The Florida International University Honors College Review

SUMMA CUM LAUDE

SUMMER 2012

Honors and Entrepreneurship

Halloween 5K RUN

Benefitting the Li'l Abner Foundation

WHERE Dolphin Mall
11401 NW 12 St.
Sweetwater, FL 33172

WHEN Halloween – Sunday
October 28, 2012

TIME 8:00 AM – 5k Run/Walk
Kids Run
Elderly Race
Awards Presentation

Register at http://honors.fiu.edu/5krun

LI'L ABNER FOUNDATION

For more information,
please call: 305-227-7240
or info@lilabnerfoundation.com

FIU | Honors College

The Florida International University Honors College Review

SUMMA CUM LAUDE

SUMMER 2012

2011 NCHC Honors Publication of the year

Just about everyone reading this is aware that we are riding the crest of a new wave of entrepreneurship. De Tocqueville wrote in 1836 that "the Americans always display a free, original and inventive power of mind," and we are accustomed to thinking of the U.S. as a land of risk-taking business innovators. Indeed, Paul Reynolds of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor estimates that about half of all men in the country are self-employed for at least a year or two during their working years. In the 21st century, however, new enterprises are as common on other continents as they are in North America. The need for ground-breaking ideas and investors to back them has grown exponentially to become a global phenomenon. At the same time, applying the principles of starting a successful new business to promote solutions to society's problems has given rise to keen interest in social entrepreneurship in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors.

The Honors College is uniquely poised to produce the cutting-edge business leaders of tomorrow. Itself a highly entrepreneurial enterprise rooted in the notion of continuous innovation and problem-solving, the College turns out graduates who are fully prepared to recognize unique opportunities, to secure the capital needed to turn them into realities, and to apply the highest ethical standards to managing and growing the resulting companies. About 20% of our graduates either major in some branch of business or go into business when they graduate. They have been shaped by courses in leadership; an emphasis on values; and training in such crucial areas as research, oral and written communication, and teamwork. They can also learn by participating in upper-division Honors seminars offered by faculty of the College of Business and in our new Business students organization.

This issue of *Summa Cum Laude* highlights just a few of the many impressive stories of Honors students and alumni who are reshaping our world by bringing fresh thinking and their Honors experience to real-world situations. The profiles here represent only the tip of the iceberg—from South Florida to the International Date Line, Honors graduates are making a difference as full participants in the business of the world.

Lesley A. Northup
Dean

Click to Give – honors.fiu.edu/enrich

Invest in the Honors College and its future leaders. Support the College's unique programs and innovative curriculum. Contribute to the cutting edge of education.

In this Issue

03 Student Entrepreneurs
Honors College students are budding entrepreneurs in diverse fields.

08 Tina Vidal-Smith
This alumna has mastered the business of mixed martial arts and corporate turn-arounds.

10 Perceptions of the World
Honors College Fellow John Tsalikis shares his views on business ethics.

18 Honors College News

24 Alumni Notes

Editorial Staff
Gustavo Emden, Editor
J.C. Espinosa
Juan Lopez
Leif Elliott

Design and Production
Aileen Solá-Trautmann
Senior Designer
FIU External Relations
Office of Publications

Rafael Avalos
Graphic Designer

Photography
Douglas Garland

On the Cover
Honors College Alumna Tina Vidal-Smith. Image taken with permission from TomHillPhotos.com.

Change of address information: Please send updated address information to the Honors College, DM 233, Florida International University, 11200 S.W. 8th Street, Miami, FL 33199 or by e-mail to hcalumni@fiu.edu

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.

Student Profile

susan tapia

Committed to Action

In 2007, President Clinton launched The Clinton Global Initiative University program to engage the next generation of leaders on college campuses around the world. Third-year Honors College student Susan Tapia was recently accepted into the 2012 CGIU. Based on her experiences with the Honors Aesthetics & Values course, her "Commitment to Action" proposal entails bringing art to universities in developing nations to stimulate discussion on social issues and promote social change. An online forum for each exhibition would allow visitors to discuss the work and the ideas it inspires, creating a platform for activism. Each show would concentrate on the most pressing issues in the nation, such as abuse, women's rights, or LGBT rights.

Susan attended CGIU's annual meeting, at which undergraduate and graduate students, national youth organizations, topic experts, and celebrities discuss solutions to pressing global issues. This year, the conference was held at George Washington University in Washington, DC, from March 30 to April 1. Nearly 1,200 attendees gathered, looking to making a difference in CGIU's five focus areas: education, environment and climate change, peace and human rights, poverty alleviation, and public health.

Susan is an International Relations major with a minor in Asian Studies, as well as certificates in Japanese and National Security Studies. The Miami native is the daughter of Nicaraguan parents who emigrated to the United States at the beginning of the Sandinista Revolution. As president of Helping Our World in the Honors College, Susan organizes fundraisers and student service trips abroad every December to the most impoverished countries of the western hemisphere, including Nicaragua and Honduras. She also serves as president of the Aesthetics and Values Club and is secretary of the FIU Chapter of Rotaract, a Rotary - sponsored service club for young professionals.

This past summer, Susan served as an intern for the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., in the Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization. She is fluent in Spanish, proficient in Italian and Japanese, and is currently studying Korean. ◻

Taking matters
into their own hands
the millennial generation

Though the economy has begun to show renewed signs of life in recent months, today's is by no means an ideal job market. As most unemployed students can tell you, the odds of finding a job are not in their favor. There is, however, one characteristic that is: self-determination. In a recent Gallup student poll, a majority of those surveyed (77%) reported that they eventually want to be their own bosses. This comes as no surprise, but the next statistic might: most students say they are not afraid to take risks, even if failure is a possibility (91%). Today's college students expect difficulty and hardship from the economy. Fortunately, the silver lining to this cloud may very well be the key to the economy's revival.

With the expectation of a job after college transitioning from reality to pipe dream, students are taking matters into their own hands and becoming entrepreneurs. If there is one thing to be learned from Mark Zuckerberg (founder of Facebook) and Kevin Plank (founder of Under Armor), it is that a dorm room is as fertile a breeding ground for entrepreneurship as any other. The millennial generation (the 20-something sons and daughters of the baby boomers) sets itself apart from its predecessors with both its fearlessness and its focus. Its philosophy is simple and practical: if no one is going to hire us, we're going to work for ourselves doing something we are passionate about. This attitude has pervaded all economic strata and is largely responsible for the social entrepreneurship movement that is building momentum around the world.

Entrepreneurial fever has hit the Honors College with overwhelming vigor and inspired students to take their futures into their own hands. Here we profile just a few.

If necessity is the mother of invention, then it can be said that entrepreneurship is its wealthy brother. Dale Parsan, a senior double-majoring in Finance and Marketing, exemplifies this maxim: he identified a need that fostered an enterprise. The idea for his company came to him during the spring semester of 2009, when he was pledging for his fraternity, Beta Theta Pi. Once the pledging period is over and a person becomes a member of a fraternity, it is customary for the pledge to present his mentor with a gift in the form of a paddle. In light of the stigma associated with paddles and hazing, Dale decided to employ some creativity in choosing his mentor's gift. Instead of buying a generic paddle, Dale handmade a 5-foot oak replica of a sword from his mentor's favorite video game. "From there," he says," the news of what I did spread like wildfire." Before long, members of other fraternities and sororities were approaching him to make custom paddles for their mentors. With traditional paddles selling for around $40 online, Dale offered his peers an original, handcrafted, and attractive alternative for $50. Already in its third year as a full-fledged business, Parsan's Paddles employs several of his fraternity brothers and hopes to lease a freestanding location within the next five years.

Dale gets great satisfaction from his success: "The part I enjoy most about my business is the pictures we receive from the customers and the looks on their faces when we deliver their paddles to them. To see their eyes light up and how happy they are is why I love what I do." When asked what advice he would give an aspiring student entrepreneur, Dale said: "Do it now! The worst feeling in the world is regret about what could have been. The time is now, while you're content with eating nothing but $1 noodles every day, to start something of your own and push everything you have into your idea. I am 21 years old. I own and operate my own business." This innovative Honors student expects to graduate this summer and continue his graduate studies at FIU.

At the heart of the philosophy that drives the Honors College is the idea of blurring borders between disciplines, nations, and people. Bulgarian immigrant and first-year Honors student Aleksandar Simeonov has done all three. He has turned a love of classical performances and technology into Cinezion.com, a website that offers high-definition recordings of opera, ballet, and theater. Aleksandar explains that in his native Bulgaria, opera and classical music are as popular with younger audiences as they are with the older generation. He was raised listening to the likes of Bach and Strauss as well as scores of classic cartoons and movies. He recalls the moment when his interest in opera was kindled: "There was one of those annual marathons of 'The Shawshank

Redemption' on cable. When Andy played 'Sull'aria' from Mozart's Marriage of Figaro throughout the prison, I was instantly captivated."

