of Alumni Relations. Since then, she has earned an M.S. in Global Strategic Communications, participated in the Leadership Education Advancement Program, and been recognized with several industry awards from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education.
Anna Scharnagl, ’10, returned to campus during Panther Alumni Week to talk about her work as a biophysicist. She visited the classes of her mother, Senior Instructor Gretchen Scharnagl. Anna is pursuing her Ph.D. in Biological Sciences at the University of Missouri, where she works with katydids to track the neuro-physiological and genomic mechanisms of insect communication.

Frank Ramos, ’93, a partner at Clarke Silverglate, has published a book for young lawyers, The Associate’s Handbook. It can be downloaded for free by going to http://bit.ly/2cBBJ9d. Frank and his wife, Ana, met in the Honors College.

Jenyer Paez ’15, has been accepted into the FIU Law class of 2020. He hopes to enter the Navy or Coast Guard and pursue a career in law as a Judge Advocate General (JAG) attorney after law school.

Jackson Fadely, ’17, will be working for Boeing, the world’s largest aerospace company, in their research and development division. He got honorable mention for the 2017 FIU Student Employee of the Year (SEOTY) award—among the final 7 from over 200 student nominees.

Amro al Ashi, ’17, received the Scholar Award, for the student who has most demonstrated outstanding leadership through academic achievement and research, at the 2017 Annual FIU Outstanding Student Life Awards Banquet. As an ARCH scholar two years ago at the Miami Research Institute of Nicklaus Children’s Hospital, Amro received the highest recommendations. He was accepted into the Knecht Group’s summer research program at the University of Miami (UM), where he worked on nanotechnology and supervised two UM undergraduates. He also served as a research assistant in Dr. Laura Serbus’ lab at FIU and was a mentor in FIU’s academic success tutor/mentor program. Amro has presented his research at many conferences, and was the Vice-President of STITCH.

Robert Jimenez, ’05, is an intellectual property attorney at Espinosa Trueba Martinez, PL.

Marlene Paloma Duarte, ’12, is now an associate at McDermott, Will, and Emery, where she is practicing corporate law.

Senator Anitere Flores, ’97, and Representative Jeanette Nunez ’94, were recently named to senior leadership roles in the Florida Legislature. Flores, who at one time worked in FIU Governmental Relations and External Relations, was named as the Florida Senate’s President Pro Tempore for 2017-18, making her the most influential member of the chamber under the senate president. Nunez has been appointed Speaker pro tem of the House.

Prof. Raul Gonzalez, ’97, is leading a team of researchers from FIU’s College of Arts, Sciences & Education and the Stempel College of Public Health & Social Work in the largest long-term study of adolescent brain development in the country. The National Institutes of Health-sponsored study will follow 10,000 children through adolescence and into early adulthood. The team will use brain imaging, interviews and behavioral testing to determine how childhood experiences and biology affect brain development.
Jose Sirven
(International Relations) interned at the U.N. Office in Geneva, Switzerland, where he represented the U.S. at the World Federation of U.N. Associations' Human Rights Youth Training. There, he and students from around the world discussed the role of the U.N. and how it advances human rights. He is currently implementing a human rights project in Florida using the Project Cycle Management method used by the U.N. He got the internship with persistence, he says, after sending many cold emails asking for advice on how to get involved in the U.N.’s Free and Equal campaign. His major takeaways: finding he belonged in the international arena and that he thrives outside of his comfort zone, gaining an international and compassionate perspective, communicating with people from different cultures, and learning the importance of listening without judgment.

Maytal Maor
A double major in human resource management and marketing, Maytal worked at Google as a BOLD Intern. She notes, “Isabel Green in the Honors College Career Center helped me revise my resume and expand on my experiences and skills. This got me an interview.” At Google, she was part of a project-based recruiting team, made friends, received advice from Google’s leadership, and gained self-confidence. Most importantly, she learned the career she wanted—employee recruitment. Read more at http://hon.fiu.edu/maytalmaor

Real-world HONORS
Since 2014, the Honors College Career Center has grown to provide some 400 internships this year for students who understand how crucial real-world experience is to their job prospects and their graduate school applications. We understand that, too. Indeed, we guarantee an internship to every student who comes to us. Let us introduce you to just a few of these dynamic young interns.
Alexis Smoot (Environmental Engineering) interned at the Department of Energy (DOE) in Washington, D.C., as part of a DOE fellowship program. While there, she created a sustainability index to measure and compare different technologies used to remove pollution or contaminants, taking a deep look at a real-world project. She also enjoyed connecting with the local alumni and staff at the D.C office of FIU. The experience helped clarify her study plans and gave her a better understanding of how professionals approach problems, especially when there are differing viewpoints.

