

# THE AMPERSAND

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**Special points of interest:**

- Find out the newest Phi Kappa Phi, Tau Sigma, Phi Eta Sigma, and Phi Beta Kappa Inductees.
- Get advice on acquiring all important Letters of Recommendation!



## A NOTE FROM DEAN BOTTOMS

Dear Honors College Students, Faculty Fellows, Alumni, and Friends:

At this time of year, don't you wish you had a dime for every time someone asked, "Where did the semester go?" Well I have an answer: Time went in all sorts of creative, interesting directions here in the Honors College over the past few months.

As you'll see within these pages, Honors College students continue to achieve all sorts of wonderful things, for which they have my great admiration. For example, because of a generous grant from the Caterpillar Corporation and a continuing gift from the Kabbes Family, we were able to give 14 students awards ranging up to \$1,000 each to support their research efforts. Honors College students excel in undergraduate research, as also illustrated by their strong showing at the recent university-wide Student Research Forum. At that event, our students won a majority of the undergraduate awards, including First Place prizes in all three categories of Life Sciences (Keerthi Ranganath), Physical Sciences (Anand Sandesara), and Humanities (Amber Stone - note: I'm Amber's proud fellow!) Additionally, many of our students have recently been inducted into the prestigious academic honor societies such as Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Eta Sigma, Phi Kappa Phi, and Tau Sigma. And because our students are not only excellent in academics, but also good campus citizens and strong leaders, many also won the Chancellor's Student Service Award. The campus is watching these talented students, and watching the Honors College because of them.

In other news, we continue to support the many student organizations represented on the Student Leadership Council. At last month's meeting, as a part of our 3-part series on leadership topics, we were honored to have Vice Provost for Resource

Planning and Management Frank Goldberg speak about the business and financial aspects of UIC. At this month's meeting, the group met and brainstormed about how to design and improve room B16 on the lower level of



**Dean Bette Bottoms**

to make it more useful for student groups. We are developing exciting plans for better meeting and work spaces. Now, umm, we just need the money for the project - to that end, I have dedicated our spring fundraising request letters to this project. I am confident that faculty, friends, and alumni will be interested in supporting student leadership development and civic engagement.

I should also mention that Honors College Fellows, students, and staff are supporting several important college initiatives by serving on three new task forces: one aimed at determining how to improve student-fellow relations even more, a second concerned with diversity and ways to diversify the Honors College student body, and a third studying our current curriculum and whether there are changes to be made to enhance the Honors experience for students at UIC. I look forward to reporting their work in future issues.

Speaking of curriculum, our course offerings are set for the Fall, and being planned for the Spring. We're offering some exciting new honors courses and seminars this fall, such as "Ethical Issues Surrounding Our Economic Situation and Extreme World Debt," "Working for Peace and Social Justice in the Legacy of Jane Addams and the Hull

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# DR. GOLDBERG TALKS BUSINESS WITH UIC STUDENTS

## NILAY SHAH

What does UIC have in common with your local pizza restaurant? Here's a hint: it's not the pizza.

Have you ever wondered how our university actually runs? From where does the money come, and where does it go? How is funding divided among the university's many departments and colleges? And just how much of *your* money helps fund the university's operations?

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Frank Goldberg, UIC's Vice Provost for Resource Planning and Management, arrived to the Student Leadership Committee meeting in the Honors College to lead a presentation and discussion on budgeting in the setting of a public research university – and just how much our university operates like a business, similar to that of the pizza place down the street. Unique in its characteristics from many of the Chicago-area institutions of higher education, UIC requires a very well-orchestrated funding and budgeting system in order for every arm of the institution to function – more complicated than a UIC student may at first think.

A research university, according to Dr. Goldberg, operates as a series of independent units coordinated together in accommodating a specific goal – in this case, that goal would include the mission of our university to “create knowledge that transforms our views of the world and, through sharing and application, transforms the world,” “foster scholarship and practices that reflect and respond to the increasing diversity of the U.S. in a rapidly globalizing world,” and, most unique to our university among all the universities in the Chicago area, “provide a wide range of students with the educational opportunity only a leading research university can offer.”