Aleksandar realized that the future of entertainment would be online. He reasoned that if opera and classical music could be popular among both young and old audiences in Bulgaria, why not in America? "I'd love to hear Verdi blaring through speakers in the street for a change," he said.

After getting enthusiastic feedback from friends and family, Aleksandar decided to turn his passion into a business. Cinezion.com offers performances from venues around the world, including the Shakespeare Globe Theater and the Royal Opera House. The website is a subscription service with a $10.99 monthly fee, though it allows curious customers a free one-day trial. Aleksandar hopes to expand his client base globally and diversify his catalog. He cites the Honors College as an essential ally in his business endeavors: "I believe the Honors College encourages forward thinking. I also think the program can help me and my business flourish by spreading the word throughout the college and the city, by giving me invaluable lessons and advice for success, and by providing solid support to build upon." Aleksandar plans to pursue a degree in Finance.

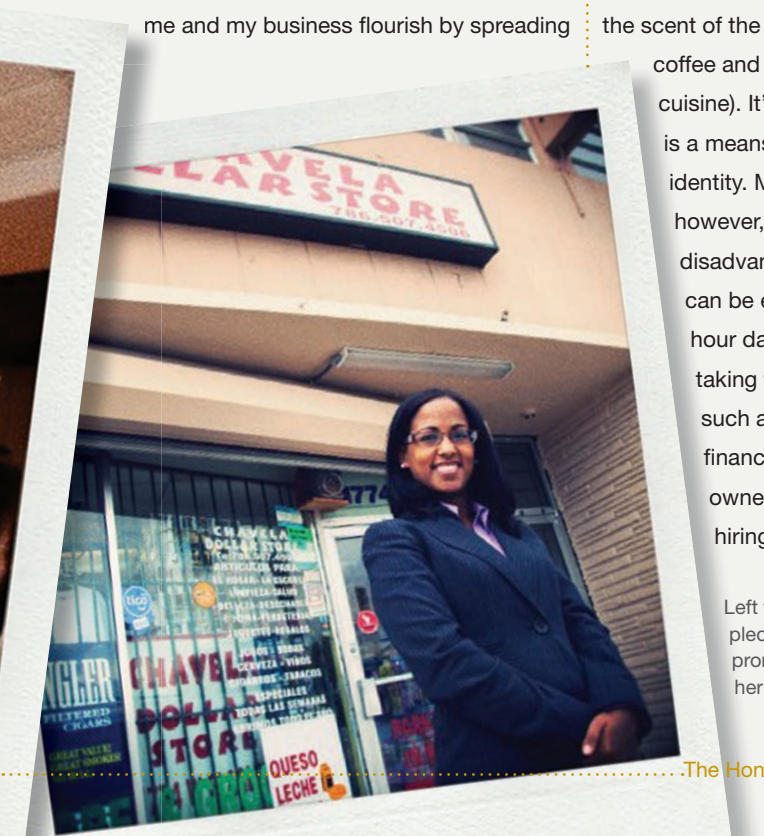
Finding another cultural niche, Yasnay Montalvo recognized that in a city with a largely bilingual populace, it is not uncommon to find small business owners who have lived their whole lives without knowing a word of English. This, in turn, leads to basic financial illiteracy. Says fourth-year accounting major Montalvo, "Advocates make a difference in the growth potential for these small business enterprises. There is a need for more messengers who will play the role I currently play in my own family business. Such a role is vital for business expansion and, often, survival."

According to a report from the Miami-Dade Department of Planning and Zoning, in 2007, Hispanics owned 244,148 Miami-Dade firms, employed 169,525 people and generated over $45,039 million in revenues. The appeal of Hispanic "mom and pop" shops is immediately apparent to anyone who's ever been captivated by the scent of the city tinged with brewing coffee and *comida criolla* (native cuisine). It's distinctly familiar and is a means of connecting with an identity. Many of these businesses, however, find themselves at a disadvantage. Business owners can be expected to put in 12-18 hour days, barring them from taking the time to learn skills such as computer use and financial literacy. Business owners have the option of hiring an employee with these skills but that requires capital — capital that can't be generated without fluency in these areas.

Yasnay offers a solution to this catch-22 that is both effective and efficient, providing student advocates who offer their academic knowledge of business to Hispanic entrepreneurs unfamiliar with financial basics. "For years I have been the only English speaker in my family and the appointed spokesperson for my family's small business. My parents are great entrepreneurs, but lack computer skills. They barely speak English, and their busy schedule does not permit them to step outside their store to go to classes and learn more about growing their business," Yasnay explains.

Her proposal would be mutually beneficial, as students would gain an invaluable opportunity to apply what they learn in the classroom and to acquire work experience in exchange for their help. "It's not about doing the work for the small business owners, but offering guidance and transmitting the knowledge students get at school through a personalized relationship. Such a service will create a win-win relationship, supporting business owners and giving the students hands-on experience." Yasnay was assisted by Dr. Dawn Addy (Director of FIU Labor Center) in developing her business model and looks to continue her studies at the graduate level.

The Honors College is more than a curriculum; it's a way of thinking and acting. Each of these students has adopted this outlook and used it to further themselves as innovators, scholars, and entrepreneurs. □



Left to right: **Dale Parsan** displays one of his custom-made fraternity pledge paddles. **Aleksandar Simeonov** has turned his love for the arts into a promising new business venture. **Yasnay Montalvo** helps out small businesses like her parents' Flagler Street dollar store (pictured in the background).

Social Entrepreneurship

Typically, business isn't considered a humanitarian affair. At its core, capitalism encourages disparities between different parties. In the 1990s, however, the concept of social entrepreneurship began to emerge. Social entrepreneurship is a departure from the competitive business environment; it encourages social reform through commercial practices. It looks to revitalize the human aspect of business by accepting contributions to the community as a basic cost of production. It's a model that views people not only as customers and consumers, but also as a society with needs and wants.

"The deeper meaning is that the investor foregoes a market rate of return in favor of sharing additional value with the recipient or customer for the service or product," explains new Honors College Fellow Robert Hacker, a financial consultant with over 35 years of experience. "Social entrepreneurship emerged as a business model in part as recognition that government and non-profit foundations can no longer address on a sufficient scale many social problems." As cultural expectations of what it means to be successful change, more aspiring entrepreneurs look to establish themselves in firms that not only pay the bills but also satisfy a passion for social improvement.

Before entering his current line of work, Professor Hacker had a long and distinguished career as a business guru. He has raised over $1.2 billion in capital over his career and has served as CFO for several companies. Hacker also has a profound understanding of what it means to work in a global workplace. He has operated firms in Japan, Indonesia, and Latin America. At FIU, he teaches courses in small business management and entrepreneurship for the College of Engineering and is a frequent speaker on business models and business plans, in addition to being a member of the Board of FIU's Eugenio Pino & Family Global Entrepreneurship Center.

An expert on entrepreneurship, Professor Hacker has taken his abilities to One Laptop per Child (OLPC), where he now serves as CFO. This nonprofit organization dedicates itself to giving children in developing nations low-cost, rugged laptop computers. The computers are used in conjunction with a novel curriculum that moves away from the 19th century "mass production" method of education toward a more independent, student-centered method. "In this new approach to learning the teacher is still a critical part of the process but the role changes from a director to a mentor or guide to facilitate self-discovery by the student," explains Hacker. The driving philosophy behind OLPC is that allowing a child a sense of autonomy fosters the critically important concept of self-esteem. Students become more motivated, giving rise to discovery and perhaps their first opportunity to aspire to a better life.

Beginning in fall 2012, Hacker will be teaching an Honors course entitled "Global Social Entrepreneurship - A Case Study Course." This year-long course will explore the social, economic and political complexities of social ventures with a focus on social entrepreneurship. Using six Harvard Business Review cases each semester, students will examine how to address social needs by developing an entrepreneurial venture. This interdisciplinary class will bring together students with various academic backgrounds and interests to devise comprehensive strategies and solutions to address important issues. Lectures, case studies and readings will prepare students to analyze a social challenge, come up with a business plan for a start-up enterprise as a team, and prepare to present their strategy to potential investors. ◻

Green Enterprise

Luciano Viola and Belinda Sardinas are 'Worlds Ahead" representatives of the Honors College's entrepreneurial spirit. They recently submitted their business proposal for a sustainable recycling program in Costa Rica to the Global Social Entrepreneurship Competition (GSEC). GSEC, a venture hosted by the University of Washington's Foster School of Business, invites students from across disciplines to form teams aimed at alleviating poverty. Commercial giants Microsoft and T-Mobile, among others, sponsor the competition. Each year GSEC engages over 400 professionals who act as mentors, judges, and sponsors for the competitors. The winning business plan is awarded over $30,000 to start the enterprise.