Alastair Paragas (Computer Science) served as a software engineer intern at Apple headquarters. With an application submitted by his friends as a joke, he wound up working on data crunching, big data, and engineering pipelines to massive datasets within the company. He particularly appreciated the hands-on mentoring, talented co-workers, and opportunity to assume responsibility for a real project. He felt privileged to attend WWDC 2016, Apple’s premier developer conference. Among his practical takeaways was accepting he was a workaholic, realizing the value of the many hackathons and other projects he works on, and learning that he could live cheaply. This summer he will be interning for CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research) as a data scientist and software engineer, using the latest hardware and software technologies to see how advanced IT solutions are used in high energy physics.

Carina Zatarain (English) interned at N2 Publishing. At N2, she wrote articles for the residential magazines Cocoplum Living and Life at the Estates. Her subject matter ranged from restaurant openings to profiles of prominent residents. She found that having to meet deadlines, personally interview people, and seeing her work in print helped her polish her writing skills. It also gave her a confidence boost—she realized that she could succeed at the things she sets out to do. Her favorite part? “Seeing my byline in a real magazine.”

Quick Notes

- DAVID VALLEJO interned for Raytheon Missile Systems in Arizona, where he was offered a full-time job.
- JOANNE LING interned in Washington, D.C., with the International Rescue Committee, working with international refugees who are resettling in the United States.
- ANNETTE DOMINGUEZ interned at blueEnergy, an international organization dedicated to sustainable solutions to complex challenges in Bluefields, Nicaragua. There she helped local residents become energy-independent.
- ISABELA CORZO is a Federal Relations intern working with FIU in Washington, DC.
- MARIO BOCARANDA interned for JP Morgan Chase and was offered a full-time position upon graduation.
- PABLO GRIJALVA is an intern at FIU’s Sea Level Solutions Center, where he uses his background in public relations and environmental studies to promote environmental issues through social media and graphic design.
- KRISTIN FIGAROLA served as an intern for the Miami Heat and was offered a full-time position as Interactive Marketing Assistant upon graduation.
- CHRISTOPHER GUERRA interned at Biomet Inc., but was whisked away by B&I Contractors and offered a full-time position as a Project Engineer when he graduated.
- Honors 2.0 student SUSAN McCOOL was offered a paid, part-time position at the completion of her internship with the Lake City, VA, Medical Center.
Kristine Hernandez
As a senior, I knew I needed an internship that would teach me my major in action. Fortunately, the Honors College offers many internships to choose from. In one of my sporadic searches, I discovered National Voices for Equality Education and Enlightenment (NVEEE), a non-profit that works to prevent bullying and suicide in the school system and the workplace.

Shortly after I started, the organization was invited to be recognized in Washington, D.C. In little more than a month, working with the executive director, another intern, and sponsors, I designed a trip to Washington that showcased NVEEE’s Peace Ambassador Leadership Program. Thirty students embarked on the journey. At the White House, we had a special tour and received a gift bag with President Obama’s signature on all the items. The greatest impact was during our workshops with a Boys & Girls Club and a high school. Some of the NVEEE Student Peace Ambassadors are also performers, and they sang inspirational songs about why each individual is important. There were also personal testimonies about bullying and how the victims overcame it. At the end, several students were eager to share their experiences and to thank the group. As a public relations intern, my role was to take photos and handle a live feed, so I was able to catch many of the responses and emotional connections. The truly rewarding portion of this trip was seeing kids feel hope.

I am extremely grateful and honored for the opportunity to go to D.C. with NVEEE. The Honors College’s financial support and belief in me as a student allowed me to learn and have a once-in-a-lifetime experience. See more at http://hon.fiu.edu/kristineh

Jared Noftle
This year, I have virtually volunteered with the Hollis Police Department in New Hampshire. I began with the department last summer as a student intern. Afterward, they asked me to develop technological procedural improvements to decrease the need for paper documents and increase efficiency. After that, a student from Northeastern University, Jonathan Northcott, and I developed an online tip service for citizens to submit tips, complaints, or photos while remaining anonymous. Recently we developed a tool that allows officers to submit daily information—such as vehicle mileage, referenced reports, equipment checks, and number of arrests or vehicle stops—which sergeants can analyze to generate officer performance reviews.