In this current volatile economic environment, there are, as Dr. Goldberg would say, plenty of “pathologies” that are created that can potentially adversely affect the operations of UIC. As a state-supported university, our existence depends significantly on the funding we receive from the Illinois legislature. It's a fact of academia, explained Dr. Goldberg, that people go where the funding is, for limits in funding prohibit intellectual license and freedom in research. Thus, a delicate balance must be struck here at UIC in order to maintain the high quality of faculty, research, and educational opportunities while still operating within the state budgetary constraints.

As Dr. Goldberg detailed, competing uses for state dollars often limit the amount of money given to higher education. In recent years, a UIC has seen a decrease in state funding support as a percentage of the total university budget. On one hand, this means that we receive relatively less funding from the state; on the other, this trend has arisen partially because UIC has seen dramatic increases in the research budget within the past 10 years, allowing

UIC to become less dependent on state appropriated funds.

Indeed, the figures are most startling when you consider the amount of state support the university receives per tuition dollar (i.e., for every dollar of tuition the university receives, how much state funding is received). In 1970, the university received \$12.80 from the state for every \$1 of tuition paid by students. In contrast, in 2008 the university received \$1.20 from the state for every \$1 received in tuition payments. While this may seem like the state has been holding back funds for the university, in way this is not such a bad thing – the fact that we need less money from the state to operate in a consistent manner demonstrates the self-sufficiency of the university running like a business.

In 2008, the university's total budget was about \$1.6 billion, with a significant portion of that being allocated for the West side colleges and the University of Illinois Medical Center. Much of the East campus, including the major colleges (LAS, A&A, Engineering, etc.) is supported by tuition dollars. In LAS, easily the East campus' largest college, nearly all of the operations are supported by tuition dollars. In contrast, UIC's School of Public Health is almost entirely supported by research grants and state funding – tuition makes up a very small fraction of the school's operating costs.

In addition, a significant proportion of money allocated for the undergraduate campus is meant for financial aid. It's also noteworthy that a significantly higher percentage of funds at UIC are reserved for financial aid in contrast to much smaller percentages at the University of Illinois campuses in Urbana-Champaign and Springfield; the unique demographic of students attending our university requires highly unique practices in budgeting, a task Dr. Goldberg and the UIC administration constantly work to balance.

So what does this all mean for students? For one, it's always important to remember that, as an urban public university catering to students from a wide spectrum of socioeconomic backgrounds, the constraints on funding at the university are significantly different than that of most universities. It's an important responsibility of students to understand how and why their university functions the way that it does.

In this case, for the apparent lack of funding for much-improved infrastructure and facilities, often minimal support for student organizations, relatively large classroom sizes, and limited funding for student scholarships that one might see at UIC, consider that our university does what no other university in the Chicago area can – allow students from every possible background to attain a high-quality education and take advantage of tremendous opportunities to improve their lives. It's a precarious balance, to be sure, but after considering Dr. Goldberg's presentation, it's one that appears to effectively provide high quality from limited resources.

***“It is a good idea to be ambitious, to have goals, to want to be good at what you do, but it is a terrible mistake to let drive and ambition get in the way of treating people with kindness and decency and respect. The point is not that they will then be nice to you. It is that you will feel better about yourself.”***

*Robert Solow*

## A NIGHT OUT OF BURNHAM—THE 16TH ANNUAL HONORS COLLEGE BALL

JOSEPH ESPARAZ

As students began flagging taxis and faculty members started arriving at the Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers, only one event came into mind—The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Honors College Ball. Sharply at 6PM, members of the Honors College Advisory Board (HCAB) began greeting elegantly dressed students, faculty, and alumni. As soon as guests arrived in the Sheraton's Promenade, the Honors College's very own string ensemble began playing a collection of music, songs that were specifically chosen for this venue. With music filling the air, the students, faculty, fellows, and alumni began congregating in one section of the Promenade. Surprisingly, behind all of these individuals was one of the largest silent auctions that HCAB has ever held. This silent auction contained around 40 donated items, including restaurant gift certificates, Broadway in Chicago plays, autographed memorabilia, and much more. The auction was receiving more attention than expected, which helped raise money for the HCAB scholarship. With more and more guests arriving, the promenade began looking crowded. Luckily, the clock struck 7PM and the doors were opened, allowing everyone to enter the ballroom.

As guests walked in, they were greeted by a pink glow that filled the entire ballroom.