Luciano and Belinda's proposal describes a company that will collect recyclable materials from Costa Rican landfills and ship it to a facility in Miami, where the materials will be processed and sold to manufacturers. The ambitious duo originally developed their competition idea for the Honors College's Advanced Research and Creativity in Honors (ARCH) program, which promotes serious, sustained undergraduate research.

While waste management is a thriving division of the private sector domestically, this is not the case for many Latin American nations. Though more environmentally minded than its neighboring countries, Costa Rica is in dire need of waste management reform. Much of the waste, toxic or otherwise, is dumped in landfills. In many cases, citizens find themselves disposing of their trash in streets and rivers. For example, "I was really surprised that crematory methods of waste disposal are non-existent in Costa Rica," says Luciano. The need for environmentally conscious behavior is especially heightened for Costa Rica, a nation that relies heavily on ecotourism as a source of revenue. As a whole, Costa Rica is home to 5% of the entire planet's biodiversity, and hosts over a million tourists generating $1 billion annually. Luciano and Belinda believe that promoting social awareness of environmentally sustainable practices will have widespread effects.

Out of 170 applicants, representing 128 universities from 49 nations, FIU's team made it to the top group. The project has been put on temporary hold since Belinda was recently accepted into FIU's College of Law. Luciano will be working as an investment-banking analyst for Morgan Stanley's Financial Institutions Group in New York this summer. After graduation, he will be taking a trip through South America, India, and Asia. Upon returning, he will be starting a full-time position at Morgan Stanley. Nonetheless, both graduates hope to pursue this project further. □

Tina Vidal-Smith

Year in and year out, the Honors College produces students who revolutionize their fields. Occasionally, the College has the good fortune to welcome these students back. Tina Vidal-Smith is one such member of the Honors community. She has served on the Honors College's Community Advisory Council and this year became its Chair. She has also served on the FIU President's Council.

An exemplary FIU student, Vidal-Smith graduated magna cum laude in 2002 with a Bachelor's in International Business and Marketing. She subsequently earned a Master's of International Business.

After graduation, Tina joined with fellow FIU alum Ray Gonzalez to found the Pacer Health Company, where she currently serves as the Director of Corporate Operations. Pacer, which specializes in turning around financially distressed companies, has subsidiaries in a wide array of markets but concentrates on healthcare. Vidal-Smith served as CEO of two corporate subsidiaries before becoming Chief Operating Officer, Non-Medical Division, then Vice President of Business Development. Her efforts helped increase Pacer revenue from less than $100,000 at its inception to approximately $70 million in five years.

Vidal-Smith highlights flexibility as the key to her success: "I believe a lot of companies develop a strategic plan and follow it with a somewhat blind focus. But plans need to be adjusted with changing business environments and economics." Following this philosophy, she has helped Pacer diversify its portfolio to include firms dealing with alternative fuels and carbon footprinting. These markets are particularly lucrative because they are, to some extent, less susceptible to the pitfalls of the recent recession.

Vidal-Smith believes that companies have a responsibility to engage in sustainable practices. "Social responsibility and an awareness of how we are affecting our environment should be at the forefront of every company's decisions. Everything we do will affect what world we create for future generations."

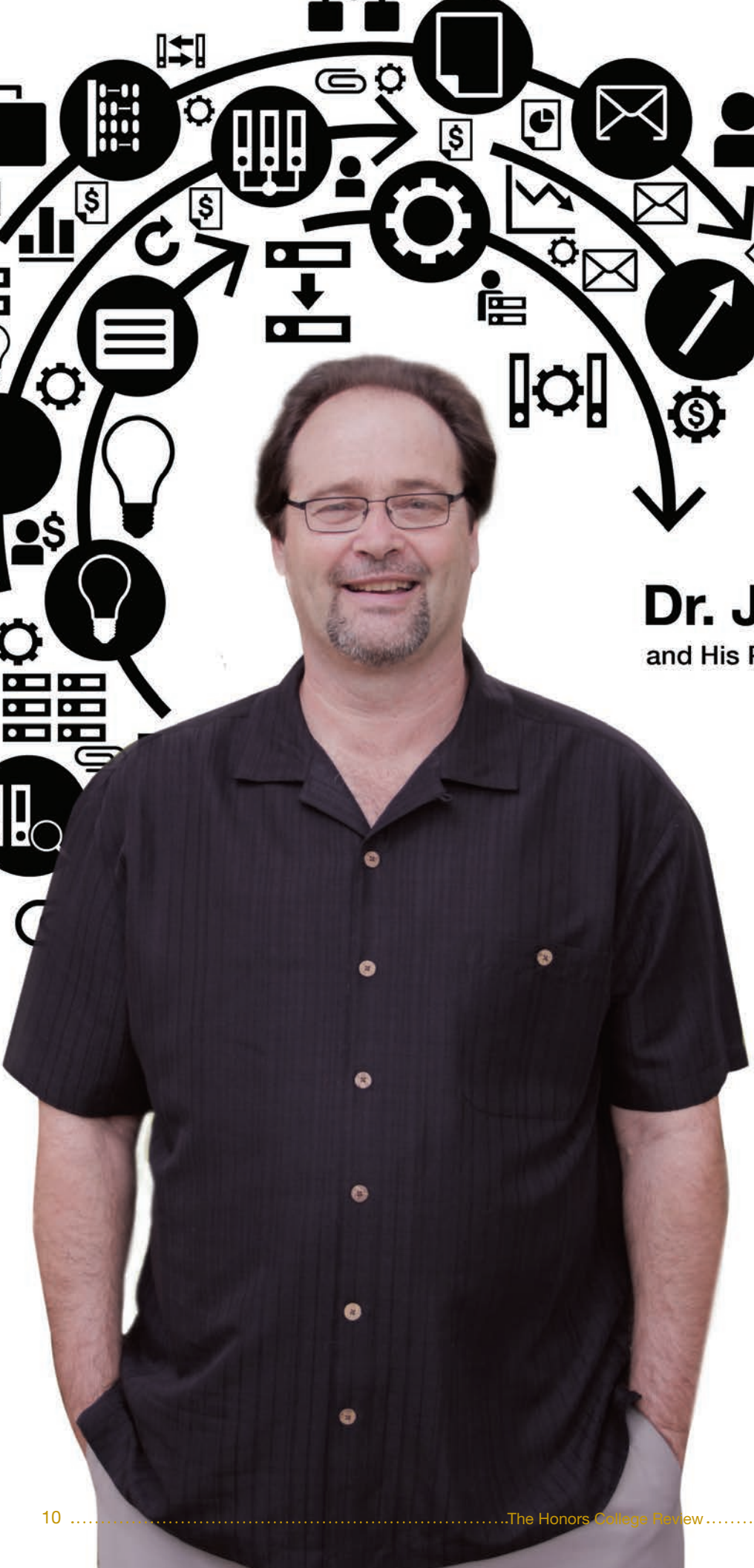
This sense of social responsibility is also evident in Vidal-Smith's involvement with Strong Women Strong Girls, a national mentorship program for elementary school girls. Each girl is paired with a working professional or college student in an effort to cultivate the next generation of female business leaders. "I grew up with extremely strong female role models, including my mother and grandmother," Vidal-Smith explains. "Having those influences in my life helped mold me as a woman and influenced my drive and ambition to succeed. It also generated a sense of self-empowerment, confidence, and strength in me that is important for all young girls to understand and feel. In an age when we are so focused on exterior appearances and the effects of bullying, it becomes even more important to teach young girls strength, self-awareness, confidence and achieving above all odds." Tina is one of eleven community leaders who sit on the organization's national Board of Directors.

Constant striving upwards defines the life of a working professional; there is no end, only the next tier. Tina has taken this to heart and has found yet another field of achievement. When she isn't running Pacer's operations or inspiring the next generation, she's managing some of the most pugnacious athletes Miami has to offer. As an owner and co-founder of the ML Management Group, Vidal-Smith has become one of the country's most respected managers of mixed martial arts fighters. Her roster boasts such fighters as Jeff Monson, the winner of numerous grappling world championships, and Thiago Silva, a popular UFC fighter and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu champion. "A lot of these guys had the talent, but needed someone to focus on marketing and promoting them and booking fights. Their job is to train and fight. My job is make sure they keep doing so," Vidal-Smith said in a recent interview for *The Examiner*. "My clients stick with me because I follow through on what I say. I have a no-surrender attitude." The name of Vidal-Smith's management group testifies to this approach. The "ML" of ML Management Group stands for "molon labe," ancient Greek for "Come and get them." The phrase, one of the few historically accurate lines uttered in the movie "300," was the reply of King Leonidas I of Sparta to the Persian army's demands that he surrender his weapons at the Battle of Thermopylae.