For my latest project, I developed an online, anonymous survey that gauged department satisfaction and organizational and leadership strengths. I administered the survey, compiled the data, and created a formal report based on data graphics and supplementary narratives. This report helped the command lieutenant and the chief with the department’s accreditation process, while also indicating areas for possible reform. Through the Honors College, I was able to volunteer with the department virtually, fulfilling my community service hours, increasing my future employment network, helping a real-world police force, and incentivizing my continued participation with the department.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE INTERNSHIPS
Out of only twenty internships the U.S. Department of State offers at the Bureau of Consular Affairs, eight were awarded to Honors students Paola Santiago, Rachel Young, Kristy Tarano, Rudy Constanda, Diana Pineada, Marina Gatinho, Rachel Schroder, and Carolina Abraham. The students were nominated by Honors Faculty Fellow and FIU Diplomat-in-Residence Catherine Rodriguez.
While earning my A.A from Valencia College in Orlando, I was part of the Bridges to Success Program as well as the Seneff Honors College. I had the opportunity to study abroad in London, and became Vice President of Scholarship for the Phi Theta Kappa chapter at the West Campus. In addition, I had a part-time job as the lead ambassador for the Answer Center at Valencia.

When I got to FIU, the Honors College expanded my horizons and opened many doors. It gave me the opportunity to become a more well-rounded student by participating in a variety of activities that have allowed me to give back to my community. For instance, I was able to volunteer at the Children’s Trust Family Expo, to tutor children at the Li’l Abner Foundation, and to work at the Miami convention on human trafficking. Subsequently, I was asked to work on events at the Frost Museum.

Last spring, I became part of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars and Tau Sigma. In addition, I traveled to Costa Rica and performed volunteer work at La Tortuga Feliz, a non-profit saving endangered sea turtles. That summer, I landed my first internship at the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Orlando, where I participated in projects including the Hispanic Business Conference & Expo and the political Hob Nob, and had the opportunity to assist the victims of the Pulse night club tragedy.

My senior year at FIU (I graduate this spring), I became Desk Assistant for the department of Housing and Residential Life. I also became an intern at Global Ties Miami, a non-profit working with the Department of State on their International Visitor Leadership Program. We help bring international visitors to Miami and connect them with local professional counterparts. I have learned how to write proposals; recently, our proposal for a program in Haiti called Leadership Development for Women was accepted. Working at Global Ties has encouraged me to make a positive impact in the world and to major in Political Science and International Relations.
Alexis Smoot (Environmental Engineering) currently serves as Representative for the Society of Women Engineers student chapter at FIU and as a general member of the American Academy of Environmental Engineers and Scientists. At the recent FIU Board of Directors meeting she presented her work with the Department of Energy on a "sustainability index." Her project was selected for the 2017 National Conference of Undergraduate Research from a pool of 4,000 submissions. Her professional interests include bioremediation, energy efficiency, renewable energy technology, and emerging green technologies.

Julie Gittelson recently had her "Miami Story" published in the Miami Herald as part of a series of such articles. Her story focused on a magnificent old tree in Coral Gables in which she climbed as a child and found a personal sanctuary. In her words, "This tree watched me grow up from being a child with dreams of becoming a princess to a young adult who was just about to start college." Read more here: http://hon.fiu.edu/bigtree

Sameer Shaikh was recently awarded the ASM Undergraduate Research Fellowship, which provides a stipend to conduct summer research with an ASM member, attend the Microbe Academy for Professional Development, and present his research at the Academy. Learning at an early age from his mother, a physician, he became interested in microbiology and, at FIU, began working in Dr. Kalai Mathee's lab with whole-genome sequencing. They identified a new “superbug” resistant to all antibiotics. Sameer plans to continue his research for a year after graduation, and then begin an M.D./Ph.D. program, researching infectious disease and pathology. Read more at http://hon.fiu.edu/sameers

Jenniffer Bustillos (Mechanical Engineering) works in the Plasma Forming Research Lab (PFL) under the guidance of Prof. Arvind Agarwal. She presented her paper, "Development of a 3D Printing Process for Engineering Graphene Reinforced Poly (lactic) Acid Composites with Superior Wear Resistance" at the national Materials Science & Technology (MS&T) 2016 Conference last fall in Salt Lake City. She also received first place for her presentation at the Undergraduate Materials Research Conference at FIU, and second place in the Mathematics, Physics and Science oral presentation category at the FIU McNair Research Conference. She plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Materials Science and Engineering. Her first co-authored paper has been accepted in the professional journal Polymer Composites.

Honors students Ana Barral, (backstroke) Alexa Bryant, Anna Jonsson, Marissa Martin, and Ally Mayhew (freestyle) are all members of the championship FIU swimming and diving team. Anna is an international student from Sweden.
NOTES

HONORS

City as Text®, a staple of the Honors first-year seminar, is a pedagogical tool that divides students into groups of 4-5 and sends them off-campus to map different communities. Each group acts as detectives to investigate the glue that holds the community together. They purchase street food, buy newspapers, visit real estate offices, interview local people, and otherwise uncover the details of daily life there. The exercise not only introduces students to the wonders of Miami’s diverse communities, but also sharpens their observational skills and an awareness of the impact of point of view and context.