**HCAB members gather for a picture at the Honors College Ball.**

Along with this unique decoration, waiters dressed in black accompanied each table, waiting for requests to be made. But, before dinner was served, HCAB's President Brian Lin and Vice President Anita Mathew gave a short presentation. This presentation was a way to say thank you to all the faculty and students that helped in the preparation for this year's ball. Also, recognition was given to all the donors, as well as this year's HCAB Scholarship winner, Murad Omery. After a round of cheering and applause, the soft "elevator style" music began, signifying only one event was next—dinner.

Waiters, carrying baskets of bread and plates of salad, began appearing from everywhere imaginable. From the expressions on everyone's faces, the first salad course was enjoyable. Up next was the main entrée, consisting of either a vegetarian Cannelloni Trio or a delicious Tuscan Chicken. Camera flashes and laughter continued to fill the ballroom as dinner progressed. Everyone seemed to be having a great time. The concept of "saving the best for last" definitely came true when the dessert arrived. Guests were served a French Apple Gallette with a caramel rum sauce and cinnamon whipped cream. Everyone's jaws dropped when they tasted this delectable dessert.

Finally, after dinner was complete, the whole ballroom was transformed into a night of dancing. Both faculty and students filled the dance floor and began getting their "groove-on" to their favorite tunes. Honors college students continued dancing until midnight—the ending of this year's ball. With the final students exiting the ballroom and the cleanup crew beginning the strenuous teardown process, the night had come to an end. It was another successful Honors College ball—one with memories that will last forever!

## PHI KAPPA PHI INDUCTEES

On Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, Phi Kappa Phi held its annual induction ceremony in the Cardinal Room of Student Center East. New faculty inductees were Brooke Shipley of the Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science department, and Ashfaq Khokhar of the Computer Science, Electrical & Computer Engineering department. Professor Khokhar gave an engaging keynote address, entitled "Important of an Academic Career and its Impact on Daily Life." Research grants were also awarded, including one to Honors College student Mike Koerner, for his project entitled "Enzyme linked Immuno-sorbent Assay to determine protein tertiary structure."

Congratulations to the following new Honors College inductees:

Michelle Apple  
Sandra Finnigan  
Liam Fischer  
Joanna Foley  
Diane Generoso  
Abdel Halloway  
Sarah Hansen  
Fadel Haowat  
Rema Jawan  
Archit Joshipura  
Ambreen Khalid  
Sergei Kutsinski  
Kausika Maddali  
Elizabeth Mattson

Ryan Patrick  
Zeeshan-Aly Rajani  
Punam Rajyaguru  
Amenda Rutherford  
Ginelle Sanchez Leos  
Marc Sarran  
Laura Shyne  
Rutger Stache  
Majdi Sweis  
Ruben Velazquez  
Elaine Zachrel  
Faria Zafer  
Eduardo Zermeno

## HONORS COLLEGE FRESMAN PHI ETA SIGMA INDUCTEES

On Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, the national freshmen honor society, Phi Eta Sigma held its annual induction ceremony. New student inductees and their families attended the ceremony, which was held in the Illinois Room. Honors College Interim Dean Bette Bottoms gave an inspiring keynote address to the students. She encouraged them to continue to strive for excellence in all they do, and to take advantage of all the resources available to them at UIC. Scholarships were awarded two Honors College students: sophomore graphic arts/photography major **William Moran**, and junior bioengineering major **Laura Zitella**.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the new Phi Eta Sigma inductees and their family enjoyed a reception in the adjoining room. Additionally, Honors College student Justin Fiala provided entertainment on the piano.

Congratulations to the following Honors College freshmen who were inducted:

Kristine Joy Arboleda  
Penelope Burikas  
Aisha Tafa Burton  
Thomas F. Calabrese  
Haroon Chaudhry  
Stephen S. Chettiath  
Julie Cho  
Roger A. DiLuigi III  
Joseph Gatuz  
Konrad Grabowski  
Sara E. Hansen  
Yuming Huang  
Daniel E. Johnson  
Puja P. Kansara  
Tatiana M. Karpouzian  
Sarung S. Kashyap



From left: Phi Eta Sigma president Alan Martinez, Honors College Dean Bette Bottoms, Treasurer Laura Hamad, and Vice President Vinod Sehgal