Tina Vidal Smith with her client, Miami-based Mixed Martial Arts fighter Jorge Masvidal.

Tina Vidal-Smith credits the Honors College with helping mold her into the multi-faceted professional she is today. "It gave me the breadth of knowledge required to communicate effectively in social settings with people from all over the world with different experiences and interests."

As an entrepreneur, Vidal-Smith offers this caveat to college students everywhere: "No matter what is going on, save at least 10% of everything you make. We are always going to experience tough times and you need to have a nest egg for when those times rear their ugly heads." She offers one more piece of sage advice: "Expect to fail many times over. When that happens, rather than getting down in the dumps, take the experience and learn from everything you did wrong so you can do it better and right the next time." Vidal-Smith encourages students to remain flexible and stay on their toes. When life gets tough, you have to roll with the punches. ◻



Dr. John Tsalikis

and His Perceptions of ~~Business~~ the World

The sign of a truly accomplished professor is publication. In this, Dr. John Tsalikis excels. The Associate Professor of Marketing has published voluminously, cementing his position as an expert in business ethics. Such titles as “The Effects of Cultural Isolation on Ethical Perceptions” and “Consumer Perceptions of Business Ethical Behavior in Former Eastern Block Countries” speak to Dr. Tsalikis’ refreshing take on the human aspect of business at home and abroad. His dedication to understanding economics from an interdisciplinary and international perspective has made him a valued Fellow in the Honors College. Tsalikis began his academic

career at Aristotelian University in Athens, Greece, where he earned his B.S. in Economics. He continued his education at Chicago's Roosevelt University, earning an M.S. in Marketing Communications, then graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1987 with a Ph.D. in Business Administration and a concentration in Marketing. He came to FIU in 1988. Since then he has been consistently rated as one of the university's best instructors.

Perhaps his best-known innovation, the Business Ethics Index, is a measure of consumer perceptions of ethical business behavior he developed with his colleague Bruce Seaton. According to Tsalikis, economics relies heavily on a sense of trust shared by all parties involved with a given transaction. Unethical behavior on anyone's part has deleterious consequences on the entire economic system. But different cultures have different ethical concerns: Americans care about good service and price gouging, while Indians and Chinese are fearful of harmful and fake products. Media can influence this measure, since consumers live vicariously through the news and media outlets. When they perceive another consumer being cheated by unethical practices, they also feel cheated. Despite what we all see on the evening news, Professor Tsalikis' research has turned up some surprising results: "While there are instances of unethical behavior in the U.S., Americans overall trust businesses."

Discussing the motivation behind his research, Tsalikis says sincerely, "I enjoy the process and the challenge of creation. I was the first to create the Business Ethics Index; no one had done something like it before. It was like stepping in the freshly fallen snow before everyone else. In addition, cooperating with my colleague Bruce Seaton has made the process even more rewarding. The intellectual give and take has elevated my thinking to greater levels. "

Tsalikis was a member of the Greek National Basketball team. He credits basketball with instilling in him the ability to strategize around a subject's strengths and weaknesses.

Clearly, John Tsalikis isn't your average business professor. As a young man in his native Greece, Tsalikis was a member of the Greek National Basketball team. He says that sports participation makes you both a risk-taker and an achiever. It is not the winning that counts; it is learning to take defeat in stride. He credits basketball with instilling in him the ability to strategize around a subject's strengths and weaknesses. Yet, he has a healthy respect for the vagaries of life: "Life in general is a series of random happenstances. Any small change and I could have been an office worker in Greece. The fact that I got fired from that job led to me coming to the U.S. and eventually to where I am now. It is the law of unintended consequences."

Almost into his third decade of teaching and research, John Tsalikis is far from hitting the proverbial wall. Between his research with the BEI and classes for the College of Business Administration, Tsalikis still finds time to teach within the Honors College. He pushes the boundaries of his student's perceptions of the world around them in his upper-division course, challenging them to recognize the limitations of human perception and their relation to the creation of knowledge. In true Honors fashion, Tsalikis' curiosity is never quite sated: "Sometimes I feel like starting over and studying physics and astronomy. It is never too late." □

International Business Honors Program

Making a stronger graduate

But what does Honors have to do with my major? This frequently asked question is resoundingly answered by the long-term partnership between the Honors College and the FIU College of Business in the International Business Honors (IBH) program. The goal of the IBH program is to provide a top-class, holistic education to the best and brightest in the two colleges. Combining rigorous courses in finance, marketing, accounting, and management with innovative courses in the Honors College, the International Business Honors program has continued to flourish since its inception. IBH challenges students to use multicultural perspectives and the expertise they acquire in their courses to enrich class discussions and group projects. Small classes enable students to work with both faculty and colleagues in a close-knit and highly interactive learning environment.

Honors students in the program benefit from the partnership between the College and the highly ranked FIU College of Business's International Business (IB) program, often listed among the top IB undergrad programs in the United States. *U. S. News & World Report* has consistently ranked FIU's undergraduate international business programs in the top 20 undergraduate international business programs in the country since 2003.

Students in the program can choose to select a region and a corresponding language as a focus for their studies. The current curriculum offers courses that focus on Asia, Latin America, and Europe. Alternatively, students can focus on the international aspects of a specific business function. Program Director Constance Bates works with each student to prepare a plan of study that strategically aligns with the student's career goals. Students in the program are encouraged to study abroad for at least one summer. Dr. Bates, an Associate Professor in the Department of Management and International Relations, has served as the director of the IBH program for the past two years. Her interdisciplinary background (art history, economics, business management) has well prepared her to work with Honors students. She encourages IBH students to participate in various conferences and competitions around the country, including the Honors College's ARCH program.

In 2005, IBH students undertook a service project in Bangkok over spring break. In partnership with programs and students from Thai universities, the students spent their spring break in Thailand working with children. They spent the months leading up to the trip in leadership training, team development work, and massive fundraising. They also developed an undergraduate journal focusing on business and social issues surrounding globalization. Twenty-two Honors students participated the first year, twenty-six in 2006, and twenty-seven in 2007. The College is considering reviving this successful and popular opportunity in conjunction with the Alternative Break program.

Recently the College of Business, recognizing the value of the program, decided to expand the concept to other IBH students as well as those from the Honors College. IBH – itself an entrepreneurial venture – serves as a successful model for possible collaborations with other colleges at FIU. ◻

The competition was intense...

The FIU team was nervous, excited, but ready. Composed completely of Honors College students, the team was presented with a financial case and given four weeks to develop a functioning entrepreneurial business model for it. They presented their case in February at the annual Johnson & Johnson University Case Competition to a panel of campus judges and representatives from Johnson & Johnson.

Honors students Carlos Gomez, Prince Mikado, Giorgio Izzo, Litong Chen, and Maximilian Staedler were tasked with creating a strategy around the acquisition of licensing rights for an organic European skincare product on behalf of an American pharmaceutical corporation. The FIU team, along with teams from nine other universities, advanced beyond the regional level of the competition and was ready to present their case at the final stage of the competition. "Our proposed strategy was to differentiate the product from internal and external competitors by offering it in boutique cosmetics stores. It would be backed by a comprehensive marketing plan that would ensure it was supported by knowledgeable employees and associated with desirable celebrities," explains Gomez.

Competition group at Johnson & Johnson headquarters in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

From left to right: Carlos Gomez, Giorgio Izzo, Litong Chen, Maximilian Staedtler, Prince Mikado

"The best part of participating," says Staedtler, "was the teamwork experience. Our diverse team of one freshman, one sophomore, one junior, one senior, and one graduating senior has been very disciplined and motivated." The FIU team members hail from Cuba, Nigeria, Germany, Italy, and China. As diverse as this team seems at first blush, their similarities are responsible for their high-caliber work. Izzo recalls the search for dedicated members of the team as an almost serendipitous process. All shared a strong work ethic and high motivation, as well as the same academic goals. Each is a member of the International Business Honors program and a finance major.

Gomez, Mikado, and Staedtler have the most competition experience in the group, having participated in several case competitions in their years at FIU. Izzo and Chen, however, are new to competition. While Izzo has several years of business classes that aided him in preparing for this project, Chen , a freshman, was in a whole new world. Everything she needed to know about finance and public speaking she learned from her teammates. Chen says that preparing for this competition has boosted her confidence in her public speaking abilities. "I was nervous about presenting to Johnson & Johnson executives, especially since I had to introduce our team. I was shaking." Chen emigrated from China when she was fourteen. A native Mandarin speaker, Litong found that "without a solid foundation in the English language, I struggled tremendously with my education and was teased by other students. But after many years of hard work, I have found my passion and direction."