John Bailly’s students are sharing their reflections on City as Text on Instagram. The places they visit value these honest assessments and social media mentions.

See more at https://www.instagram.com/miamiastext/

My now is a busy week with one day to breathe in and out, reserving Thursdays for art collections with my best friends, criticizing my everyday notions in every piece I see

—Ximena Lugo

D.C. Careers Program. This winter, four Honors students were selected to participate in the inaugural Career Success fly-in to D.C. Fully sponsored by Campus Life and the Green School to fly to the nation’s capital for two days, Briana Alvarez (Hosp.), Joseph Cabauy (Crim. Justice), Guethshina Altena (Math/Comm. Arts), and Michelle Rodriguez (Psych.) joined 14 other students chosen on the basis of their high potential and demonstrated leadership. As part of the program, they toured historic landmarks and participated in professional and leadership development training.

Honors 2.0 Congratulates First Fully Online Graduates

Edwin Arocho, Jr. (Finance) will be entering the PNC Bank ACCEL Retail Banking Development Program. He plans to earn his MBA within the next five years.

Viktoriya Justiz (Hospitality) focused on event planning and also earned a minor in Graphic Arts. She manages her own YouTube channel and would like to start her own brand. She studied abroad in France with Honors.

Susan McCool (Recreational Therapy) participated in the ARCH Undergraduate Research Program, completing a meta-analysis on the effects of a multi-modal recreational therapy for individuals with mild neurocognitive disorders. She plans to pursue a Master’s in Recreational Therapy and work for the VA while teaching and continuing her research.

Claudia Johanna Quiroz Revoredo (Crim. Justice) also earned a minor in Psych. She plans to pursue a law degree or MBA, with the goal of working for a federal agency. She is also considering a second career related to healthcare.
**PALS**
When the Honors College heard that the Peace Ambassador Leadership Summit (PALS) was looking for an inaugural host university, we were happy to oblige. PALS is an outstanding summer program, presented through the National Voices for Equality, Education and Enlightenment, that brings together high school students from around the country to develop leadership skills, learn to stand up against bullying, and prepare for college. Since 2014 the Honors College has also continued to provide student volunteers and interns throughout the school year.

**Culture Crawl**
By Elizabeth Pooran
The annual HEARTS culture crawl this winter took a bevy of students on a trip around some of Miami’s cultural treasures on South Beach. About 60 crawlers got a guided tour of the New World Center by world renowned Pritzker Architecture Prize laureate Frank Gehry, where they also sat in on a rehearsal of the New World Symphony. Next was the FIU Jewish Museum for a tour of their current exhibits, Hot Couture: Florida Jews on the Fashion Scene, 1880s to Today, and Stitching History from the Holocaust. South Beach landmark sightseeing was capped with a New World Symphony concert under the stars, with picnic lunches provided by FIU Campus Life. One participant reported that “this was an amazing event. I thoroughly enjoyed myself. As an international student, this was my first time to South Beach and this trip made me fall in love with Miami even more. This was sincerely an unforgettable experience for me.”

**Fashion in Wynwood**
This fall, the HEARTS Fashion Club welcomed guest speaker Joannis Duran from Nomad Tribe in Wynwood, a boutique that promotes “fashion and social impact” by selling merchandise created ethically and through fair trade. During the annual Wynwood Fashion Night Out, in which dozens of boutiques, restaurants, and other local businesses participate, club members helped stores bring in people to participate in unique events, like a DIY jewelry making station. President Yashodhara Suri and VP Nishita Aswani were invited to help plan the next Fashion Night Out with Joannis and the Wynwood team.

**Palate**
Diario de Las Americas recently did a feature story on Palate, the Honors student arts magazine. The article quoted Palate founder María José Ayuso: “I wanted to create a platform where students could freely express their talent, both in art and in their academic studies. My goal is eventually to be able to take all this to other communities in the state and the country.” Ayuso also spotlighted Palate at SpeakFriday’s “Miami’s Most Diverse Open Mic,” a showcase for expression and understanding through the arts. Read more at http://hon.fiu.edu/palateherald

**Voting with Their Feet**
Over fifty Honors College students walked together for 2 miles to the nearest polling station to cast their votes during fall early voting hours. In addition to getting out the vote, the event was meant to inspire students to become voters for life. Wearing T-shirts printed for the occasion, the group marched, with the Honors banner, to West Dade Regional Library, where they cast their votes—citizenship in action!
Ignite the Future