Scholarship winner William Moran with his proud parents, T.J. & Cathy

Alfreda S. Kutor  
Ramier Joyce Lehne  
Paulina Makuch  
Alexandru T. Marginean  
Sharda Mundada  
Anish K. Oberoi  
Carrie L. Pallardy  
Riten Patel  
Niki Patel  
Amee K. Patel  
Sylvia J. Pawlowska  
Matthew M. Pearce  
Anum N. Qadri  
Jelena Saric  
Ryan M. Tabor  
Jennifer A. Wolff

## TAU SIGMA NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTEES

On Monday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, Tau Sigma National Honor Society held its annual induction ceremony. Tau Sigma is a relatively new presence on the UIC campus, and serves to recognize and promote the academic excellence and involvement of transfer students.

The keynote speaker for the evening was Assistant Dean of Students Malcolm Smith. He gave an eloquent address, advising students to get involved on campus and to continue to strive for the academic excellence that they had already achieved.

After the ceremony, new inductees and their guests enjoyed refreshments at the reception.

Congratulations to the new Honors College member of Tau Sigma:

Shraddha Adhikari  
Daniel Aiello  
Emilia Baczek  
Terri Jeanine Davis  
Edlyne Else  
Rick Griffith

Joanna Mangio  
Courtney O'Connell  
Michele Sajdak  
Kara Tumminello  
Kayla Zimmerman

## PHI BETA KAPPA INDUCTS HONORS STUDENTS

Several Honors College students were recently inducted into the prestigious Phi Beta Kappa Society. Founded in 1776, Phi Beta Kappa is the nation's oldest academic honor society, inviting into membership outstanding seniors who have attained a liberal arts education with demonstrated breadth and depth. The organization gets its name from the first letters of the Greek phrase Φιλοσοφία Βίον Κυβερήτης – which in English means "Love of learning is the guide to life."

Congratulations to all the new Honors College inductees, listed below.

Oluseyi Akintorin	Daniel Lee	Amenda Rutherford
Jesse Christ	Jeanette Mazeikis	Natasha Saiyed
Nicole Diaz	William McSurlay	Ginelle Sanchez Leos
Kalya Durbak	Sathyaraj Murugappan	Anand Sandesara
Neal Edgren	Jamie O'Connor	Shravan Sarvepalli
Albana Jovan	Mohini Pathria	Alex Smetana
Eric Kinzel	Aisan Raisdana	Dana Williams
Michael Koerner	Catherine Rim	David Wong



L to R: Anand Sandesara, Julie Cain, Elzbieta Starzycka, Amy Ye, Nilay Shah

## ACTIVITIES HONORARY SOCIETY INDUCTEES

The Activities Honorary Society was founded in 1950 to recognize students who participation in a variety of activities on campus has contributed to a better community for everyone. Inductees into AHS are associated with at least three relatively diverse student organizations or activities and hold a key leadership role in at least one of the three and must be in good academic standing with at least 72 credit hours by the end of the spring semester. This is a special honor, for no more than 15 students are inducted each year in a ceremony that has remained virtually unchanged since its inception at the Navy Pier campus. This year's inductees and their families and guests took part in the ceremony held on Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup>. The event was held at the Chicago Yacht Club, on the shore of Lake Michigan.

Congratulations to the Honors College inductees shown in the photo at left.

## STUDENT LEADERSHIP AWARD WINNERS

Since 1972, the University of Illinois Alumni Association has honored exceptional graduating students for their leadership contributions to UIC societies, groups, and organizations. The Student Leadership Award is presented to those who have provided exceptional leadership through their involvement in campus organization and maintained successful academic careers. The following Honors College students received their award at the UIAA Leadership Awards dinner on March 12<sup>th</sup> at Student Center West.

Congratulations to all!

Dima Alfawakhiri	Tania Boisson	Anand Sandesara
Brooke Bachelor	Julie Cain	Nilay Shah
Angela Bixby	Jake Lindquist	Elzbieta Starzycka

## ANAND SANDESARA WINS PHI KAPPA PHI FELLOWSHIP

Every year, the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi awards sixty Fellowships of \$5,000 each to members entering the first year of graduate or professional study. Each Phi Kappa Phi chapter may select one candidate from among its local applicants to compete for the Society-wide awards. UIC's nominee and winner this year is Anand Sandesara.