The Johnson & Johnson Case Competition team personifies the emphasis on international perspective in the Honors College and the university at large. Gomez and Staedtler are both interested in working in the alternative energy sector. Gomez plans to focus on the East Asian market. Mikado is intensely studying Latin America and the Caribbean; his ultimate goal is to become the U.S. Ambassador to Brazil. Chen plans to return to China and establish an international entertainment company. Izzo is set on working for IBM. The future of international business lies with students like these, who are training diligently to view the world as a single expansive market.

The FIU team made it to the final round of competition hosted at the Johnson & Johnson New Jersey headquarters in March. Congratulations! □

Perseverance Personified

Joel Gandara (2003). Persistence is worth more to a hopeful entrepreneur than ability. This is the working mantra of Joel Gandara, Honors graduate and founder of Underwear Station, Inc. Gandara graduated from the Honors College with a Bachelor's degree in International Relations and a minor in Business Administration. He was the president of the American Marketing Association at FIU in addition to being a member of several honor societies. Despite being a successful and bright student, a decade passed between Gandara's graduation from high school and his graduation from college: "That's what happens when you work full-time and spend every free moment working on starting a business."

What started as a side venture became an international business with divisions on three continents. Underwear Station, Inc., is a wholesale distributor and manufacturer of men's underwear and swimwear. With 100+ employees, a factory in Colombia, and clients in European markets, the South Florida enterprise has come a long way from its humble beginnings. Gandara recalls buying his first samples of clothing from a veteran sales representative at a garage sale: "The first purchase I made from him was worth $550 (his entire inventory) and quickly it turned into about $3,000."

Frequent appearances and success at flea markets motivated Gandara to expand his customer base and take his inventory to eBay. Despite working 40-hour weeks with his day job and being an active student, it was only a matter of months before Underwear Station had its first exclusive international brand.

The accomplishment prompted Gandara to take his name and wares to his first trade show in Las Vegas. "This was a massive investment for me at the time. Just the 10' x 10' space to showcase my small collection cost about $5,000, plus airfare, hotel, food, etc. That first show I felt was a complete failure. I only managed to get three small stores to buy from me and my total sales from the show were about $4,000. Of that $4,000, $2,500 alone went to pay for the products that I had to buy."

Gandara returned to Miami discouraged and uncertain. Two months had passed since his graduation from FIU and the Honors College and life had presented its own set of demands: Gandara had married a few months earlier, taken a mortgage on a condo, and had no source of steady income. He abandoned Underwear Station temporarily, opting instead to become a sales representative with another company. At his new job, Gandara received the comprehensive sales training he was lacking. Through almost a year of 12-hour days, he developed into a savvy professional. Returning to Underwear Station, he applied what he had learned and the company blossomed, reporting peak gains of 300% over previous years, despite the economic downturn.

From an early age, Gandara showed glimpses of the entrepreneur he would one day become. He recalls a particular transaction from 4th grade: "I used to buy collector cards that came in packs. I think they came in packs of 10 cards and they were 50 cents per pack. I would resell each card for 10 cents, doubling my money. One day I had a card that three friends

wanted to buy from me. 'OK,' I said, 'since you all want it so bad at 10 cents, what would you say if the price was 50 cents?' One friend folded his cards and walked away. I was still left with two bidders. I could not believe it; this meant that my 5-cent investment was now worth more than 50 cents! I felt very bold and I told my two remaining bidders that we would solve this by making the new price $1.00. One kid said no, but the other one said, "YES!" and took it. He went away very happy and so did I. I was maybe 10 years old then and I still can close my eyes and remember that moment in detail, and the excitement that I felt at the time. I don't know if I spent that money on bubble gum, soda or what, but I know that I learned a very valuable lesson. I did not learn it by writing a business plan or dreaming; instead I learned it by investing a couple dollars and testing it out."

Gandara offers as his single most valuable piece of entrepreneurial wisdom the maxim that practical experience is the key. While many young business people spend all their efforts developing a detailed business plan, website, and business cards, few take the time to dive into their intended markets and test the waters. All the preparation in the world is useless, he says, if you don't know if there is a demand for your product and how strong that demand is.

Gandara's perseverance, willingness to be a lifelong learner, and innovative ideas have combined to make him a highly successful entrepreneur at the age of 36. ◻

Honors Entrepreneurs

Ana Perez (2012) is assisting her father in expanding Pathway Genomics, a consumer DNA testing company, into her native country of Venezuela. Perez graduated from the Honors College with a Bachelor's degree in International Business and Green Management. Pathway Genomics offers affordable DNA testing to the general public to provide customers with insight into any genetic predispositions they may have for diseases. This technology allowed Perez's father to identify his genetically determined risk for hemochromatosis and take preventive action before he fell ill. Perez believes Pathway Genomics can help revolutionize not only the medical industry but also entire economies. A fascination with its rhythmic nature and a study abroad trip to Brazil compelled Perez to pursue a second Bachelor's degree in Portuguese. She also plans to utilize her passion for Brazilian culture and familiarity with Portuguese to further expand Pathway Genomics into Brazil. At FIU, Perez was active in many student organizations, including the International Business Honor Society, the Brazilian Culture Club, the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, and the Golden Key Honor Society. As a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Perez was awarded the Outstanding Academic Achievement Award in Portuguese. Perez hopes to return to FIU in the near future to pursue a master's degree in transformational leadership in organizations. ◘

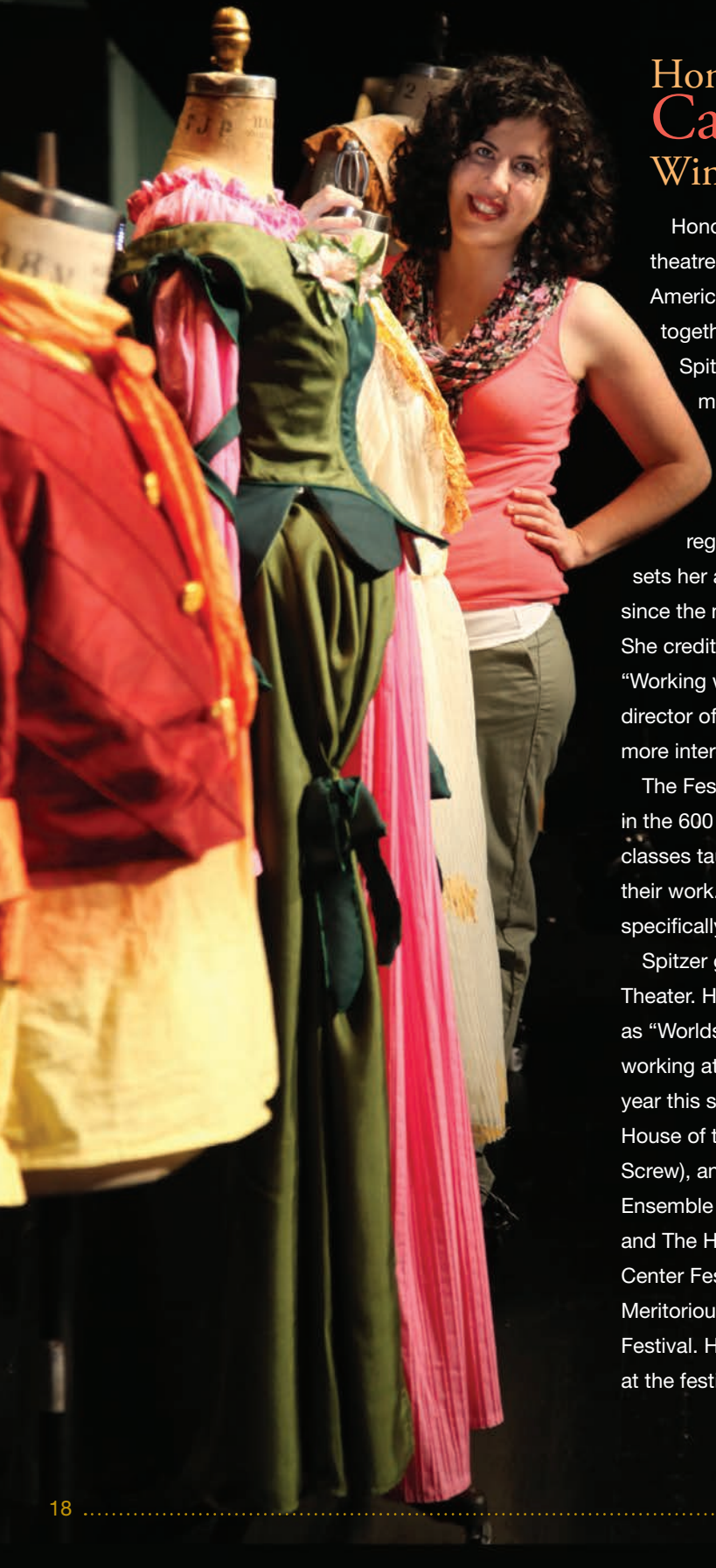
Marcel Navarro (1993) is the principal in MMG Equity Partners, a privately owned full-service real estate development company focused on long-term ownership, management, development, and acquisition of commercial properties throughout South Florida. Navarro has an accounting degree from FIU and an M.B.A. from the University of Miami. Prior to founding MMG, he served as Chief Financial Officer of Navarro Discount Pharmacies, a $350 million retail drug chain in South Florida. He became a member of the FIU Foundation Board of Directors in September 2008. ◘