By Jose Maldonado

When I was a child, my mom worked in a sub shop, where I was allowed to build stuff with leftover cardboard and styrofoam. I built models or random things from robot figures to water flows. This early exploration into creative thinking and prototyping fueled my interest in engineering and building on ideas. I wanted to find a way to combine this way of learning and the standardized curriculum in the public school system. The result: Ignite The Future, a student group looking to rethink public education. Our team has designed a robust learning platform that helps teachers deliver an engaging and interactive learning experience, increase student mastery of material, and boost student curiosity and self-esteem. Our system provides curriculum-based class kits for every student. Each box includes the materials necessary to complete a curriculum unit through a project-based learning exercise. Teachers and students also have access to an online site where teachers can review the kit activity and lesson plans while students can access homework and review materials. We can fund this through a subscription model, allowing schools to scale and expand at their own pace. The system is designed to be economically available to all schools. We currently run an afterschool program at Sweetwater Elementary once a week for fifth graders, partnered with the Honors College and Google IgniteCS. We are looking to possibly partner with Miami Dade Public Schools and FIU Teach.

Tiger

Prof. Naphtali Rishe of CIS recently announced the release of the first version of the Informed Traveler Program, an app field-tested by a cohort of Honors students. The system has the potential to be the nation's premier product helping in the transportation of persons with physical and cognitive challenges. The project was part of the U.S. DOT-funded TIGER UniversityCity Project, which will also produce a pedestrian bridge over Tamiami Trail between Sweetwater and FIU. Honors has been an active participant in the TIGER grant since its inception.

Art-gineering

By Yanina Onyewenjo

Walking around the exterior of the College of Engineering and Computing (CEC), you are surrounded by colorful confetti growing on trees like fungi, futuristic metallic dogs, giant nests with football-sized eggs, and a skeleton on a toilet. Standing alongside art constructed from recycled materials, Deans Lesley Northup of the Honors College and Ranu Jung of the CEC inaugurated the 2016 NestGen art exhibit at a reception at the CEC.

Curator Leonor Anthony, the Honors College Artist in Residence, began the project, now in its second year, as an aesthetic response to environmental threats. This year’s show included works by 17 internationally renowned artists.

Examining Aimee Perez’s sculpture, The More You Squeeze, two engineering students tried interpreting its use of large, rusted metal rods, screws and clamps to hold fragile chicken eggs. The students saw “innocence” held in the tight grip of an increasingly sterile world.

Anthony’s iToilet installation, created from a skeleton found in the trash at a chiropractor’s office, is intended to incite curiosity and challenge values. “The skeleton represents humanity, surrounded by cables, remotes and computer parts symbolizing reliance on technology,” the artist explained. “The toilet indicates the resulting environmental damage.”

The collaboration resulted from the deans’ vision to bring culture and introspective discussion to the CEC. For the deans, the opportunity to collaborate was a no-brainer. “This is the exciting beginning of what I hope will be a long-term venture to put quality, curated art at the CEC and other FIU campuses,” said Dean Northup. “It’s another key step in educating well-rounded, well-informed young leaders.” Added Dean Jung, “Engineers are the ultimate artists—they take an abstract idea and turn it into reality. We hope this art collection will inspire our future engineers to explore their own creativity. Like art, engineering helps move humanity forward, so this exhibit was a natural fit for us.”
Our academic field journey began in Johannesburg. After a brief refresher period, we jumped in with a welcoming talk from Dr. Laurence Kruger (Director, Organization for Tropical Studies South Africa), covering issues including safety, roles and responsibilities, South African history, and tropical challenges. In the evening, our trip leader, Prof. Aileen Marty, spoke on antibiotics and the history of modern medicine.

We spent the next day at GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), a major pharmaceutical company, interacting with staff members and examining the connections between industry, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and pharmaceuticals. Prof. Marty led the staff and students in a discussion of antimicrobial resistance and the role of industry.

In the afternoon, we went to the Bryanston Organic Market for lunch and shopping. Later, we heard a case presentation on a patient with squamous cell carcinoma, learning the social determinants of health that led to his malignancy. The rest of the day was spent at the Apartheid museum, strengthening our understanding of how history shapes South Africa’s present triumphs and challenges. An understanding of social determinants of health was emphasized throughout the course and this visit to the Apartheid museum contributed greatly.

The following day we visited the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), which helps eradicate communicable diseases. There we heard of the role NICD played in response to the Ebola outbreak. We visited the labs, heard a talk on South African responses to the TB and HIV epidemics, and learned about the challenges of setting up an Ebola diagnostic lab in Sierra Leone. Our speaker described the extraction methods and primers used for detecting the virus and identifying samples. Next was an outstanding Q&A on surveillance, One Health in South Africa, the new CDC method of classified and regression tree analysis, and mosquito-borne illnesses like Odyssean malaria and tick-borne fevers.

