

The Florida International University Honors College Review

# SUMMA CUM LAUDE

Winter 2011 | Volume 1, No. 3



Honors  
in Research

# QUENCH

*your intellectual thirst*

# SATISFY

*your hunger for meaningful dialogue*

SPRING 2012

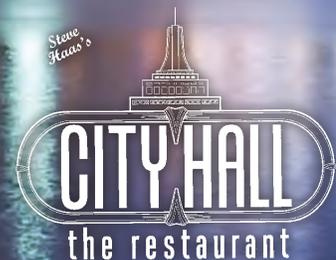
# FOOD for TALK

**Food For Talk** is a cocktail and dinner forum with university scholars leading discussions on a wide array of fascinating topics in an intimate small group setting. Discover the intellectual treasures at Miami's leading public institution of higher learning. After a beer and wine reception, dinner will be served at a table where an expert-led discussion will ensue. Proceeds from Food for Talk benefit the Florida International University Honors College scholarship program.

**JOIN US Thursday, April 19, 2012**

6:00 pm      City Hall - The Restaurant  
2004 Biscayne Blvd.  
Miami, FL 33137

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



# FIU

Honors  
College



Welcome to the latest issue of Summa Cum Laude, which this year was named the best Honors publication in the country by our professional organization, the National Collegiate Honors Council. This edition highlights the work of the Honors College and its students and faculty in the area of research. Until very recently, the development of serious research skills and opportunities for undergraduates had been a long-neglected area of university life. Nationally, honors programs have helped advance acceptance of the importance of focused, mentored research before students proceed to graduate school.

FIU's Honors College has been a leader in this movement, sponsoring an ever-growing undergraduate research conference for eight years. The spring conference was expanded to two days and the quality of the work displayed was remarkable. This year, we have raised the bar considerably, offering support awards for outstanding research and initiating a new undergrad-to-grad bridge program that provides stipends to Honors students who join established FIU research teams, with tuition waivers and further stipends if they continue on to an FIU graduate program. Our ARCH course has been revamped and now focuses on intensive mentoring and subject affinity groupings. And our service-research courses are pioneering a new pedagogy that is transcending the old service-learning model and setting the standard for undergraduate community-based research. It is our intention to be the cutting-edge undergraduate research program in the country.

Many of our alumni researchers are highlighted in the issue. You, our alums, can make all the difference for the scientific and technological leaders of tomorrow. Our annual campaign has just begun, and you should be contacted by phone by our student callers. Please pick up the phone and talk with them. Not only will your contribution, in any amount, go far toward bolstering our scholarship resources, but we will be able to update your contact information and ask you about your experience with Honors or its earlier version, the Faculty Scholars Program. Your input will help us determine the future course of our Honors College. If you aren't called, we may not know how to reach you—please give us a call or an email telling us where you are. You are also alumni of another FIU college—the one that gave you your degree—but please don't forget the Honors community of which you are also an integral part. Don't hesitate to let us know about your impressions and experiences with your FIU Honors College!

I hope you will be proud and excited reading about your College and your colleagues. I look forward to seeing you this April 19 at the Third Annual Food for Talk event, to be held this year at the hot new City Hall restaurant on Biscayne Boulevard.

Lesley A. Northup  
Dean

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*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.*

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Cross section view of the Compact Muon Solenoid (CMS) located in an underground cavern at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) facility in France. Image taken from CERN website (<http://cdsweb.cern.ch/>).

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# daniel tapanes

## America's Top Honors Student

Danny Tapanes, a senior in FIU's Honors College, was named Student of the Year during this fall's National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) conference in Phoenix, Arizona. The award is highly competitive. NCHC has approximately 850 member institutions from throughout the United States and overseas, and each may nominate one student—and only one is chosen from those nominees.

Danny, a biology and chemistry double major and humanities minor, plans to pursue an MD/Ph.D. in tropical medicine, specifically in parasitology. He is a MARC\*USTAR fellow, a Multicultural Programs and Services (MPAS) Scholar, and a Quantifying Biology in the Classroom (QBIC) Scholar. Academically, his achievements can't be overstated: five scholarships; four prestigious research positions; three juried conference presentations; three honors societies; a research grant; and a published article. He was recently invited to conduct research at the laboratory of Dr. John Janovy at the University of Nebraska—one the country's premier parasitology labs.

Last summer, Danny's research took him to the Peruvian Amazon with the Honors service-research study abroad program. He conducted research on parasites in fish stocks. His attention quickly turned to the local indigenous population when he noticed that the closest medical clinic was many hours away by boat during medical emergencies. Tapanes brought together government authorities, a Peruvian architect, and city of Iquitos medical personnel to begin building a clinic for the Yagua people. Danny will return to the Amazon next summer to continue this important initiative with the help of American and Peruvian volunteers.

Before the Amazon clinic project, Danny already had considerable experience in launching student-led philanthropic projects. During his freshman year he created Helping Our World (H.O.W.), an Honors College group that travels abroad to assist children in impoverished communities. His sophomore year he founded Students Taking Initiative Through Collaboration in Honors (Pre-Med S.T.I.T.C.H.), an Honors College organization for pre-med students. He also grows out his hair to contribute to Locks of Love.

In short, Daniel Tapanes is a Worlds Ahead student. In the words of Dean Northup, "He is the complete package; a Renaissance man whose achievements set the bar for every student. He is an individual who you will read about in the news for years to come." ▣

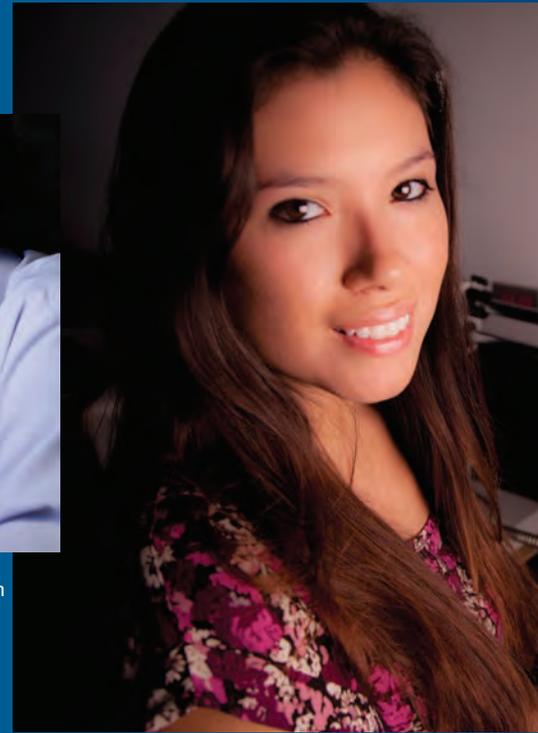
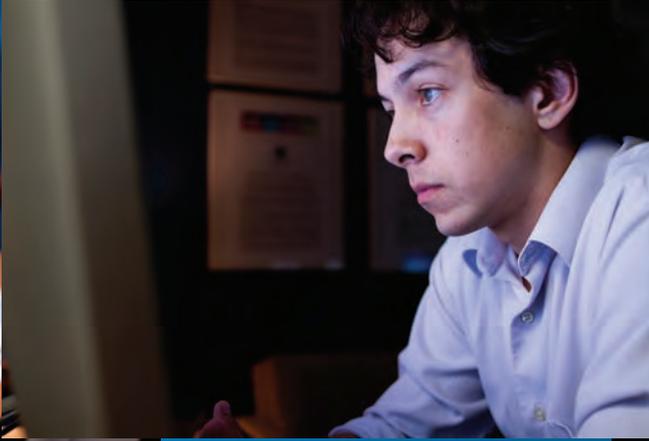


# FROM STUDENT TO RESEARCHER

Last year, the Honors College undertook an ambitious new initiative to expand and improve undergraduate research skills and opportunities. Advanced Research and Creativity in Honors (ARCH) has rapidly grown into a trend-setting, multi-faceted program that prepares students for graduate school and high-impact careers—particularly in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and math), but also across the disciplines.

ARCH is an integrated program of research training, fellowships, internships, and conference participation that also features the Honors College’s groundbreaking and quickly developing service-research approach.

Research training begins with an enhanced version of the university’s required First-Year Experience course, in which Honors students are introduced not only to college life, but most importantly, to college-level research. Their skills are immediately put to use in the first-year Honors seminar, which requires two major research projects that are carefully mentored by the fifteen faculty members of the first-year team. One such assignment is the museum project, which requires students to select a piece from FIU’s Wolfsonian Museum of art and modern design and conduct an in-depth research analysis of its cultural significance. The other focuses on the notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci.



◀ Pablo Currea - Creativity: the Corpus Callosum Between Left and Right Brain Thinking

Pablo Currea looks at a "Dream Machine" program that induces trance-like states for his ARCH project.