After he graduates from UIC, Anand will spend a year studying and researching towards his Master of Public Health degree at the Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences in Tanzania. While in Africa, he will continue his research on the prevention of the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus. After he completes his MPH, he will return to Chicago to begin medical school at UIC's College of Medicine.

Congratulations, Anand!



## CHANCELLOR'S STUDENT SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Honors College students give of their time and energy on a daily basis. On Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, the Chancellor and other distinguished university administrators recognized these efforts at the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Chancellor's Student Service and Leadership Awards. Held in the UIC Forum, students were recognized individually for their contributions to the campus and various communities. Congratulations to the following Honors College students who were named recipients of the prestigious award:

Neha Agnihotri	Vikrant Jagadeesan	Pryal Patel
Arturo Aguirre	Asha Kalichira	Elias Pittos
Rasha Atallah	Susan Kang	Ashley Prentice
Suzan Atallah	Michael Kenes	Manu Raghavan
Aaron Babu	Anup Kotadia	Arina Ratner
Yaw Baoateng	Adam Kuranishi	Sujithra Reprakash
Angela Bixby	Anna Lendabarker	Adam Rozalowski
Tania Boisson	Ginelle Sanchez Leos	Anand Sandesara
Carolina Borelli	Brian Lin	Samantha Scarpelli
Noreen Brahim	Paulina Makuch	Rebecka Schmidt
Maria Bulatovic	Amanda Mantilla	Nilay Shah
Julie Cain	Bernard Mariano	Vrushank Shah
Chariz Calip	Aaron Miles	Prashansa Sharma
Justin Cavida	Ryan Murray	Sean Smrt
Staci Chan	Jee Eun Nam	Amber Stone
Angela Chi	Jee Hye Nam	Tadas Stonkus
Kathleen Deguzman	Louisa Ng	Travis Strutzenberg
Rodje Estrada	Ashley Novak	Quanglong Truong
Ana Genkova	Erin O'Heath	Pauliaus Vertelka
Diana Guizman	Katarzyna Olcon	Aran Yoo
Shauna Gunaratne	Karen Oram	Saada Zegar
Susan Hogan	Philip Ozaki	

## 2009 GRADUATE MENTORING AWARD RECIPIENTS

The Graduate College is pleased to announce the Graduate Mentoring Award Recipients for 2009. The Graduate Mentoring Awards are meant to recognize and encourage excellence in the mentoring of graduate students. This year's recipients are also all Honors College Fellows.

**Professor Mary Ashley, Ecology and Evolution/Landscape Ecology and Anthropogenic Process (LEAP).** Professor Ashley has advised over twenty-five graduate students. She is a champion of interdisciplinarity who grants her students the flexibility to find research projects that will allow their careers to flourish. In 2006 she received funding from the NSF for a \$2.8M IGERT training grant that will provide 24 fellowships for doctoral students engaging in interdisciplinary research. Her scientific success and accessibility have made her a role model for women in science, and she served as the first senior facilitator of WISEST at UIC.

**Professor Wonhwa Cho, Chemistry.** Professor Cho is an LAS Distinguished Professor of Chemical Biology. Throughout his career he has dedicated himself to using innovative methods to promote independence in his graduate students, accelerating the transition from entering student to mature research scientist. His challenging yet supportive approach inculcates critical thinking, problem solving skills, and leadership qualities in the many students he advises. On the strength of the training received from Professor Cho his students have gone on to prestigious postdoctoral fellowships, tenure system jobs at top universities around the country and leading scientific roles in industry.

**Professor Christian Messenger, English.** Professor Messenger has been a dedicated mentor throughout his career, challenging and protecting graduate students at all stages of graduate study. His mentorship has had significant impact on students in the classroom, as well as during research at the masters and doctoral levels. He has a special talent for understanding the needs and talents of individual students and for eliciting from each student the best work of which he or she is capable. His respect for and cultivation of the particular talents and interests of his students has nurtured their creativity, allowing them to become, in their own right, distinguished professors and top innovators in their fields.

## CATERPILLAR AND KABBES RESEARCH GRANT AWARDS

Seventeen Honors College students were recently awarded research grants from the Caterpillar and Kabbes fund. Listed below are the winning students and the titles of their research projects. Congratulations to all the winners!