In the Special Pathogens area we heard at length about biosafety, the
history of the unit, the agents that are diagnosed and researched, and the discipline and training necessary to perform the work.

In the afternoon we visited Constitutional Hill in Johannesburg, near the western end of the suburb of Hillbrow, where we saw the notorious prison that housed Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi.

In the evening we were given a talk on South Africa, particularly contextualising recent student movements. Afterward, we watched and discussed the documentary “Disrupt,” which looks at rape culture and sexual trauma in South Africa.

May 14 we headed to the Cradle of Humankind and the Sterkfontein Caves, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Sterkfontein caves are home to key archeological discoveries, including the 2.3 million-year-old fossil Australopithecus africanus. It is estimated that the caves produced over a third of all known early hominin fossils discovered prior to 2010.

The next day we travelled to the Wits Rural Facility, which borders on the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces. There, we were welcomed by monkeys, zebras and impalas.

Early the next morning we began activities with home-based care workers in various villages. These people play an important role in facilitating the delivery of health care.

In the evening we watched and discussed the movie “Yesterday,” which chronicles the story of a woman living with HIV/AIDS in a rural Zulu village. The film helped us understand structural violence, and the migrant labour system, and their impact on health, particularly of women.

After a free day for personal exploration, we visited the Vukuzenzele cooperative, where we learned about different healing avenues, including herbal and traditional healing—a further look into the lived realities and experiences of health care in South Africa. A Sangoma, (traditional spiritual healer) spoke to the students about communicating with the spirit world because their ancestors task them with healing their people spiritually and physically. Modern Sangomas are trained in the sustainable culturing and use of herbal medicines but still use animal bones in diagnoses.

Later, we visited the local hospital, where we investigated malaria control efforts after a highly clinical presentation on malaria from Prof. Marty. Later in the trip, she also presented her TEDx talk on the
response to the Ebola outbreak in Nigeria.

We spent our last day at Wits with workers in the Mnisi "One Health" community program, a multidisciplinary program sponsored by the University of Pretoria that unites research, teaching, learning, and community engagement. We watched cattle-dipping while visiting the vet clinic, as well as the research site and the labs. The dip tank was an excellent example of community cooperation to solve a problem of great concern to cattle owners.

An environmental monitoring team trained by UNESCO talked about key issues they face, such as the fear of vaccines, managing community expectations, and recruiting local environmental monitors. We also toured the animal clinic.

Our next trip was to the Hans Hoheisen Wildlife Research Station, where we learned of work combatting ticks on the carnivores of Kruger park and of the impact of parasites on human health. We received an insightful presentation on how land use impacts rodent diversity and parasites-an ideal example of the importance of the "One Health" concept. We also heard a presentation on the work that led to understanding Kuru and other Prion diseases, and their associations with sorcery and cannibalism.

The next activity took place in Kruger National Park, where we worked on our research projects. We each explored a topic such as animal ethics (making dipping less stressful for animals), lime disease, the difficulties of accessing clinical information, mental health services, housing; and the use of guard dogs.

At the park, we learned more about environmental determinants of health and aspects of Comparative Risk Assessment, a very valuable tool, through a team-based learning exercise. We were appalled to learn that as many as 23% of deaths are linked to environmental factors. We also learned about measuring particulate matter in air pollution, DALY (disability adjusted life years), environmental changes in South Africa over the last 25 years, environmental determinants of health, the double-sided aspects of land use, the distinction between living nature and urban nature, and systems thinking.

Another presentation covered new and emerging diseases originating in animals, focusing on the animal-human interface and how and why pathogens jump species. It covered the history, science, and medicine of Zika, Ebola, Rabies, CCHF, and LoJo infections, emphasizing the criticality of monitoring and innovative diagnostics.

The next day, we had the privilege of walking among the animals on a field exercise that took us through Kruger park to explore rodent traps, the state of the flora, and the impact of the current drought. We encountered termite mounds, beehives keeping elephants away from crops and livestock, a rhino skull left by poachers, and a pride of lions. We also had a superb presentation on disease investigation of wild birds in Kruger Park and the role of disease in the environment. This was followed by a discussion of TB challenges in the park, with a fascinating laboratory exercise showing slides of bird blood infected by malarial parasites with a detailed explanation of techniques of diagnosis.