Toward the end of their second year, students can choose from an array of advanced research options designed to make best use of their interests and talents. Perhaps the most exciting of these opportunities is the new Honors-to-Graduate (H2G) Research Fellowship. This innovative partnership with the University Graduate School and Office of Research is open to selected Honors juniors who are strongly interested in remaining at FIU for their graduate work. These students will join ongoing funded research projects, becoming full members of a research team along with the faculty principal investigator, allied researchers, and graduate students. While still undergrads, they will receive an annual research stipend between \$2,000 to \$3,000. If they continue at FIU as graduate students, presumably in the same department and quite possibly working on the same project, they will receive a tuition waiver as well as a continuing research stipend. This is an excellent opportunity for FIU students to fund their graduate work and for FIU to produce top home-grown talent.

Honors students may also participate in the all-new service research seminar, Engaged Research in the Community through Honors (ENRICH). This six-credit course, which combines the methodologies of community-based

research and service learning, provides students the chance to work intimately with the community in the City of Sweetwater. Intensive individual research leads students to identify community issues and to propose and implement projects addressing them. The seminar builds on the innovative model used in the College's study abroad program in the Peruvian Amazon, where recent student-generated projects include studies on water quality, domestic animal health, the preservation of traditional music, and eco-tourism. So encouraging have been the results of these initiatives that the College is working toward integrating the service-research methodology throughout the curriculum.

ARCH also now offers formal training in research procedures for students choosing the six-credit ARCH seminar option. Professor Anthony J. McGoron of Biomedical Engineering, who became the co-director of the program this year, has joined Associate Dean Juan Carlos Espinosa, a political scientist, to provide hands-on mentoring and training to supplement ARCH students' work with their individual faculty mentors. A series of workshops give students the tools and guidance to prepare professional-level work.

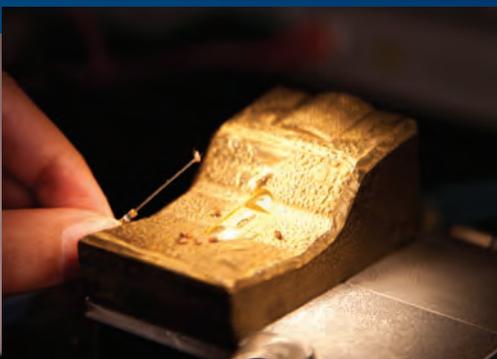
The capstone of ARCH is the annual ARCH Conference in late March, where all

students who opt to complete a six-credit research project resulting in thesis-level work present their findings. This spring, seventy-five of the College's best young researchers presented at the Eighth Annual ARCH Conference. Students may work on funded faculty projects or find a mentor to work with them on a topic of personal interest. The ARCH option includes senior research projects, departmental honors theses, and International Business Honors theses, and allows students to do a quarter of their Honors credits in their majors or related fields. The research option has been formalized into a year's intensive work under the direction of faculty mentors from across the university's disciplines and has led to an increase in both the quality and the quantity of the work. As a result, the 2011 conference was for the first time expanded to two days.

Moreover, seven students who participated in ARCH were selected to present their work at the National Conference for Undergraduate Research. The annual event, held from March 30th to April 2nd, drew over 3,300 students from 370 universities around the country to Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York, also home to Cornell University. The FIU delegation to this prestigious symposium, the largest in recent years, underlines the importance given to research and

Adria Llerena - The Consequences of War ▶

Adria Llerena is designing an art installation inspired by the Peter Paul Ruben painting, *Consequences of War*.



◀ Stephanie Cabrera - Does Insect Flight Stabilization Depend on Varying Optic Flow Fields?

For one of her experiments, Stephanie Cabrera glues a rod to a fruit fly in order to mount the insect to a 3D simulator.



mentorship at the Honors College.

This year, FIU has funded, through a Critical Investment grant, scholarships for Honors students doing advanced undergraduate research. Students compete for funds of up to \$1,000 to finance and conduct their work. The first grants were awarded this fall to the following student researchers:

- Stephanie Cabrera, *Does Insect Flight Stabilization Depend on Apparent Distances in Optic Flow?* (mentor: Jamie Theobald).
- Alejandro Vazquez, *Tip-of-the-Tongue (TOT) State: Metacognition of Faces* (mentor: Bennett Schwartz).
- Raul Camarca, *Unfurling the Geoweb: Applications for the Distribution of Geospatial Data* (mentor: Naphtali Rische).
- Luciana Viola and Belinda Sardinas, *Costa Rica Recycling Project* (mentor: K. Galen Kroeck).
- Kristina Bado, *How Do Gender Studies and Gender Curriculum Serve to Recreate and Perpetuate the Standards of Gender Itself?* (mentor: Sean Walsh).
- Rene Ferrer, *Fidelity and Sexuality or Apocalyptic Visions within Arthurian Literature* (mentor: Heather Blatt).

Clearly, mentors are critically important to the success of ARCH. Senior Marlene Palomo describes her mentor, Scott

Fingerhut of the College of Law, as “nothing short of fantastic. He has provided me with guidance and connections that I would not have had otherwise.” Physics professor and Honors College Fellow Pete Markowitz [profiled in this issue] says, “Laboratory research lets the students turn classroom theory into real experiences. Getting their hands dirty does more, though -- it turns them from students to researchers, joining their professors as peers.”

ARCH has grown by some 40% over the last two years, in terms of both student and faculty participation. In response, the College has established affinity groups within ARCH, peer-centered groups of four to six students working in similar disciplines or conducting research on topics where interdisciplinary communication can advance their work. In addition, *Saraswati*, an online student-run research journal, goes live this fall.

Increasingly, research experience is becoming a standard for undergraduates pursuing graduate studies in the sciences. In fact, its prevalence has led graduate schools and employers to expect it from their applicants. A recent study conducted by the National Science Foundation (NSF) found that 72% of chemistry students and 74% of environmental science students with graduate school aspirations

had research experience before applying. Similar 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 those studying social sciences and humanities as well.

Clearly, research is at the core of the Honors curriculum. ARCH is expected to grow by another 25% next year, with over a hundred students presenting at next spring's conference. The conference, scheduled for March 26th and 27th, is expected to expand to a third day and to include other universities. The Honors College is also coordinating FIU's hosting of the 2014 Florida Undergraduate Research Conference. The College has already been approached about partnering with other Florida institutions, as well as universities in other countries. As FIU increasingly recognizes the importance of developing undergraduates' research skills, the College stands ready to export its expertise and experience to the larger university community. ▣



**W**ho has not gazed up at the sky and wondered what is out there? A few brave souls try to unravel the mysteries of the Big Bang, black holes, parallel universes and extra dimensions. FIU's very own physicist, Dr. Pete Markowitz, is among some 10,000 visiting scientists who investigate these questions at the European Organization for Nuclear and Particle Physics (CERN) in Geneva, Switzerland. Markowitz carries out nuclear and particle physics experiments at the Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility (JLab) in Virginia as well as at CERN. His work focuses on the source of gravity, extra dimensions, black holes, the quark structure of nuclei, dark matter, dark energy and the electro-production of matter and anti-matter. Markowitz's experiments use high-energy accelerators to bombard various target materials with subatomic particles and then measure the reactions. CERN is one of the world's largest and most respected centers for research into fundamental physics—finding out what the universe is made of and how it works. By studying what happens when these fundamental particles collide, physicists are uncovering new understandings of the laws of nature.

Markowitz's research on extra dimensions takes him to CERN for several weeks at a time, four or five

# Uncovering The EXTRA DIMENSION

times a year. Teams of physicists use highly specialized equipment to analyze the particles created by collisions in the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) [see cover], a gigantic particle accelerator that spans the border between Switzerland and France about 100 m underground. According to Markowitz, “Scientists from all over the world are working on hundreds of different experiments that are trying to measure different pieces of physics; we are directly testing the big bang theory and recreating the matter that existed during the big bang.”

One fascinating area of Markowitz’ research is conducted on extra dimensions. We all recognize the three spatial dimensions of length, width, and depth. Time is the fourth dimension. But what could possibly be an ‘extra’ dimension? Markowitz says, “We think that these extra dimensions are not ‘reality’ like x, y, z or time, but something called a compactified dimension. We know that we can go on forever in the x dimension. But in the new dimension, we think even going forward forever would be like moving just a millimeter. Spaces are all curled up in these dimensions.”

Scientists Lisa Randall from

Harvard and Kani Hoffmann from Princeton predicted that there could be extra dimensions. This would explain why gravity is so much weaker than, say, electricity or magnetism. “Understanding gravity is important when you are looking at something like the Big Bang and trying to understand what would have happened. In the Big Bang, all the forces in the universe had equal strength. This implies that there must be more to the universe than just what we are seeing.”