**Saad Abid**, Historical View of cocaine & legitimacy: Users & demand

**Saeb Ahsan**, Challenges for American Muslims of the Obama Era: Frontier toward Legitimation

**Angelica Alonso**, Chicken Choriollantoic Membrane Assay & the effect of Iron overburden on cancer cell invasiveness

**Costadina Aneziris**, Experiences of living w. Sickle Cell Disease & treating pain

**Andrea Antoniou**, Site-directed mutagenesis of a recombinant & spectrin alall E121M

**Mohammed Hussain**, Is the transforming principle stomatin produced in Autophagi vesicles?

**Rhoda Jamadar**, Hot Flashes & memory in men undergoing GnRH analog therapy for prostate cancer

**Yaser Kattoum**, Calculating the topography of a differentiated vesta

**Ekaterina Khramtsova**, Ceremonial feasting patterns in prehistoric & colonial Philipine lowland chiefdoms & upland tribal societies

**Hope Lancaster**, Think-Aloud as a way to look at learning

**Eun-Hee Lee**, Effects of abiotic Stress on Rice *Oryza sativa* & the role of Phenylalanine in its defense mechanisms

**Raj Murugappan**, Candidate Gens for MSS HNPCC

**Josh Padovano**, Neurotophiz Coatings for Polymide Cortical Electrodes

**Pamela Pimentel**, Public Support for Juvenile Sex Offender Registry Laws: Reaction to Threat or Moral Outrage

**Masha Reider**, Role of scientific reasoning skills & relevant background knowledge in judgments about the relationship of studies to theories

**Kathleen Richert**, Interrogation of the Reactivity of Cyclopropyl-substituted aryl azides towards transition metals

**Abdul Sozzer**, Structured comparison between PAX-3 & PAX-3 FKHR proteins

## STUDENT RESEARCH FORUM RECOGNIZES HONORS COLLEGE STUDENTS

Honors College students won the majority of the awards for the undergraduate portion of the annual Student Research Forum. This exciting campus-wide event was held on Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup> at the UIC Forum. Close to 200 students from every department on campus competed in this event, which allows students an opportunity to present and showcase their research. Each student's work is judged by a panel of faculty, alumni, and staff, and cash prizes are awarded to the best in each category.

Listed below are the Honors College students whose work was recognized for its excellence. These awards are listed by general category, the title of the student's research and the award they received

### Life Sciences

First place: **Keerthi Ranganath**: "Relationship among morphology, hydrodynamics, and symptom in adult patients with Chiari I Malformation"

Second place: **Eun Hee Lee**: "The effects of abiotic stress on rice *Oryza sativa* and the role of Phenylalanine in its defense mechanisms"

Third place: **Alex Smetana**: "Generation of affinity reagents to the recoverin protein in the photoreceptors of the zebrafish eye"

### Physical Sciences

First place: **Anand Sandesara**: "Trauma and PTSD among juvenile offenders in alternative detention"

Second place: **Ivy Abraham**: "High-resolution diffusion tensor imaging in the putamen and globus pallidus of de novo Parkinson disease"

Honorable mention: **Christine Hofmann**: "Biomechanical evaluation and redesign of a universally-designed accessory unit for exercise in manual wheelchair users"

### Humanities

First place: **Amber Stone**: "Severity of violence exposure and proximity of the perpetrator: the impact on child behavior"

Second place: **Daniel Schneider**: "Born with it: Photographic images of life with Sickle Cell disease"

Honorable mention: **Brandon Postel**: "Undergraduate student attitudes on human cadaver use in an anatomy and physiology course"

Congratulations to all the winners!

## ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK HELPS HMONG REFUGEES

ANAND SANDESARA

Sunny beaches and palm trees? How about 30 degrees and a wonderful snow/rain combination? Over spring break, 10 UIC students, including myself, chose to skip the Cancun coast and opted to go on an Alternative Spring Break trip to St. Paul, Minnesota to work with issues relating to refugee resettlement in America. Minnesota has one of the largest resettled refugee populations in this country, and the Twin Cities (St. Paul and Minneapolis) are home to the some of the largest concentrations of Hmong and Somali Bantu refugees. Despite the weather, it was an amazing experience and overall great spring break. The 10 of us made up a significantly diverse group, ranging from age 18 to 29, with majors from Political Science to Biochemical engineering, representing eight nationalities, coming together for a singular cause.