Next: two nights in Swaziland, where we spent a day at an eye clinic. The clinic helps solve a key cause of blindness in Swaziland—cataracts. We learned that the cataract surgery performed at the clinic is a modern version of an ancient Egyptian technique called “couching.”

Despite the serious learning packed into the trip, it wasn’t all work—we had time for daily exercise, morning game drives, sundowners, and evening movies and documentaries. A central feature was the debrief, where students and staff gathered to critically reflect on each day.

Back in Miami, Dani DuQuesne got teary-eyed talking about the trip. The best experience of her life, she said, in every possible way: "I’ve learned so much!"
Once a year I visit family in my hometown, Trujillo, Peru. I do some community service there because they desperately need help. Pesqueda Hill is one of the poorest zones in Trujillo, a steep hill where the houses are made of cheap materials. Until ten years ago, the only way to the top was to walk. Now paved roads and a ladder make it easier.

IE 1691 is the smallest kindergarten, with only one classroom and a principal who is also the teacher. The people are very poor and most kids do not finish their education—usually because they have to work in order to help their families. Kids working with their parents can be as young as five. They are very independent, though, because they have had to learn to do things for themselves and to care for the younger ones.

I chose to work on Pesqueda Hill because I feel great compassion for the residents. They are good people but they have low self-esteem, they are impoverished, and they believe everything the government tells them. Every time there is an election, the candidates go there and speak with the people and make a lot of promises, but at the end they don’t come through. I wanted to show the kids a different kind of role model.

From 8.30 to the 1 p.m. dismissal time each day, I helped prepare for class, wrote the homework assignments in each of the children’s workbooks, monitored bathroom breaks, helped with class language and craft projects, supervised lunch and playtime, and hand-copied teacher work plans, since the school does not have a copier. At the end of the day, I waited with the kids until their parents picked them up.

I love these kids and their innocent and happy faces, but I also see the poverty and suffering they live with, and how little help the schools get from the government. When I graduate, I hope to find organizations that might help schools like this, and advocate to improve their situation.
For the last five years, Honors Study Abroad has taken students to Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand. The focus is on U.S. involvement, and its impact, in the area’s conflicts of the 50’s, 60’s and 70’s. Most students know little of this part of our history, though it still haunts the geopolitical decisions of our own government. Students also get a healthy awareness of the shifting dynasties and alliances that have shaped the area historically and engage in dialogue with university students in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, while visiting sites of historical importance.

After being immersed in the past, the group moves to Cambodia, where they focus on the future. The rule of the Khmer Rouge in the late '90s took the lives of 25% of the population, including all the educated members, and the social, economic, medical, educational, infrastructural, and governmental fabric was totally destroyed. Cambodia has had a long, hard climb trying to educate its people once again, so Honors students spend three weeks teaching English in the local teachers’ college. One group created a “Learning English” booklet for the teachers to use with their students.

Another group of students raised $1600 to purchase bicycles for 6th grade students so they can attend middle school 5 miles away. Yet another collected 90 pairs of shoes for younger children in a remote rural district.

Students also visited the villages of the Cambodian students they worked with, meeting their families and observing problems with sanitation, health, education, transportation, and the other crushing issues of everyday Cambodian life. They conducted interviews, studied contributing factors, and gave presentations on their findings. All the students say it was a life-changing experience—for them and, we hope, for the Cambodians they worked with.
Seizing the Day

Even a small act of generosity can alter a student’s life, especially when the student is on a downward spiral. I would know: It happened to me. When I transferred to FIU, I first declared a chemistry major, although I had no real passion for it. Being the son of immigrants and a first-generation college student comes with certain expectations—you’re supposed to pursue a lucrative profession that will ensure financial stability. But my heart was not in chemistry, making it difficult to study with conviction. By the time I realized my mistake, I felt lost.

I wanted to explore different disciplines and discover what I loved. The Honors College’s service research study abroad to Cambodia and Vietnam immediately grabbed my attention. I wanted to enroll in the program and teach English in Southeast Asia but was disheartened when I realized I couldn’t afford to go. The Honors staff found a way to help me, and that winter, I was on a journey to self-discovery.

The moment I arrived, I knew I had found exactly what I was searching for. Amidst palaces and Hindu temples, I discovered an affinity for teaching English to students of a completely different cultural, ethnic, and linguistic world. I immediately declared myself an English major, with a philosophy minor. This change was not only reflected positively in my grades, but led me to new academic and professional aspirations. I am an excellent example of how Honors’ support of students like myself can turn lost and disadvantaged dreamers into successful Worlds Ahead graduates.