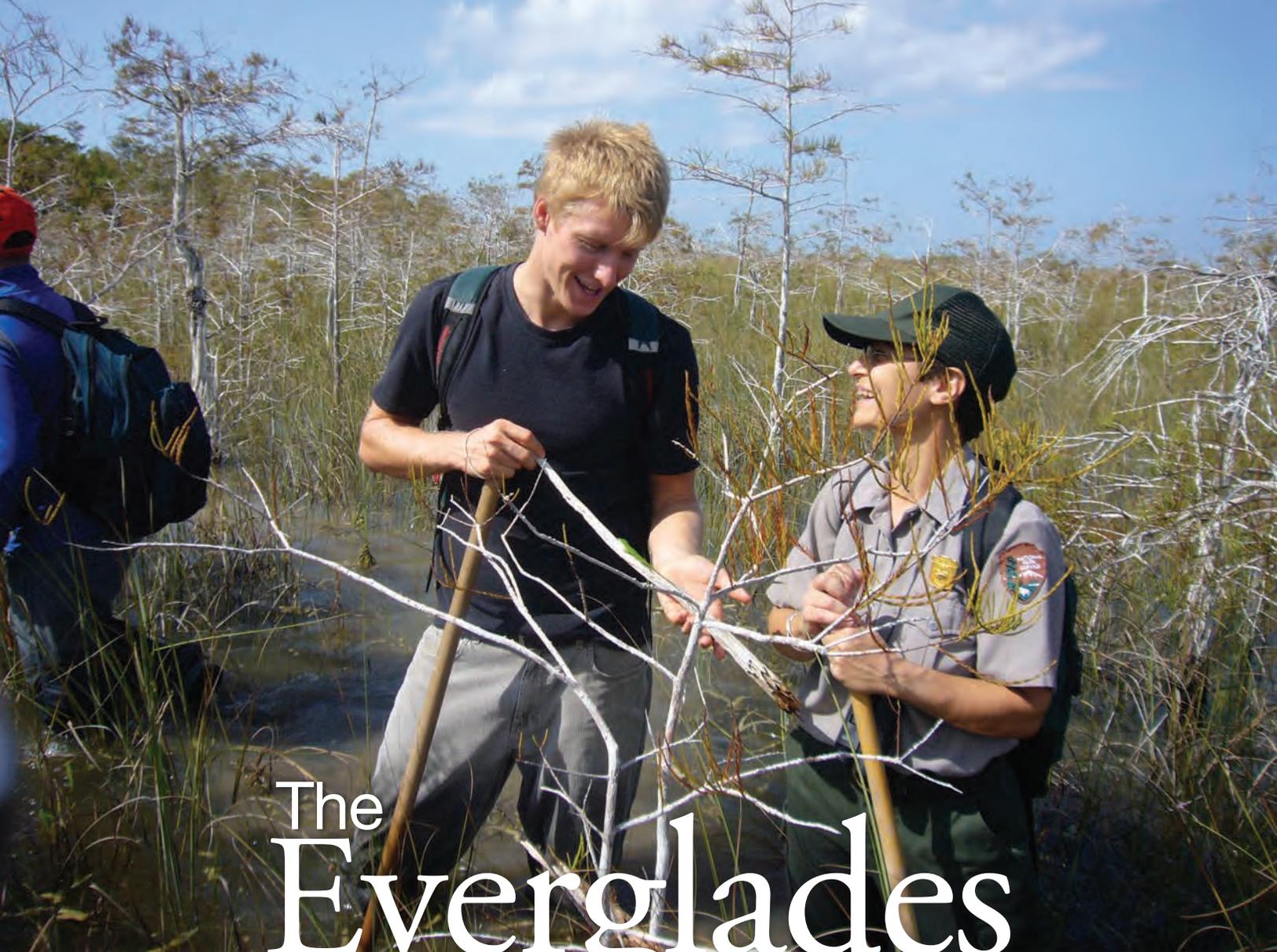
Currently a group of scientists is looking into a possible fifth force that would modify our understanding of gravity. “There is also another force in the universe, a force that we know but have not identified or understood, called dark energy. For example, the galaxies are spinning so fast that pieces should fly off, yet they don’t. The galaxy is held together by something in addition to the gravitational force and a large mass, but we can’t see this force.”

Hawking radiation (named after famed physicist Stephen Hawking) is a type of thermal radiation predicted to be emitted by black holes, but “so far we haven’t observed the radiation directly,” says Markowitz. “But if the theories

about extra dimensions are right, then they ought to be there.”

Most recently, a group of scientists has reported that an experiment in a collider like the one at CERN has produced a particle measured moving at 60 nanoseconds faster than the speed of light. These findings would have a direct impact on Markowitz’s work and potentially on us all: “If these results can be confirmed, we could perhaps dream of faster-than-light travel to the stars, or of exceptions to Einstein’s established laws of physics. It could literally be the biggest result in a hundred years. Although the experimenters are cautioning everyone not to read too much into the new finding, the potential if this result is correct would be mind-boggling.”

Markowitz brings the same enthusiasm and cutting-edge thinking to the classroom. During his time at FIU, he has taught classes across the academic spectrum ranging from nuclear physics to the Freshman Experience course. Markowitz, a Fellow of the Honors College, also teaches the second-year seminar, where he is repeatedly acclaimed as one of our top professors. □



# The Everglades

From Beginning to End?

Fourteen years ago, Professor Peter Machonis proposed a very unusual idea for an Honors course—no classrooms, no meetings twice a week, no hovering over desks. Machonis, a classical pianist whose specialization is French linguistics, wanted to take a dozen or so students to the Everglades every other Friday, put them in canoes, and take them on a true adventure of discovery. Over the years, Machonis and his co-instructor, Devon Graham, a biologist, have developed an on-site, hands-on course through which students study not just the biology, botany, and ecology of the River of Grass, but also its history, politics, literature, art, and sociology. Students explore Florida’s unique fresh water swamp in airboats and canoes, in films and books, and on “slough slogs” that totally ruin a pair of sneakers.

The students are initiated into the course during the first class excursion. The airboat stops in the middle of pristine wetlands and Machonis and Graham invite the students to jump into the Everglades and get wet. “Generally, with a combination of peer pressure and the mild threat of failing to get full class participation credit, everyone jumps in and experiences the Everglades,” said Graham. The students enjoy the moment. It is liberating to escape to a seldom-visited place beyond paved confines. At that moment, the professors can sense a group unity. They know that these playfully curious 18 students will experience more of these moments throughout the course.

“The Everglades: From Beginning to End?” combines many of Machonis’ passions: his love of the written word, bird watching, and canoe rides down the serene, expansive Everglades. The course was intended as a one-time offering in the fall of 1997 to correspond with the 50th anniversary of the dedication of the Park. “We talked about the importance of each class location and its historical and literary relevance. For instance, we would share with the students impressions of Lieutenant Hugh L. Willoughby’s journal, *Across the Everglades* (1898), in the middle of a 5 ½-mile canoe trip. We had to have a required writing component for an Honors course as well, so we decided to have the students write their own journal entries, like Willoughby,” said Machonis.

The course thrives because nothing else like it exists at FIU or anywhere else. The class can be physically challenging since it involves hiking, biking, canoeing, and walking through the swamp, rain or shine. Students must learn to identify South Florida flora and fauna with binoculars and field guides. Over the years, the class has brought park rangers and guest lecturers,

including famed Everglades photographer Clyde Butcher and popular writer Carl Hiassen, to give different perspectives on the park’s present and future.

Some of the course’s components have



evolved over time. Students create projects about the Everglades by developing posters, which go on display every year at the Coe Visitor Center in the Park. These research projects are regularly competitively accepted for presentation at the annual National Collegiate Honors Council Conference (NCHC). “I think that participation in NCHC for both ourselves and the students has really opened our eyes to new ways of approaching subjects and of presenting material, and has also emphasized the uniqueness of the Everglades course and how aspects of it can be implemented into other Honors Programs,” said Graham. The two professors now conduct different observational exercises during class, such as City as Text, and creative assignments like “writing on your feet,” where students

write about their experiences as they happen. “You should also write about what you are thinking before you go into the muck!” said former Everglades student Carmen Barresi.