Jay Starkman (1985) is the founder and CEO of Engage PEO, a firm that provides human resources to corporations. Prior to founding Engage, Starkman was the president and chief executive officer of AlphaStaff Group, Inc. In less than a decade, he grew AlphaStaff ten-fold, taking it from a small organization to a top-five professional employer organization (PEO) with over 70,000 worksite employees, the fastest growing PEO over that period. Starkman sold the company in 2008 to a private equity group. Earlier, Starkman was president and CEO of OneChem, a software application provider to the chemical industry. Starkman was an active member of the board of directors of ESAC (Employee Services Assurance Corporation), the accrediting body for the PEO industry. He also served on the board of the National Association of Professional Employer Organizations. Starkman has received numerous awards and recognition for his accomplishments in the PEO industry, including Florida's Top Entrepreneur by *Florida Business Leader* in 2010; HRO Top Superstar by *HRO Today* in 2005, 2006 and 2007; and Florida TrendSetter by *Florida Trend* in 2004. ◘

Joseph S. Steen (1997) is the founder of EmpowerIt, an Aventura company that provides IT support. After obtaining his B.S. in Biology, Steen spent 6 months working at the Ortho/Rehab center at Jackson Memorial Hospital. After working as a service engineer and sales manager, in 2001 Steen opened Falconwind Consulting, an information technology support firm. After 7 years of independent operations, Steen joined Conquest Technology Services. At Conquest, he handled the roles of Director of Operations, CFO, and direct sales associate, helping Conquest grow by almost 40% in a down economy during his tenure of just over two years, while facilitating the development of a functional managed services delivery model. Steen seeks to repeat this success with EmpowerIt. ◻

Alexis Mantecon (2000) is the owner and manager of MV Real Estate Holdings. He graduated summa cum laude from FIU's College of Business with degrees in Finance and International Business. Subsequently, Mantecon worked his way up to become the vice president of a multi-national hedge fund with offices in Boca Raton, Hong Kong, Switzerland, and Toronto. He was involved in day-to-day operations, generated business, and managed the real estate portfolio of the fund. This experience prepared him to establish MV Real Estate Holdings, which focuses on the acquisition, turnaround, and management of distressed real estate assets. ◻

Luck favors those who can adapt and prosper. Friend and benefactor of the Honors College **Joe Carvelli** knows what it takes to stay on top when things don't go exactly as planned. Carvelli graduated from FIU in 1975 with a B.A. in Psychology, set on a path toward becoming a clinical psychologist. Along the way, Carvelli switched focus and went to work for an employment agency as a recruiter, helping local companies find permanent and temporary personnel. After thirteen years in the industry, he was looking for new opportunities. While interviewing for new positions, he recalls receiving a phone call from a previous client about finding personnel. "He said he had called my previous agency looking for me, was told I was no longer there, said thank you, hung up, and looked me up in the phone book. He found my number and called me at home. I was happy to hear from him, but puzzled that he went to such an effort to find me." Taken by surprise, Carvelli explained that he was no longer with his previous agency and had none of the appropriate files or resources to help him. "Look, Joe, I did not use the agency you worked for because of them, I used them because of you. Find me a clerk," insisted the client. Carvelli figured that if someone was willing to track him down and hire him, despite his repeated disclaimers, Why not help him out? Working from his kitchen table with no employees, Carvelli founded Your Staffing Source, Inc. Now into his twelfth year as president of the company, he is competing with large staffing firms by adhering to a simple principle: Be as thorough and personable as possible. To the ambitious young entrepreneurs of the Honors College, Carvelli says, "Love what you do. You will not enjoy every aspect of business ownership, but every aspect of business ownership is still your responsibility. You will have many things working against you from time to time. When those burdens seem insurmountable, always remember the bigger picture is that you are doing what you truly love." ◻



Honors Student
Caroline Spitzer
Wins National Award

Honors College senior Caroline Spitzer was one of thousands of theatre students from around the country at the Kennedy Center American College Theater National Festival in April. The event brings together the top students and faculty in the world of theater. But Spitzer was soon no longer one of the crowd. A Theater Design major, she won the top award for Outstanding Costume Design at the event.

Spitzer had been invited to participate in the D.C. event after receiving an award for her costume designs at the regional level of the festival in Daytona Beach. The distinction sets her apart as the premier collegiate costume designer in the nation, since the nomination pool included both student and faculty designers. She credits the Honors College with helping her realize her vision: "Working with my ARCH Mentor Michael Yawney, who was also the director of the show, helped me to expand beyond the visual, and take a more interdisciplinary approach to my research."

The Festival aims to stimulate and recognize college theater programs in the 600 participating academic institutions. Participants attend master classes taught by acclaimed artists and professionals, who also review their work. The festival honors excellence in overall production and specifically in playwriting, acting, criticism, directing, and design.

Spitzer graduated this spring with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Theater. Her achievements earned her an FIU presidential designation as "Worlds Ahead" at her commencement ceremony. She will be working at the Texas Shakespeare Festival for her third consecutive year this summer. Spitzer has designed costumes for FIU Theatre (The House of the Spirits, Twelfth Night), FIU School of Music (The Turn of the Screw), and the New World School of the Arts College Opera Theatre Ensemble (The Bartered Bride). Her designs for both Twelfth Night and The House of the Spirits received nominations from the Kennedy Center Festival. Caroline's designs for The House of the Spirits received Meritorious Achievement in costume design at the 2012 Region IV Festival. Her millinery work earned her an Honorable Mention in millinery at the festival in 2011. □

The 2011-2012 Excellence Lectures

Honors alumna, author and journalist **Ana Menendez (1992)** appeared in the fall of 2011, discussing "The Future of the Story in the Information Age." Menendez shared her experiences as a writer and gave aspiring writers and journalists a realistic perspective on the challenges and changes in her field. Since 1991, Menendez has worked as a journalist in the United States and abroad, including as an award-winning columnist for *The Miami Herald*. She has written about Cuba, Haiti, Kashmir, Afghanistan and India and is the author of three award-winning books of fiction. Her work has appeared in a variety of publications, including *Vogue*, *Bomb Magazine*, *Poets & Writers* and *Gourmet Magazine*, and in anthologies such as *Cubanisimo!* and *American Food Writing*. She recently published a new novel, *Adios, Happy Homeland*, and contributed to an anthology of original stories, *Blue Christmas: Holiday Stories for the Rest of Us*.

Historian and community engagement scholar **Ira Harkavy** delivered the spring 2012 Excellence Lecture, addressing "The Role of Civic Engagement in Advancing Research, Education, Service, and Learning." His talk provided a detailed overview of the historical role of higher education in community involvement and attracted many attendees from among FIU's administrators as the University seeks to expand and refine its community engagement activities. As Founding Director of the Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania, Harkavy has developed and taught service-learning courses and overseen the creation of a major project to create university-assisted community schools in West Philadelphia. Under his leadership, the Netter Center for Community Partnerships received the inaugural William T. Grant Foundation Youth Development Prize and a Best Practices/Outstanding Achievement Award from HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research. Harkavy has served as a consultant to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and helped create its Office of University Partnerships.

Women's sports scholar and University of Minnesota Kinesiology Professor **Mary Jo Kane** delivered the second Spring Excellence lecture, on "Media Representations of Female Athletes: The Good, the Bad and the Sexy." She discussed why sportswomen are routinely portrayed in the media in terms of their femininity and sexuality rather than their athletic talent and the negative consequences of this kind of representation. Kane cited her recent work demonstrating that the average sports fan is more interested in performance skill than the sexualized representation of the female athlete highlighted in sports media. Kane is Director of the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport at the University of Minnesota and a Fellow of the National Academy of Kinesiology, the highest academic honor in her field. She was recently named one of the 100 Most Influential Sports Educators by the Institute for International Sport.