The majority of refugees we worked with were Hmong or Karen. The Hmong are originally from the mountainous regions of Southeast Asia. Laotian Hmong were recruited by the CIA in the 1960s to fight in what is known as the secret war against communist Vietnam. However, after American withdrawal, the Hmong were left defenseless and were subsequently targeted for genocide. As a result, many fled to refugee camps in Thailand or were resettled around the world. The Karen are an ethnic group native to Burma who have been fighting for independence for more than fifty years. Analysts believe it to be the

longest-running civil war today and estimate that around 80,000 people have been killed.

Throughout the week, our group worked daily with the students at Como Park Elementary School, a K-6 school in St. Paul.



Anand Sandesara (right front) and other members of ASB with students from Como Park School

The days would run from 8 AM – 3 PM, often followed by some after school tutoring, as well. In pairs, we were assigned various grade levels to work as teacher's aides for classes that were predominantly constituted of refugees. I worked with fellow honors student Ksenia Smith in a 1<sup>st</sup> grade classroom, which consisted of 18 students, 12 of whom were either Hmong, Karen, or Tibetan refugees or children of refugees. This was my fourth ASB trip, and compared to building houses and working on

construction sites, volunteering at Como Park with six-year-olds was probably the most tiring of all!

However, the experience was extraordinarily rewarding if nothing else. In just one week, the Como Park students and the UIC volunteers became very attached to one another. The majority of the time was spent helping these English Language Learners (ELLs) with their speaking, reading, and writing skills, which some of the students desperately needed.

Considering that the school that was 70% Asian, most of who came from immigrant households, it was largely understaffed to adequately meet all the students' needs, so our help was very much needed. The students clearly came from a traumatic past, with some students even able to recount their treacherous crossing of the Mekong River with their families to reach safety. Despite their adversities, it was amazing to see these students progress and overcome the countless hurdles which they have faced and the histories which continue to haunt them. While the school was very thankful for our assistance, we were grateful to help out and learn about an issue most of us were largely unfamiliar with.

Our group of 10 engaged in several activities to better acquaint us to the issues surrounding refugee resettlement and the particular case of displaced Southeast Asians. We visited the Hmong cultural center to learn firsthand about the plight of the Hmong and how the community remains strong in the face of adversity, and we also wandered a Hmong marketplace. The highlight of the trip, no doubt, was an authentic Karen meal prepared by one of our students' mothers. We were invited to their home for dinner, and food was absolutely delicious. Through games, songs, and speeches (and many necessary translations), we expressed our appreciation for one another.

To all of you who have yet to participate in an ASB trip, I strongly recommend it. Spring break does not mean that you have to be a couch potato all week. Instead, you can travel, volunteer, and be educated about pressing issues facing our country. For more information, please visit [www.asbuic.org](http://www.asbuic.org).

## ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK WINS DIVERSITY AWARD



At the Chancellor's Student Service and Leadership Awards ceremony on Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, Alternative Spring Break received the 2009 "Commitment to Diversity" award. This award recognizes an organization that provides a forum for cultural awareness, understanding, and/or education to flourish. From working with migrant workers on the Texas/Mexico border, to tutoring children of the Hmong tribe, ASB volunteers serve a wide range of populations and aid in various causes all over the country. The organization strives to increase diversity among each trip's participants, as well as their executive leadership board.

Congratulations to ASB!

# HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!

LISA ZHANG

As spring approaches, (I know it's buried under the snow somewhere) so does scholarship and application season. In the next few weeks, countless students will be applying for scholarships, study abroad programs, summer programs, internships, graduate schools and professional schools. One of the major components of most of these applications is...dun dun dun...the dreaded recommendation letter. Why is it dreaded, you ask? The whole situation just seems a bit awkward and uncomfortable. Asking for a recommendation letter means that you have to ask someone you don't know that well to spend time writing down all of your positive qualities while air-brushing the ones that are not as attractive. But if looked at in another way, it's one of the easier parts of the application because you personally don't have to do much...Below are some steps you can take that will not only make the whole please-please-please-write-me-a-rec-letter process less intimidating, but also help you to get a better letter.