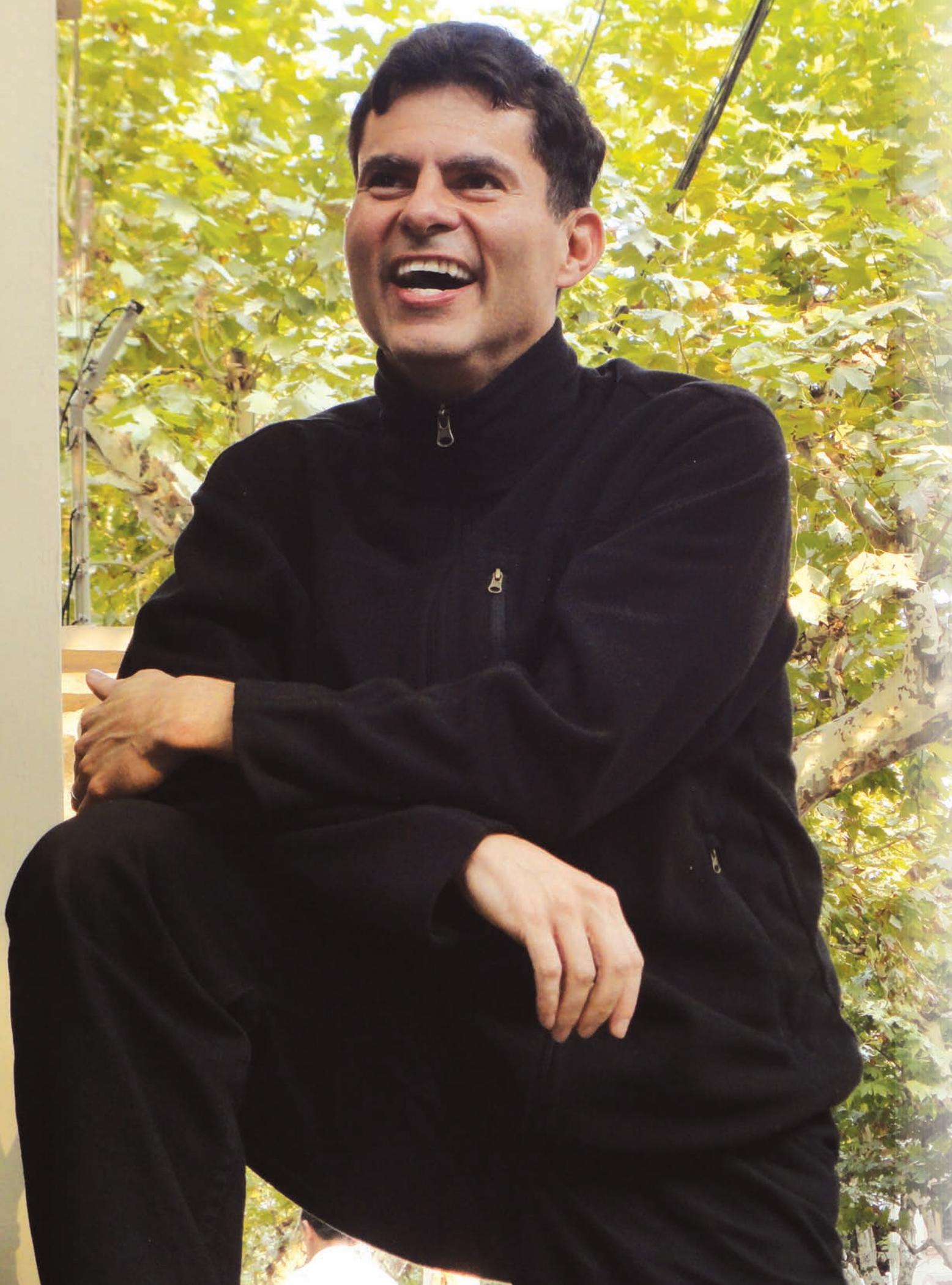
One of the most rewarding moments for the class comes when the students present simplified versions of their projects to Sweetwater Middle School 5th graders. Watching the reactions of both the school children and their own students as they become passionate about the Everglades is one of the most rewarding parts of the course for the instructors. Machonis was impressed listening to student Omar Leon talk about learning responsibility through working on his Sweetwater Elementary project: “He realized that he was representing FIU, the Honors College, and our class when he made an appointment with the principal to talk about planting native plants at the school with the pupils. He had to set up meetings and then follow up the plans with action.”

Machonis believes attitudes are changing about the need to preserve the Everglades. In years of teaching the course, he has seen some restoration projects come to fruition,

such as governmental land buyouts, agricultural-derived phosphorous reduction projects, and the building of a new bridge to restore the north-to-south water flow into the Everglades. He also sees the attitude difference every time he runs into his former students at the park. Some are camping or bird watching while others are doing volunteer work. He knows that his students get something meaningful from their experiences, but he still admits that “each new generation has to be convinced about the importance of the Everglades to South Florida—not only as the source of all our water, but also as a place to learn, to be inspired, and to grow intellectually, artistically and spiritually.” □



<http://honors.fiu.edu/sloughslog>



# Gabriel A. Rincón-Mora

Eight books, 120 scientific publications, 37 issued patents, 26 commercial power chip designs, and over 60 international speaking engagements—and that is just a fraction of Gabriel Rincón-Mora's long list of accomplishments.

This remarkably accomplished Honors College alumnus was born in Venezuela and emigrated to the US when he was 11 years old. During his senior year in North Miami Beach Senior High school, Rincón-Mora attended FIU to work in an electrical engineering lab. It was his introduction to the university and to electrical engineering. He fell in love with both.

Rincón-Mora entered the Honors Program (then known as the Faculty Scholars Program) in 1989. "FIU and the Faculty Scholars Program offered me excellent growth opportunities. Classes were challenging and enlightening," said Rincón-Mora. "I realized how well prepared I was later when I went to Georgia Tech to pursue my master's and Ph.D. degrees, because I was as prepared as anybody else there, and in some cases, better."

Rincón-Mora was a Senior Integrated Circuit (IC) Design Team Leader for Texas Instruments from 1994 through 2003, and has taught at Georgia Tech since 1999. His research focuses on developing microelectronics that draw and condition power from tiny batteries, fuel cells, and the environment, energizing microsystems for biomedical, consumer, industrial, and military applications.

Rincón-Mora's early work focused on battery power and energy for portable

consumer products like cell phones and laptops, then moved into harnessing energy from tiny generators that convert ambient energy into the electrical domain. "I have been excited about my work at every stage, and harvesting energy with micro-scale devices is now equally exciting for me," said Rincón-Mora. Many scientists and engineers tend to concentrate on the

teaching or conducting research, he travels around the world helping others. He has worked with children affected by AIDS and disabilities in India, built schools in Tanzania, and worked with orphans in Mongolia and Vietnam.

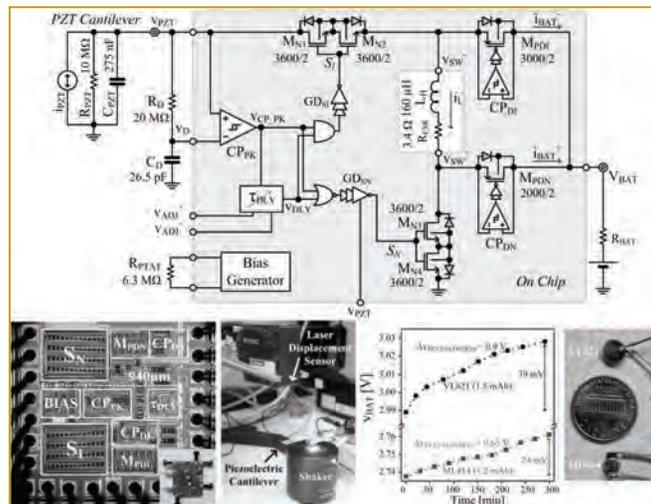
Among his nonacademic achievements are climbing Mounts Everest and Kilimanjaro. His philosophy is to live

life fully, "because what is important is not the actual end but the process. The value of what we do is our impact on other people's experience through life. Human interaction is important because its effects never stop rippling through time and space and through others and the people they touch in turn."

When asked to offer advice to current Honors students, he had this to say: "I'm not sure if I'm qualified to offer advice, because like everyone else, I'm still learning. If pressed, I'd say

that being passionate, generally optimistic in life, and honorable and professional have helped me. Passionate people care about their jobs, and when you care, you excel. And an optimistic mind not only finds solutions but also attracts them (along with others' good will). Above all else, though, I believe in compassion."

Ricon-Mora is the recipient of Florida International University's Charles E. Perry Visionary Award. Georgia Tech also inducted him into its Council of Outstanding Young Engineering Alumni in 2000 and *Hispanic Business* magazine featured him on the cover of its October 2000 issue as one of the 100 Most Influential Hispanics. ■



A piezoelectric harvester microchip and prototype Ricon-Mora's team developed to charge lithium-based batteries from energy in vibrations

conversion process, not the management and conditioning aspects of generating the power needed to energize and operate real-life microelectronic systems like wireless microsensors, which can continually collect, process, and report data on their own for months and even years."

Rincón-Mora is also very enthused about his work on piezoelectric, photovoltaic, and thermal harvesters, as well as tiny hybrid fuel cell-battery systems. The common thread (and challenge) in his work is technologies that produce only small amounts of current. His fundamental research is thus in how to draw, condition, and transfer this power extremely efficiently.

When Rincón-Mora is not busy

## ALUMNI RESEARCH

The Honors College emphasizes and supports undergraduate research as one of our highest priorities. Serious research experience prepares students for both graduate school and professional life. Our alumni have reaped the benefits of that experience, as demonstrated by just a few impressive success stories.



### TIFFANY BRANNON (2007)

In her senior year in the Honors College, Tiffany Brannon was awarded admission and full funding to the Ph.D program in Psychology at Stanford University, as well as a pre-doctoral fellowship from the National

Academy of Sciences' Ford Foundation. Brannon's graduate research examines the psychological benefits of claiming identity and celebrating cultures for individuals who belong to historically disadvantaged and negatively stereotyped groups. Her curiosity is a result of being a "native of South Florida, a region that has vibrant and deeply-woven multicultural and international ties," she says. According to her, the project aims to "understand the conditions under which culture and identity can serve as a resource that can be a buffer against negative consequences associated with stereotypes and stigma and enhance cognitive flexibility and problem-solving related to creativity."