Advanced Research and Creativity in Honors (ARCH)

Undergrad Research Program Grows Exponentially

The Honors College ARCH program is pleased to announce the inception of the new Honors-to-Graduate (H_2G) program designed to encourage Honors students to remain at FIU for their graduate studies. The program, supported by the Graduate School and the Division of Research, provides stipends for students assigned to work with faculty on funded research projects. These students will have the kind of responsibilities and opportunities usually afforded graduate students and will be encouraged to remain working on their projects as they pursue their advanced degrees. This cutting-edge program builds communities of researchers across the various levels of scholarship at the university and helps FIU keep its best and brightest at the graduate level.

Other aspects of the College's Advanced Research and Creativity in Honors (ARCH) program also are flourishing. Eighty of the Honors College's best student researchers presented their work at the College's Ninth Annual ARCH Conference in late March. The presentations were the products of a year's intensive work under the direction of faculty mentors from across the university's disciplines. ARCH is the center of interdisciplinary undergraduate research at FIU, matching talented undergraduate students with university research faculty. Students may work on funded faculty projects or find a mentor to work with them on a topic of personal interest. A College-wide program, the ARCH option includes senior research projects, departmental Honors theses, and International Business Honors theses, allowing students to do concentrated research in their majors as part of their Honors education.

ARCH has evolved quickly over the last three years. Almost 40% more students and faculty mentors are now involved in the program. This year, the continuing increase in the quality of the work presented and the number of student researchers has required the expansion of the conference to two days. Moreover, peer-centered affinity groups have been created in which four to six students from similar disciplines work together or conduct research on topics where interdisciplinary communication can advance their work.

Increasingly, research experience is becoming a key advantage for undergraduates pursuing graduate studies. In fact, graduate schools and employers expect it from their applicants. Studies conducted by the Michigan Department of Education and SRI International concluded that participation in undergraduate research directly correlates with higher levels of student retention and motivates students who previously were not interested in advanced graduate studies to pursue Ph.D.s. These benefits extend not only to students studying the sciences and mathematics, but to those in the social sciences and humanities as well.

"ARCH has created a definitive template for undergraduate research in a large university," says Dean Lesley Northup. "Our nine years' experience in this area has enabled us to continually expand and innovate." ARCH now includes the 6-credit research course option, H_2G, the annual conference, and subsidized participation of students in national and international conferences for which their work is accepted. □

ARCH
Advanced Research and Creativity in Honors

Honors partners with Miami-Dade magnet schools

Students from the Jose Marti MAST 6-12 Academy visited the Advanced Research and Creativity in Honors (ARCH) Conference on March 26th. This field trip marked the beginning of a partnership between the cutting-edge magnet school and the Honors College. The MAST 6-12 Academy is a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) school, with a particular focus on life science, physical science, and mathematics/computer science. The interdisciplinary curriculum employs a concept-based learning approach to prepare its students for STEM occupations. These fields are projected to grow by 17 percent from 2008 to 2018, compared to 9.8 percent growth for non-STEM occupations. Professionals in these areas command higher wages, earning 26 percent more than their non-STEM counterparts. Honors College graduate Sofia Buttacavoli, now an administrator at the Academy, contacted the College about a potential partnership after reading the last issue of *Summa Cum Laude*. The project will emulate the ARCH program, with Honors students serving as mentors to the younger Academy students as they prepare their own research projects. ◻

Danny Tapanes Receives Highest FIU Student Honor

Honors College junior **Daniel Tapanes** received the Presidential Award this April at the annual Outstanding Student Life Awards ceremony hosted by the Division of Student Affairs. Tapanes was honored for his research and charitable work in the Peruvian Amazon and the U.S., and his active contribution to the life of the College and the University. The Presidential Award, the highest honor a student can receive from Student Affairs, recognizes students who have introduced a new tradition or program to the university. Tapanes worked with local officials in the Orosa River area to develop a rural medical clinic for the indigenous Yagua Indian communities. The project arose from his Honors study abroad trip to the Amazon, when he realized that the native population had virtually no access to medical care. Tapanes secured land for the clinic, had plans drawn up, and has employed contractors to build it; they broke ground this June. He is working with several other universities and medical schools to make his dream a reality.

No stranger to philanthropic work, Tapanes also has founded two non-profit organizations, one of which collects and distributes thousands of new children's books to underserved areas. He also grows out his own hair, then has it cut and donated to Locks of Love, which makes wigs for cancer patients.

Tapanes' immediate plans call for traveling with December's Honors study abroad in Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia, where he will work with local hospitals for the poor. He plans to earn an M.S. in Public Health, then continue directly to an M.D./Ph.D. program. His goal is to provide medical care in underserved communities around the world. ◻

Honors Student Wins Business Award

Honors College alumna **Brayanna Peralta (2011)** was selected as a finalist for the 2011 Georgia Tech CIBER Best Paper Award at the 2011 Conference of the Academy of International Business, Southeast USA Chapter. The winning paper was her Honors thesis, "The Impact of Historical Conflict on Negotiation Processes and Outcomes." It was completed as a requirement for the FIU International Business Honors program. Professor Sungu Armagan of the Department of Management and International Business served as Peralta's thesis mentor.

The Academy of International Business is the leading association of scholars and specialists in the field of international business. It boasts 3,224 members in 76 different countries around the world. Members include scholars from leading global academic institutions as well as consultants, researchers, government representatives, and NGO representatives. ◻

A member of the Honors College Community Advisory Board since 2010, multi-business owner **Raul Rodriguez** developed a close relationship with the College through its involvement in Sweetwater, where Rodriguez owns the Li'l Abner Mobile Home Park, which houses about a quarter of the city's residents. His extensive philanthropic commitment to the people of Li'l Abner, in the form of scholarships for young residents to attend Belen and FIU and the establishment of the Li'l Abner Community Center, brought his interests together with those of the College. For several years, Honors students have served as interns in Rodriguez's enterprises.

An uncommonly creative entrepreneur, Rodriguez has a wide array of business interests. He is founder and president of Agua Dulce Investments, LLC, a private investment and family wealth management company. He is also the chairman and vice president of NAS Homes, an importer and exporter of home products with offices in China and Mexico. As the founder, chairman and president of Lunar Entertainment, he has ownership interest in Segafredo's Café and Irish Pubs. He is a partner in the Fuentes Rodriguez Consulting Group, and serves on several corporate boards. Recently, Rodriguez started National Health Transport, a medical and nonmedical transport company, which became a virtual overnight success. Proving that business and pleasure aren't necessarily opposites, Rodriguez has also turned a passion for horses into Rosa Horses, a prestigious Paso Fino ranch. In his "free" time, he serves as a SWAT team police officer in Sweetwater, and teaches martial arts to youngsters at the Community Center.

As president of the Rayni Foundation, Rodriguez has provided over a hundred scholarships so that immigrant children can succeed in school. The Belen alum is also the founder and president of the Lil' Abner Foundation, which offers tutoring to children in collaboration with the Honors College, Belen, and Lourdes Academy, as well as sports clinics and health classes. Speaking of his foundation's scholarships each year to Belen and FIU, Rodriguez says, "My core philosophy is that any child, given the proper tools, encouragement, protection and opportunities can succeed in life. We need to share our knowledge and treasure with others and for the service of others."

Rodriguez is currently planning the first-ever Halloween-Charitable 5KRun/Walk to be held on Sunday, Oct. 28, at Dolphin Mall. The last mile of this unique event will take place inside the mall. This will be the first charitable run in the history of the City of Sweetwater and of Dolphin Mall. The race will be produced and marketed by U.S. Road Sports, the same company that produces the ING Miami Marathon. It joins a golf tournament and a sparkling gala held annually at FIU as Rodriguez-driven fundraising events. Last year's gala featured musical performances and flamenco dancing, as well as a choreographed exhibition of two magnificent Paso Finos.

Though he was never a student of the College himself, Rodriguez has supported its mission whole-heartedly. "The leadership that the Honors College has is second to none. They demonstrate that they care for their students' success and for the community in which they operate. The students in the program are qualified and motivated. They want to succeed and give their time to see others succeed. In my book, this is what makes a perfect team."

Rodriguez has been a key player in the success of the multi-faceted Sweetwater Partnership that the College has forged with the city, helping the College improve the quality of life of the residents of the municipality while encouraging Honors College students to develop into informed and engaged citizens His many contributions to the College—in addition to serving on the Advisory Board, he has hosted a Dinner with Future Leaders, been a generous donor, and provided space for events in his restaurants—have made Rodriguez a highly admired and valued member of the Honors College community. □

Norman Uriarte has joined the CAB this spring. Uriarte, an Honors College alum, is the president of Panorama Travel and is responsible for the development of Panorama Service Expeditions (PSE), Panorama's division for creating, developing, organizing, and managing global service projects for colleges and universities. The PSE staff has created, led, or participated in Alternative Break projects in Central America, South America, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean.