By Jenyer Paez
I was almost aborted even before I saw the sun. My godmother, my savior, convinced my mother not to and so I was born. I was raised by a single mother who did not know how to raise strong and independent children, but my brothers and sisters and I have all turned out fine, thanks to the powers of god knows who. My mom never worked, so she did the best she could with about $426 a month and some food stamps. I don’t care to talk about my dad; he was around but I never had a real relationship with him. When I was about five years old my brother molested me. I didn’t tell my mother until I was twelve, and even then there was no justice done. I loved to read and learn, but people made fun of me and I never really fit in growing up.

Around the same time, my godmother died, and from then I developed an eating disorder. I didn’t know what it was then, but I would eat whenever I felt anxious or uncomfortable and gained almost 60 pounds.

My mom was an alcoholic back then and would get so drunk that she would throw up all over our one-bedroom duplex. I remember waking up and cleaning it up and feeling disgusted. I hated it when my mother drank. This duplex was shared by me, my two brothers, and my sister. After they all grew up and moved out, I was left with my mom. So my mother drank. This duplex was shared by me, my two brothers, and my sister. After they all grew up and moved out, I was left with my mom. Soon after, we were kicked out of the only real home we knew, and my mom and I became homeless.

We lived with our cousin at first in the housing projects of Liberty City until she started rumors about us, then we lived with my dad for a while. We finally got approved for subsidized housing and moved to the dangerous side of Liberty City. I hated it.

I grew up poor but I had never been exposed to this sort of environment. People smoked weed on the porches. Drug dealers hung outside my window. I was becoming very religious around that time so I would go downstairs and preach to them. I confused my anxiety with spiritual impulses that were beckoning me to save the neighborhood. There was gun violence but I mostly kept to myself so I did not know any of these people personally.

Desperate to escape, I married an illegal immigrant who turned out to be HIV positive and verbally abusive. I was going to Miami Dade and Broward College then and I didn’t care if I failed a class; I would tell myself that I would just retake the course. So I was an average student in community college and it took me five years to get my AA degree. My husband lived in someone else’s house. I did not understand why he preferred to live with someone else. I finally left him and had to return to my mom’s house.

The violence seemed to get worse every year. I remember that a guy got shot right outside our door at a “stop the violence” party! I saw that and just screamed in outrage and frustration. The people there have this deep sad look on their faces. I know you cannot see hopelessness, but their faces scream out hopelessness. I never really knew how disadvantaged I was until I left that neighborhood. Amid all this chaos I managed to get a decent job that only paid 9 bucks an hour and gave you only 24 hours a week, just to avoid paying for your medical benefits. Still, I was happy to have that job because who else would hire me? I tried to apply everywhere after I was fired, and when I found a job related to my major I was ecstatic. So I worked at a drug rehab center around convicted felons. I made these big tough guys follow the rules, so that felt really good.

Finally the violence got so bad—shootings every week, no exaggeration—I called the FIU hotline and moved on campus, which changed my life. I don’t have to be afraid anymore. Enrolling at FIU was like a dream come true. I was at the Fair one day when I was about 12 or 13, and I looked up at the buildings and told myself that this would be my college one day; of course, I literally had no idea that it would ever come true.

Then I learned about the Honors College. At first I didn’t have the GPA, but I worked hard to make my GPA high enough. Still, I kept doubting myself. I would say things like, “You are not smart enough,” or, “You are the wrong color,” and I would talk myself out of applying. Then I got a letter saying that I was invited to apply to the Honors College and I was so happy! I struggled with how to tell my story and then finally submitted it and when I got accepted, I knew I had turned a corner and never needed to go back. Joining the Honors College let me know I could do anything.

Even though I still feel a little inadequate sometimes, my life is so much better than it ever was before and I truly love my school and this semester I made the dean’s list. When I look at my transcripts and see where I was academically versus where I am now it is amazing. My whole life has been about constantly overcoming adversity, so I guess I am just proud to be alive. Waking up without fear or anxiety is an accomplishment. Never having a suicidal ideation is an accomplishment. Not having to turn to drugs to deal with the past is an accomplishment. This spring I will graduate. I plan to pursue a Ph.D. in Psychology. Most of all, being able to smile in spite of everything is the greatest accomplishment.

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The Honors College has annually been the first unit to reach 100% in the FIU Ignite staff/faculty campaign since its inception. We believe in what we do, and invest in it.

An internship is guaranteed to every Honors student.

36% of Honors College students agree or strongly agree with the statement: “I came to FIU because of the Honors College.”

Our Daniel Tapanes was National Honors student of the year in 2011.

Summa cum Laude has repeatedly won the top national award for Honors Publication of the Year.

The Honors College has grown 700% in the last 10 years.

For every 1% of each freshman class that Honors enrolls, FIU’s graduation and retention rates rise one point.

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