Brannon began research in the Honors undergraduate research program (now called ARCH), where she was able to cultivate skills that prepared her for graduate studies. "My interactions with the Honors faculty and staff who genuinely believed in my potential helped develop my own efficacy and gave me the courage to consider graduate studies—and as an ethnic minority and a first-generation college student this encouragement has proven crucial to my success."

Brannon has this advice for the current students: "Take advantage of all of the opportunities that the Honors College has to offer, from undergraduate research conferences to developing a sense of community with your Honors peers. One of the important aspects of my Honors education that has been the most influential was taking year-long seminars with Honors faculty from various disciplines. Even today the papers and readings that I did for those seminars are impacting the approach that I take to my own research by allowing it to be interdisciplinary."



### DAVID MAYETT (2009)

David Mayett graduated in 2009 with a degree in physics. He was active in research throughout his undergraduate career. He spent the summer after his sophomore year at Michigan State University, where he worked on a theoretical nuclear physics project with Dr. Vladimir Zelevinsky that involved the study of the behavior of quantum signals through two-dimensional periodic open lattices. Upon returning to FIU for his junior year, he did further research in theoretical particle physics with Dr. Rajamani Narayanan, involving the study of anomalies of gauge theories on the lattice.

As a senior in the Honors College, he worked on a study of two-dimensional Yang-Mills theories on single-site lattices under the direction of Dr. Narayanan. Mayett was responsible for writing the computer code necessary for organizing and analyzing the data. His findings were presented at the Honors College ARCH conference, as well as at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Section of the American Physical Society.

Mayett is currently at Syracuse University on a full-tuition STEM fellowship, pursuing a Ph.D. in theoretical particle physics.

### TESHAMAE MONTIETH (1998)

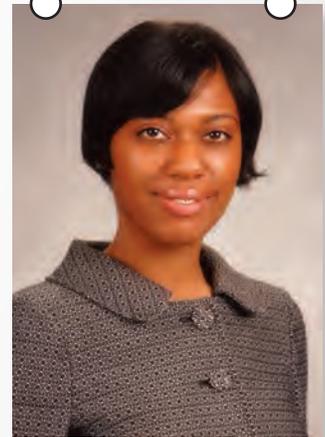
Teshamae Montieth graduated from the Honors College with a biology degree and immediately began her graduate studies at the University of Miami School of Medicine. Subsequently she completed a neurology residency at New York University School of Medicine. She chose headache medicine as a sub-specialty because “it was a way to learn more about the brain, alleviate pain, and significantly impact the quality of life of so many who are suffering.”

Montieth is currently a fellow in headache research at University of California, San Francisco, where she is involved in a number of neuroimaging studies designed to illuminate the complex patterns of brain dysfunction in migraine and post-traumatic headache. “I was quite moved by reports of the alarming rates of headache disorders in veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan,” she notes. While traumatic brain injury has gained increasing attention, headaches remain an unaddressed and silent symptom of the wound.

In 2010, Montieth was awarded the American Academy of Neurology Palatucci Advocacy Leadership Forum Co-Advocate of the Year Award for her role in securing Department of Defense research funding for chronic migraine and post-traumatic headache. According to Monteith,

“This was a step in the right direction, but we remain far from understanding the disease mechanisms required to fully address the needs of not only returning veterans but many migraine patients that suffer in silence.” Recently, she presented to the American Headache Society her work on nitroglycerin-induced headaches in a group of migraine sufferers.

“The most memorable event I recall from my Honors College days is participating in Arts for Life. I invited my sister to join, and both of us dressed up as mimes to raise money for AIDS. Our faces looked ridiculous with the white paint smeared everywhere. Even so, we had lot of fun. The capacity to combine fun, purpose, and charity is fundamental.” Elaborating, she said, “Participating in the Honors College was a formative experience. It provided an informal, flexible, yet structured environment to develop academically.”





### PAOLA A. PRADA (2005)

Paola Prada graduated cum laude in 2005 with a B.S. in Chemistry. She was the first undergraduate to write an honors thesis from the department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. Prada continued her doctoral studies at FIU in forensic chemistry, working with Dr. Kenneth G. Furton. Her research focused on analytical forensics, especially human scent discrimination and the collection materials for human scent samples.

Prada now has eight publications in peer-reviewed journals and has represented FIU at international conferences such as the European Academy of Forensic Sciences in Helsinki, Finland, and the International Working Dog Breeding Association Conference in Belgium in 2009. She is the recipient of a prestigious post-doctoral fellowship from the CIA in explosives detection and animal behavior.

Prada is pursuing her current research into problems related to odor production and detection in avian taxa, working at UC Davis in the Department of Neurobiology, Physiology, and Behavior. These studies compare the scent abilities of birds and dogs in applied contexts. Her laboratory work determines optimal conditions for eliciting behavioral responses to odors. She plans to continue to develop useful technologies in forensics that benefit homeland security.

“The best experience the Honors College gave me was the opportunity to challenge myself and excel beyond the normal parameters. By fulfilling my senior requirement with the completion of the Honors thesis, I was able to discover my true passion for research and complete the first Honors thesis in my department. This experience gave me the tools and foundation I would later use throughout my doctoral studies, which allowed me to complete the curriculum and eventually successfully complete my dissertation. I strongly advise current students to take on new challenges like the Honors College, which makes you go the extra mile and ultimately provides a cutting edge over the rest of the students. It is these challenges that help you discover your true passion and ultimately guide you on the career path to success.”



### ALVARO QUIÑONES (2010)

Alvaro Quiñones graduated from the Honors College in Fall 2010 with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. “The Honors College courses were beneficial to my education and helped to make my undergraduate experience exciting,” he says. “The courses exposed me to ethics, history, and contemporary social issues.” During each summer at FIU, Quiñones participated in internships

with the National Science Foundation (NSF), FIU, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), which familiarized him with different areas of structural engineering. At NSF, he worked with practitioners and researchers on innovative research being conducted to improve the performance of structures during earthquakes. As a research assistant at FIU’s Laboratory for Wind



## RAHUL PATEL (2009)



Rahul Patel is a research assistant in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at Stony Brook University in New York, pursuing a Ph.D. in Physics with a concentration in Astronomy. His current project deals with a survey to directly image new planets outside our own solar system (exoplanets) around young nearby stars.

Over five hundred planets have been discovered around other stars. Most have been detected via indirect observation: measuring the host star’s light to detect a gravitational pull on the star due to the planet. However, some require direct imaging, which can be difficult because the planet can be over a million times fainter than the parent star. In addition, special care is needed to control and correct for the aberrated starlight as it passes through the Earth’s atmosphere. It is in this field that Patel researches, primarily using the five-meter Hale telescope located on Palomar Mountain just outside of San Diego.

In his junior year at the Honors College, Patel signed up for, according to him, “one of the most interesting courses I’ve ever enrolled in: ‘The Art of War,’ taught by Dr. J.C. Espinosa.” He says, “Instead of war tactics from Sun Tzu, analysis of war through a cultural lens and perception of war influenced by media and technology was the subject for discussion.” This provided him with a refreshing and insightful view of human culture during wartime and the symbiotic relationship this culture has with war. “One thing I’ve picked up through my undergraduate studies and now in graduate school is that you never know what your choices will lead you to. My choice to join a class based on the course title led me to rework my understanding of culture and how it ties in with technology and war. Nonchalantly taking up a summer research position led me to learn about a different aspect of the cosmos and become awestruck at the possibility of finding new planets. I never know what’s going to come next – all I can do is keep an open mind and hope to see the path in a positive light.”

Engineering Research, he worked alongside graduate students on hurricane mitigation research, preparing full-scale models of houses and commercial buildings for testing in the lab’s Wall of Wind. The experimental results of this project will help to improve the ability of buildings in hurricane-prone areas to resist damage from rain and high winds. During two summers

at MIT, he was part of a research group investigating the mechanics of historic masonry structures such as the Roman Pantheon. He helped to develop a testing method using novel small-scale 3D-printed structural models to study the stability of masonry domes under support displacements. From this work, his group published “Small-Scale Models for Testing Masonry Structures.”

He also presented their paper at the 7th International Conference on Structural Analysis of Historic Constructions held in Shanghai, China.

Quiñones was awarded an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship, and will start the structural engineering master’s program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2011.