Noel J. Guillama-Alvarez is a nationally recognized expert and lecturer on healthcare management and the use of technology in healthcare. He is the chairman of Guillama, Inc., a strategic operations consulting and management company, and has led in the development and construction of a wide range of projects, including roads, medical facilities, commercial complexes and infrastructure facilities. He is also the Founder and Chairman of The Quantum Group, a healthcare information technology company and of SynaBee, which markets a customizable IT platform for large organizations. The Havana native was named an FIU Honorary Alumnus in 1999 and is a member of the FIU Foundation Board of Directors.

Douglas Jones is an insurance broker with Weinstein, Jones, & Associates. He specializes in developing insurance programs for law firms and large businesses. Jones graduated from FIU with a Bachelor's degree in Public Relations. Several universities recruited him to play football out of Monsignor Pace High School in Miami. Jones decided to play for the 2002 inaugural FIU football team, and was punter for the team until his graduation in 2005.

Jack F. Gonzalez is a director at BDO USA, a professional services firm providing assurance, tax, financial advisory, and consulting services to companies. Gonzalez has over 20 years of development, marketing, and management experience in South Florida. He has long taken an active role at FIU as the president of the Alumni Association Board of Directors and as an FIU Foundation Board member. He has also been involved in several leadership and fundraising initiatives for organizations like the Miami Symphony Orchestra.

Honors College Alumni Chapter Board Vice President and CAB member **Carlos A. Somoza** was the keynote speaker at the Honors College graduation ceremony this past fall. A former Senior Tax Manager at BDO USA, he is now an international tax principal with Kaufman, Rossin & Company. Somoza is also an avid triathlete, having finished three Ironman triathlons.

Congratulations to Honors College alumna **Tina Vidal-Smith** on becoming the new chair of the CAB. She succeeds Orlando Gonzalez, for whose exemplary service the College is truly grateful. **Jonathan Cameron** is the new vice-chair.

FOOD for TALK

The third annual Honors College Food for Talk event was held at Steve Haas' City Hall restaurant on April 19, 2012. This year's program included ten FIU scholars and community leaders, including the deans of the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Nursing, and Architecture and the Arts. Winemaker Peter Schnebly generously donated tropical fruit wine from his famous Redland-based winery for the cocktail portion of the event. Also hosting a table was Hispanic television personality and therapist Nancy Alvarez. Guests had dinner in the restaurant's second-floor loft while discussing a topic of interest focused on the table hosts' expertise. All proceeds from this successful event went to deserving Honors College students and helped advance the College's mission of transformative education.

What are they up to?

FIU Graduate student **Adam Johnson (2010)** was named a "Worlds Ahead" graduate at the spring commencement. Adam earned a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from FIU and this year completed a Master's degree in Asian Studies with an emphasis in Chinese political economy and East Asian security issues. He also worked as a teaching assistant, the first T.A. in the program to teach his own class (Introduction to East Asia). Adam interned with the U.S. Southern Command, working in the Policy and Strategy Directorate, and received fellowships from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to conduct research and study in China and Brazil. Johnson will be serving our nation in the U.S. Army Special Forces. He hopes to join the 1st Special Forces Group, which carries out counter-terrorism and other operations in East and Southeast Asia. After his service with the Army, Johnson plans to complete a Ph.D. or law degree and work for the U.S. government, with the ultimate goal of one day becoming a university professor. ◻

Another "Worlds Ahead" graduate, **Humberto Solano Costa (2012),** earned a B.A. in International Relations with a minor in Political Science. Solano Costa also earned certificates in National Security, Latin America Studies, and European Studies. He was an avid participant in the Honors College's Sweetwater program, spending two years advocating news literacy and conducting research into the educational trends of the Sweetwater community. Solano Costa's research led him to develop an initiative through which Sweetwater businesses provided financial support to five Sweetwater residents so that they could attend college. The Angolan native won numerous distinctions during his undergraduate studies at FIU, including Academic Excellence Awards in Psychology, Communication, and Honors Spanish; acceptance into the Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society; the President's Honor Certificate; the FIU Dean's List; and the General Consulate of Angola Merit Award. He is also the winner of the 2008 Peggy C. Raker Annual Speech Contest. Solano Costa was recently promoted to the position of vice president of the Assembly of God Bethlehem Ministry in addition to his current service on the Brazilian District Council. He is married and has two small children. ◻

Ashley Rousseau (2009) is Development and Marketing Coordinator at the FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, and is in the process of earning a Masters of Public Administration at FIU. She graduated from the Honors College with a B.S. in Mass Communication and a minor in Psychology. During her tenure as an Honors student, Rousseau helped curate two art exhibitions as part of Professor John Bailly's popular Aesthetics & Values course, raised

Brennezza DaParre Garcia (2005) graduated from the Honors College with a B.A. in Political Science. She was active in a host of student organizations, including Gamma Epsilon Phi (Honors College Honor Society), the Order of Omega (Greek Honor Society), Omicron Delta Kappa (International Leadership Honor Society), the Order of the Torch (FIU Leadership Honor Society), the Student Alumni Association, the Student Government Association, the Homecoming Council, Panther Rage, the Greek Programming Council, and Phi Sigma Sigma sorority. She started her career at FIU as a student assistant and served as Executive Assistant to both President Modesto Maidique and President Mark Rosenberg. Currently, she is the FIU Deputy Chief of Staff. Like most Honors students, DaParre Garcia's education continued. In 2007, she graduated with an M.S. in Higher Education Administration. Three years later, she returned to graduate school to pursue an Ed.D. in Higher Education. She expects to graduate in 2014 and aspires to become a university Vice President.

funds for underprivileged children in Thailand as part of IBH, and served as Vice President for Project Nur, a chapter of a student organization dedicated to advancing religious understanding. She was also an active volunteer with Hands On Miami, frequently serving as a volunteer leader for many of their projects.

Anthony Rionda (2009) assumed the position of Chief of Staff of the FIU College of Law in April. He graduated from the Honors College with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science. Rionda was an exemplary leader during his undergraduate studies, earning a Virginia Carter Smith C.A.S.E Award. As president of the Student Government Association, he was responsible for managing an $11 million budget and served on the FIU Board of Trustees. Rionda was also a member of the Honors College Leadership Council, Pi Sigma Alpha Honor Society, Golden Key Honor Society, and Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity. He went on to complete a Masters in Public Administration, and will be pursuing a Ph.D. in History. Rionda is a former assistant director of the FIU Alumni Association.

Ernesto Alonso (2011) graduated from the Honors College as an International Relations major with a minor in Economics. He is currently an intern in D.C. at a major lobbying firm and was an intern in FIU's federal liaison office in the fall of 2011. He studied at the Universidad de Seville in 2008 and in 2007, studied in Regensburg, Germany. He has also received a prestigious Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship to study at the University of Cape Town in 2012-13. He intends to pursue a Master's in Economics or Global Governance at FIU.

In Memoriam
Damion R. Dunn
Class of 2004

WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
Share your story at **honors.fiu.edu/share**

Everglades Day

Honors College Alumni volunteered to clean up the area around the historical Nike Missile site in Everglades National Park on February 4, 2012. This private location once housed anti-aircraft missiles during the height of the Cold War. After finishing the service project, 4th-Year Everglades Honors professors Peter Machonis and Devon Graham gave the group a guided walking tour of the Anhinga and Gumbo Limbo Trails.

FIU | Honors College

Modesto A. Maidique Campus
DM 233
Miami, FL 33199

honors@fiu.edu
305-348-4100

Change Service Requested

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
MIAMI FL
PERMIT NO 3675

cambodia & vietnam

December 9, 2012 to January 3, 2013

The Honors College is pleased to announce a new study abroad program to Vietnam and Cambodia. The first Honors foreign study program to be offered in Southeast Asia, and the first to be held during the winter, this exciting new study abroad program will feature the culture, history, and art of Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam, as well as serivce opportunities.

The program will travel to Bangkok, Thailand for 4 days, Vietnam (Saigon, Danang, Hoi An, Hanoi) for 9 days, and Cambodia (Siem Reap, Phnom Penh) for 13 days.

The program is open to both students and alumni.
honors.fiu.edu/vietnam-cambodia

Were you in an Honors study abroad program while at FIU? Join our Facebook group and reconnect with friends as you share photos and stories from your trip.
honors.fiu.edu/StudyAbroadGroup

FIU | Honors College