# Honorsnews

Dana and Sky Choi



## Sweetwater Elementary Celebrates an Artistic Evening

The Second Annual Sweetwater Evening with the Arts took place on April 20, 2011 at a packed Jorge Mas Canosa Youth Center in Sweetwater. The evening featured art and music by both Honors College and Sweetwater Elementary students. It proved to be an even more resounding success than the inaugural arts evening the year before. Completely planned and organized by students in the Honors College Leadership class led by Dr. Cecile Houry, the event concluded with a hearty reception, provided by local restaurants solicited by the students. The evening continues the innovative partnership between the Honors College and the City of Sweetwater that matches Honors students with a wide variety of engagement opportunities in our neighboring city. In attendance—in addition to a standing-room-only crowd of Sweetwater residents—were Sweetwater Mayor Manuel Maroño, Sweetwater Elementary School Principal Janet Olivera, FIU Provost Douglas Wartzok, FIU Vice President for Community Engagement Divina Grossman, and Honors College Dean Lesley A. Northup. The Evening with the Arts promises to become an annual tradition in which both communities can participate with excitement and pride. ▣

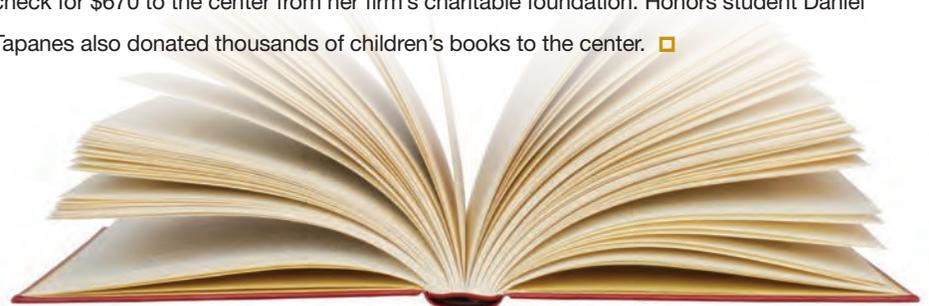


## Honors College Gives Back to Sweetwater Community Center

The Honors College helped kick off the new Li'l Abner Foundation Community Center in the city of Sweetwater. Many important FIU and community dignitaries, including FIU President Mark B. Rosenberg and Sweetwater Mayor Manuel L. Maroño, attended this exciting event on September 8, 2011.

The Center provides needed programs, including after-school tutoring, martial arts training, US citizenship classes and fitness seminars, to the surrounding community. Honors College Community Advisory Board member Raul Rodriguez started the Foundation to support the underserved community at Li'l Abner Trailer Homes in Sweetwater. Last year, the Honors College, through its community engagement partnership with Sweetwater, provided student-run tutorial services and fitness programs in the old center location. This year, the College and some of its students have taken an active part in providing valuable resources for the promising new center.

Honors College student Sky Choi gained national recognition three years ago when he enrolled at FIU as a freshman at age 12. Sky is a Physics and Asian Studies major with minors in mathematics and astronomy and a third-degree black belt in Taekwondo. In 2008, Sky launched his own non-profit organization, The List Kids, which provided toys, supplies and support for Iraqi immigrant children who had recently come to the US. *People* magazine recognized him for his efforts in one of its "Heroes Among Us" stories. Sky recently offered to donate a great many supplies to the Community Center. Dana Choi, Sky's mother and an attorney at the Holland & Knight law firm, presented a check for \$670 to the center from her firm's charitable foundation. Honors student Daniel Tapanes also donated thousands of children's books to the center. ▣





## Overtown YOUTH Center



On Friday, February 18, 2011, Tau Sigma Alpha and the Honors College on the Biscayne Bay Campus hosted the fourth annual “Possibilities” Luncheon to celebrate the College’s partnership with the Overtown Youth Center. The Center is a comprehensive in-school, after-school, weekend

and summer program established by NBA All-Star Alonzo Mourning to provide academic, personal, and social enrichment activities for underprivileged inner-city Black youth living in Overtown, one of the poorest neighborhoods in the State of Florida. The partnership initiative, which was founded by Honors College Coordinator Jayne Klein, is an all-volunteer program, which focuses on mentoring and tutoring the Center’s 9th -12th graders and preparing them to take the SAT and ACT exams. The partnership also serves to bring the youth to the Biscayne Bay Campus on a regular weekly basis so that they will be exposed to a university environment. As in the past, the luncheon served to welcome the OYC students and staff to our beautiful campus once again; to give them a sense of belonging; to make them feel comfortable; and to share great food, entertainment, and fun. The event was held in the Wolfe University Center Ballroom and included a Caribbean-style buffet lunch, a live band, dancing, and a special address commemorating Black History Month, along with a musical performance by Leo Casino, a Grammy-nominated saxophonist and composer.

The lunch was attended by about 40 middle- and high-school students from the Overtown Youth Center; the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the OYC Advisory Board; Steven Moll, Vice Provost, BBC; Christin “Cici” Battle, President of the BBC Student Government Association; and many of BBC’s students and staff. The event was a tremendous success, and everyone had a wonderful time dancing, singing, and listening to inspirational musical performances. □

## Senior Receives Rotary Club Ambassadorial Scholarship



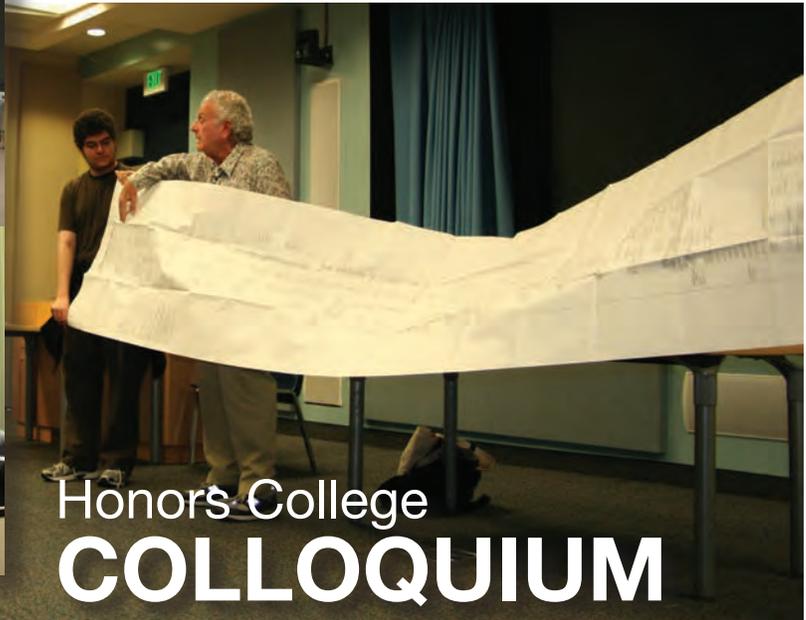
Honors College senior Andrea E. Cruz has been awarded the prestigious Rotary Ambassadorial

Scholarship. She will be spending a year in Spain at the University of Seville as a 2011 - 2012 International Ambassador of Goodwill. She will represent Rotary District 6990, which encompasses the region of South Florida and the Bahamas. Cruz has been a co-founder and former president of Helping Our World (HOW), an Honors College international service organization; President of Tau Sigma Alpha Honor Society; and a member of the Honors College Leadership Council. Cruz served as the Honors College Senator for the Biscayne Bay Campus Student Government Council for two consecutive terms. After her time in Spain, Cruz plans to return to FIU to complete her degree in journalism. □



## Water Bottle Project

Raising ecological awareness to an art form took on a whole new meaning with the Water Bottle Project, an eco-art installation created by Honors students in “Inhabiting Other Lives,” a course that encourages students to contribute to the discourse surrounding societal problems. This installation was designed to bring attention to the world’s bottled water consumption. Using water bottles collected on campus and from students’ homes, they constructed an arch and a wall with fishing line and tape for structural support. □



## Honors College COLLOQUIUM

In the first of its spring semester colloquia, the Honors College featured a lecture by FIU Professor and political consultant Dario Moreno. His talk, titled “Polarization of US Politics,” took place on January 27 on the Modesto A. Maidique Campus.

Moreno is an expert on Florida and Miami politics and is often quoted in both the national and local media. He recently conducted surveys to gauge popular opinion of the Miami-Dade mayoral recall effort. Moreno has published over 20 scholarly articles and book chapters and two books. He is a contributing editor to the *Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy*. A Pew Scholar at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and a Fulbright scholar in Costa Rica, he is a professor in the FIU Department of Politics and International Relations, focusing on Miami, Cuban, Florida, and urban politics.

Undergraduate Education Associate Dean Hilarion “Lari” Martinez presented the second spring colloquium. He lectured on “Getting Someone Else to Pay for Graduate School: National Competitive Awards and Internships.” Martinez decided to become a diplomat after graduating from law school in 1986 and soon ascended the ranks at the U.S. State Department. As a university administrator with high-level diplomatic and compliance experience, he has helped many students through the complexities of the application process for governmental programs.

Martinez was born in Cuba and, at the age of seven, came to Miami aboard one of the Pedro Pan flights. He earned a bachelor’s degree in mathematics at Duke University, a law degree from the University of Florida, a master’s degree in Law from the Free University of Brussels, and a Master of Science degree in National Security Strategy from the National War College at the National Defense University. He retired from the Department of State in 2010. In the same year, he taught an Honors seminar and was one of three FIU adjunct faculty members to receive an Excellence in Teaching Award.

The final Honors College Colloquium speaker of the academic year was retired businessman and educator Bill Fern. He spoke about his interest in genealogy and his extensive research on the international connections of his family (a printout of his family tree was held up by three assistants during the lecture). In his talk, “Fascinating Adventures in Researching Family Genealogy,” he delved into many of the stories of long-lost family members he had found around the globe, like his Catholic French cousin who was completely unaware of his Jewish ancestry. Fern has an MA in the History of Romance Languages from Harvard University and a doctorate in Educational Administration from the University of Chicago. He is currently studying the life of English diarist Samuel Pepys, and the island named after Pepys that appeared in 18th century maps until explorers discovered that it never existed. ▣



# Congratulations Dean Northup!

The Honors College is pleased to note that, after a national search, Dr. Lesley Northup was appointed permanent dean of the Honors College this summer. Since taking the reins of the College as Interim Dean in 2006, Northup has served in the deanship longer than all but one other FIU dean. Said Northup, “The best part of the search and hiring process was the overwhelming support I received from Honors and FIU faculty, staff, and students.”

Northup, an Associate Professor of Religious Studies, came to FIU in 1993 after teaching for five years at the University of Maryland. Her Ph.D. (Historical Theology) and MA (Liturgical Studies) are from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. The author/editor of eight books and numerous articles, she specializes in myth and ritual studies, American religious history, and church-state issues. The State of Florida and the Faculty Senate have repeatedly recognized Dr. Northup with Excellence in Teaching and Service awards.

The Hudson River Valley native has held an eclectic assortment of jobs, including New York cabbie, legal assistant, and copy editor for a large international magazine. Northup originally planned to become an attorney but opted instead to follow a calling to the priesthood, studying

at the Episcopal Divinity School in Boston, where she received her master’s of Divinity in Liturgics in 1980. Shortly after, she began her graduate studies, focusing on liturgy and ritual. Northup also spent 22 years in the Navy Reserve as a chaplain, becoming the first woman military chaplain in the Episcopal Church. She retired from the Navy with the rank of Commander. “At heart, despite all those different jobs (I’ve had 47), I always knew I should be teaching,” says Northup.

Since her arrival at FIU, Northup has been a dynamic innovator responsible for the creation of new programs and initiatives. After being hired as an assistant professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, she and the other Religious Studies professors split off to create a separate department. As its first Graduate Program Director, she built the department’s MA program from the bottom up. In 2002, she joined the Honors College as a teaching Fellow in the first-year course, and was named Associate Dean in 2004. Two years later, she was appointed interim Dean.

Northup has initiated a number of fundamental changes and advances in the College’s programs and approach. One that made an immediate impact was the hiring of three full-time Honors instructors who have expertise in the Honors curriculum, team teaching, and advanced pedagogies. Two years ago, she launched an innovative partnership with the neighboring City of Sweetwater, through which Honors students served in a variety of City internship posts and provided a range

of community services to residents. This experience, along with the groundbreaking Amazon study abroad course, has led to the development of service-research, a model that calls for students to engage in research while helping to improve the lives of underserved communities.

Under Northup’s guidance, the College has also committed to a holistic approach to Honors education, offering not only a diverse and continuously improving array of courses, but also emphasizing character, integrity, and interpersonal skills, with a view to helping develop tomorrow’s young leaders. The College has also undertaken numerous collaborations with other FIU units, including a “3+3” program with the College of Law, the beginning of a pipeline to the College of Medicine, and a partnership with the College of Architecture and the Arts in connection with the the new Honors Education in the Arts (HEARTS) program. The Advanced Research and Creativity in Honors (ARCH) program, profiled in this issue, promises to become one of the nation’s premier undergraduate research initiatives. Honors has grown its innovative study abroad offerings to include programs in France, Italy, the Peruvian Amazon, China, and Cambodia/Vietnam.

Northup wants the College to grow by 50% over the next five years to match FIU’s rapid expansion. The Dean envisions acquiring a dedicated Honors College building that will include not only academic and administrative spaces, but also student housing, study rooms, tech labs, and commercial concerns to meet students’ needs. □

# Worlds Ahead Graduates

Three Honors College students are recognized by President Rosenberg at 2011 commencements as Worlds Ahead Graduates.

## David Jaramillo



David Jaramillo double-majored in Human Resource Management and Psychology and graduated summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa. Jaramillo has the honor of being a 2009 APA PRIME (Psychology Research Initiatives and Mentorship Experience) Fellow and 2010 Ronald E. McNair Fellow. He is also an affiliate of the

Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology (SIOP), the Academy of Management (AOM), and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). At FIU, Jaramillo served as Lab Manager at FIU's Industrial-Organizational Psychology Laboratory, and as a Research Assistant in FIU's Infant Development Laboratory. Additionally, he was recently published in *The Journal of Vocational Behavior* for his research on the relationship between personality variables and work-family conflict. Jaramillo was also President of FIU's Chapter of Psi Chi, the National Honor Society in Psychology, which this year celebrated its 37th anniversary. Jaramillo currently lives in New York City and works as an analyst for a Fortune 100 financial services firm headquartered in Manhattan's financial district.

## Hector D. Mujica



Hector Mujica graduated with a bachelor's in Business Administration with magna cum laude honors. While at FIU, he was deeply involved with the university and the larger community. A member of the Student Government Council at the Modesto A. Madique Campus, Hector was elected College of Business Senator for two terms. During

his second term he served as Speaker of the Senate, making him a member of the University-wide Council and University-wide Budget Committee. He was a member of the Honors College Leadership Council, a group of student organization leaders that serves as an advisory council to the College administration and organizes Honors activities. He was influential in engaging the Honors community in its Sweetwater Partnership, and in raising funds for Haitian earthquake relief. In the community, Hector is one of the founders of the Green Mall Movement, a Clinton Global Initiative-recognized non-profit that advocates for recycling practices in public areas, and volunteered with Habitat for Humanity and the ONE Campaign. For his work in the community and the university he was awarded the FIU Excellence in Civic Engagement Medallion, the FIU Student Life Award for Leadership, and the Honors College and U.S. Century Bank Outstanding Service Award. Professionally, Hector has held several prestigious internships, including at Oppenheimer & Co., Inc.; as Congressional Aide for Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida's 20th Congressional District; with Google's Leadership & Development team; and most recently in the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo's Economic Affairs Section, where he worked on issues of energy, science and technology, including international cyberspace policies and economic recovery plans for Japan's post-earthquake disaster relief. Hector is now working for Google in Mountain View, California. □

What's the Honors College's  
**Worlds Ahead** Strategic Plan?



Find out at  
[honors.fiu.edu/strategic-plan](http://honors.fiu.edu/strategic-plan)



# jairo pava

## Where is Fishkill, New York, and why would anyone go there?

Jairo Pava is on his way to the once-sleepy Hudson Valley town, the corporate home of IBM. There, he will become a full-time software engineer and be funded to attend a top Computer Science graduate program in New York—perhaps at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute or Columbia University.

Jairo's list of academic achievements reads like a recipe for the model Honors student. His contributions to his community are paralleled only by his exceptional research efforts and scholastic accomplishments. Both professors and fellow students refer to him as one of the most exemplary Honors students to emerge from this institution in recent years. All this he accepts with a modesty that is both rare and refreshing.

A Colombian immigrant, Jairo was admitted into FIU in the fall of 2006, and concluded his undergraduate career this summer with a bachelor's in Computer Science. In his four years here, Jairo won an intimidating number of well-deserved accolades, including the 2011 Summa Cum Laude Award, the highest award a graduating student can receive from the Honors College.

Jairo is the quintessential Honors student—an out-of-the-box critical thinker with the ability to bring a multitude of disciplines to bear on any given problem. In 2009, he developed a project to investigate how technology can be used to understand art's ability to initiate, accelerate, or combat social change. This resulted in a website that other proactive students could use to upload controversial art, using the Internet to observe the

interplay between art and divisive social issues. To date, the website has received over fourteen thousand hits from seventy-four countries.

Jairo presented his project at the 2009 National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) Conference, the nation's most prestigious conference for Honors institutions. His proposal to make a presentation at the conference was initially accepted in poster format, but after his persistent yet tactful petition to the NCHC Board of Directors, he was allowed an uninterrupted hour-long time slot. He delivered such a well-received presentation that he was invited to speak at the following NCHC conference about art's impact on urban renewal, alongside Dr. Bernice Braid, former president of NCHC and Dean of Academic and Instructional Resources at Long Island University—an unprecedented opportunity for an undergraduate.

Jairo also put his considerable leadership skills and natural teaching ability to great use by starting a computerized robot building program for students at Sweetwater Elementary School. He has set up a plan to make sure the program continues in the future. Jairo was named a **Worlds Ahead** graduate in Fall 2011. □

## Congratulations to the new members of the Honors College Community Advisory Board

### Jose Keichi Fuentes



Jose Keichi Fuentes serves as the Founding/Managing Partner for The Fuentes-Rodriguez Consulting Group, a firm that specializes in governmental affairs and business development, representing private and public clients at the local, state and federal levels. Fuentes has served in the public sector for more than seventeen years, including as a Legislative Assistant for various state legislators.

Fuentes is actively engaged in the community, serving as a member of the City of Miami Mayor's International Council, City of Miami Waterfront Advisory Board, Miami/Kagoshima Sister Cities Committee (MKSCC), Miami-Dade County Asian-American Advisory Board, FIU Honors College Advisory Board and City Year Miami Board.

### Dr. Garth Graham (Honors College, 1997)



Dr. Garth Graham is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health in the Office of Minority Health at the Department of Health and Human Services. The department addresses minority health concerns and works to ensure that health programs take into account the needs of disadvantaged, racial and ethnic populations. Recently, he was appointed a White House Fellow and founded the Boston Men's

Cardiovascular Health Project.

Graham is currently on the faculty of Harvard Medical School, where he trained in Internal Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital, and serves as a visiting scientist at the Harvard School of Public Health. He has written in various publications on cardiovascular disease, HIV/AIDS and community medicine.

For his services to promote health he has received numerous awards, including the 2002 American Medical Association Leadership Award, the Partners in Excellence Award, the Miriam Kathleen Dasey Award from Yale Medical School and the 2005 Reginald Hawkins award. He is also a recipient of the FIU Torch Award.

### Alexis Mantecon (Honors College, 2000)



Alexis Mantecon is the owner and manager of MV Real Estate Holdings. He graduated summa cum laude in 2000 from FIU's School of Business Administration with degrees in Finance and International Business. Afterward, Mantecon worked his way up the corporate ladder 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 for the establishment of MV Real Estate Holdings, a real estate investment company that focuses on

the acquisition, turnaround and management of distressed real estate assets.

### J.C. de Ona



J.C. de Ona is Senior Vice President of Stonegate Bank. Based in Coral Gables, his focus is on overall bank growth and expansion, with a specialization in private banking and wealth management. A successful businessman for the last 13 years, de Ona has become a well-known and respected banker in South Florida. De Ona is an FIU Alumnus, having earned here a BA in Business Administration with a concentration in Finance and an MBA. This year, he graciously hosted one of the Honors College's "Dinners with Future Leaders."

### Michael Cohen



Michael Seth Cohen is the president of Michael Seth Cohen, P.A., a civil litigation firm that practices in the state and federal courts.

Cohen has been practicing law for 35 years and is Board Certified in his specialty of civil trial law. Over the course of his career, Cohen has continuously been accorded the highest peer recognition by the national ranking organization, Martindale-Hubbell, and has also been recognized in other state and national peer recognition surveys such as the Miami Herald "Super-Lawyers" survey. Cohen is a dedicated long distance bicyclist.



From left to right: Edith Lacayo, Raul Rodriguez, Ruth Jimenez, Sergio Barrera

On May 24, 2011, US Century Bank hosted their Annual Fundraiser, “Monumental Art on Brickell,” at the Brickell US Century Bank branch to support the FIU Honors College Scholarship Fund. The special exhibition featured the work of Costa Rican sculptor Jorge Jimenez Deredia. The guests had the opportunity to meet the artist and support the college. A \$25 suggested contribution included a chance to win one of two Deredia serigraphs and autographed books by the sculptor. HC Alumni Chapter Vice President Carlos Somoza and former CAB member and artist Xavier Cortada were the lucky winners of the Deredia serigraphs.

# FOOD for TALK



The second annual CAB-led Honors College Food for Talk event was held on April 15th, 2011, at the Fontainebleau Miami Beach Hotel. The 2011 program offered a diverse group of local experts, like former FIU President Modesto A. Maidique, FIU Medical School Chair and Presidential Medal of Freedom winner Joe Greer, and sexologist Marilyn Volker, leading conversations on a range of topics. Following a beer and wine reception at the Arkadia Lounge Bar, guests and table scholars were led to their respective discussion venues, Gotham Steak and Scarpetta restaurants. The experts entertained and educated their small audiences with interesting insights during the table talk portion of this successful fund-raising event.

# WHAT ARE THEY UP TO?



**Robert Jimenez (2005)**, attorney and prolific legal scholar, received his bachelor's degree in Political Science,

graduating magna cum laude in 2005. He subsequently received his Juris Doctorate at the University of Florida's College of Law, where he was the recipient of the Book Award in International Human Rights Law and a member of the *Florida Journal of International Law* staff. Jimenez studied international and comparative law at Magdalen College, Oxford University, during the summers of 2006 and 2007. In 2008 he began a clerkship at the law offices of Michael J. Schlesinger, P.A., and was involved with South Florida commercial and real estate litigation. In 2009 he joined the law offices of Fermin M. Ferro, P.A. After his admission to the Florida Bar, he became an associate at the law offices of Charles Restrepo, P.A., in Ft. Lauderdale. By 2010 he had established his own practice—Jimenez, Milian & Associates.

Jimenez's practice areas include estates and trusts and condominium law. He is a member of the Appellate Practice Section of the Florida Bar Association and handles cases before the Florida Third District Court of Appeal.



**Dillon Arango (2008)**, a current third-year FIU medical student, has been making the most of every opportunity since

he was a youngster. He began at FIU while still a high school student via FIU's Early Admissions Program. He continued on to graduate with a B.S. in Chemistry in 2008. He recalls one of his most memorable Honors College experiences as Professor Irma de



**Bernadette Kalyan-Salgado (2007)** has been fusing the study of mind and body from a very young age. Dancing is a crucial aspect of her identity, both professionally and personally.

After graduating from FIU in 2007 with bachelor's degrees in Dance and Psychology, she worked for several years as a professional aerial/modern dancer and a dance instructor for young children in the Miami Dade County Public School System. This past spring she graduated from the University of Miami with an MA in International Administration for Non-profit Organizations.

Her work in dance, especially with the school system, led Kalyan-Salgado to discover a love of teaching young children. While performing in the Bates Dance Festival, she found herself comparing her body to that of a child as she explored movement and psychology. These experiences, along with the birth of her own child, inspired her to study different approaches to education and involving children in the arts. After exploring different schools of thought, she eventually adopted the Reggio Emilia teaching philosophy, which emphasizes self-directed, interactive learning through observation and exploration of one's self and one's environment. After months of studying the method, she was hired as a teacher at KLA, a Reggio-teaching inspired school. This journey culminated with Kalyan-Salgado's development of Movement Yoga for Children, her own unique method for teaching Yoga to children as young as two, using techniques that "engage their minds and bodies." She cites the Honors College as playing a pivotal role in helping her make her journey: "I owe a lot of my current success, both in my career and personally, to the Honors College at FIU. I remember the most unforgettable experience I had in the Honors College was being a part of the first Aesthetics & Values Exhibition. It developed in me a profound appreciation and new-found knowledge of the arts, and assisted in my research and understanding of the Reggio Philosophy. I encourage students to take advantage of that wonderful opportunity by getting involved creating relationships that can last a lifetime. I would have not founded Movement Yoga for Children without the experiences the Honors College granted me. It was truly a major stepping-stone in my life."

Alonso's class. He says Alonso demonstrated genuine caring and interest in her students' lives. She was even a guest at Arango's wedding to fellow Honors alumna Vanessa Raschio. An accomplished researcher, Arango has contributed to several medical projects, including work on minimally invasive mitral valve surgery and a study on the effects of ethnicity and education on physical activity. He cites one of the best aspects of the Honors College as the environment that fosters intellectual curiosity. "What the Honors College did for me was allow me to interact with other students who really wanted to excel. They were not content just going to college; they wanted to be involved in research projects, academic programs, etc. I seem to have a bad habit of working as hard as those around me, and by being part of the

Honors College, I was encouraged to work harder."



**Michele Bechor, (2011)** came to FIU in 2007 to pursue her interest in neuroscience. She soon developed a

curiosity about the biology of stress, prompting her to major in psychology and minor in biology and chemistry.

In January 2009, Bechor became a Research Assistant in FIU's Developmental Psychobiology Laboratory. Her undergraduate Honors thesis focused on the effects of enriched rearing on spatial exploration in quail chicks. Bechor, an active member of Psi Chi, won the FIU Psychology Honors Society's first-ever

Psi Chi Scholarship for her work.

In 2010, Bechor was selected for FIU's Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Fellowship, and spent that summer studying cognitive psychology at the University of Notre Dame. She received a National Institutes of Health Travel Award, allowing her to present her Honors thesis at the International Society for Developmental Psychobiology meeting in San Diego.

An active Honors citizen, Bechor participated in the ARCH program, and served as Co-President of MUSE and as an FIU Student Ambassador. Bechor was accepted into FIU's Ph.D. program in Clinical Psychology and was granted the prestigious Presidential Fellowship. She plans to study child anxiety at FIU's Center for Children and Families.

**WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?**  
Share your story at [honors.fiu.edu/share](http://honors.fiu.edu/share)

**Honors College Alumni Happy Hour**

The Honors College Alumni Chapter hosted a Happy Hour to congratulate the new 2011 Spring graduates of the Honors College. The event was held at the Brickell Irish Pub on July 12, 2011.





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of the Honors College at FIU  
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Curated, funded and presented  
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