**Build up your relationship.** It's awfully hard for someone to write a one page description of a person they barely know. Usually, the letter will end up sounding like a vague collection of adjectives that could almost describe any college student. To avoid this, *talk to the potential recommender* so that they know you on a personal level. If you'd like to ask professors for a letter, go to their office hours often and if you feel comfortable, share about yourself and perhaps what other activities you're involved in or other interests that you have. These activities will stick out to them when they are actually writing your letter.

**Ask Early.** A good rule of thumb is to give the recommenders at least 2-3 weeks notice before the deadline of your application. Would you like it if your Professor emailed you tonight and told you a paper was due in two days? Professors don't like it the other way around either. By asking early, you're showing that you're a conscientious person, a good planner and that you are aware of other people's obligations and time constraints (all positive characteristics that could be put into your letter!) Asking early means that you also must do your research early. Immediately after deciding what types of programs or scholarships you want to apply for, ask for the required recommendation letters. You can finish your part of the application while your recommender(s) are working on your letter.

**How/What to Do When You Ask.** It's important to be courteous and respectful when asking for

a recommendation letter. After all, professors and faculty are not *obligated* to write you a letter; they are doing you a favor.

Besides asking the recommender early, after they have agreed to write your letter, prepare a "rec letter packet" for them to *make the recommender's task easier*.

Write a short concise letter to them thanking them for writing your letter, explain the program/scholarship you're applying for, even if you've mentioned it in person, highlight the application deadline and make it clear where to mail or fax the letter.

If the letter needs to be mailed, provide them with a stamped envelope.

Explaining the program/scholarship is extremely important. Certain programs/scholarships are looking for applicants that have certain qualities. If you're applying for a scholarship that is for great community volunteers, you don't want your recommender (s) to go on and on about how awesome you are at your *job* at the convenience store. Stating the program/scholarship you're applying for clearly can help the recommender(s) highlight the characteristics that you have that fit with what the reviewers are looking for.

It's also helpful to include a short resume, which will help them to get a better understanding of who you are as a whole.

Lastly, emphasize that they can come to you with any questions or for clarification.

**Follow-Up.** If you haven't heard back from your recommender(s) and the deadline is less than a week away, it's OK to email them or casually remind them of the impending deadline. Sometimes they have already sent it in but forgot to remind you or they may have had a busy month. In either case, it's better to ask them now then to find out after the deadline that you were short a recommendation letter.

**After the letter.** As soon as you know that your letter has been sent in, send your recommender (s) a hand written note thanking them again. Don't just break off the relationship now that you got your letter. Also, if you ever need another letter of recommendation, they already have one written so it makes sense for you to keep that relationship. This will keep you from finding a new person each time you need a recommendation letter and it makes life easier for them as well because they'll only need to update or modify their existing letter for you.



*The Honors  
College staff  
wishes all of our  
graduating seniors  
the best of luck in  
the future. Be  
happy and stay in  
touch!*



## We Want to Hear from YOU!

Are you interested in writing for the Ampersand? The Ampersand is open and eager to accept submissions from all Honors College students.

Please contact Jennifer Kosco at [jkosco@uic.edu](mailto:jkosco@uic.edu) if you are interested.

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## HCAB HOSTS SUCCESSFUL ORGAN/TISSUE DONATION DRIVE

The Honors College luncheon was held on Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, and in addition to the opportunity to share great Mexican food with Honors College colleagues, staff, and faculty, the first Honors College organ donation registration drive gave students the opportunity to give the gift of hope and life.

Organ and Tissue Donation offers patients a renewed chance at healthy, productive, normal lives, and allows people to return to their lives with their families and friends. Because of the significant need for organ donors, organ and tissue donation registration is a choice that everyone should at least consider. Every 13 minutes, another person is added to the national organ donation waiting list, and nearly 100,000 people are waiting for lifesaving organ transplants nationwide. More than 4,700 people in Illinois are waiting for organ transplants.

Organ transplantation is one of the most remarkable success stories of modern medicine, though the availability of donor organs is vastly less than the need for healthy organs. Organ donation is a serious choice that requires thought; keep in mind the number of lives you could influence and impact by signing up as an organ donor.

It is natural to feel apprehensive about organ donation, so in an effort to better educate Honors College members about organ donation and its benefits, a series of emails was sent leading up to the day of the registration drive and the Honors College luncheon. Students were encouraged to take the time to read the emails to see just how significant an impact they could make by registering as an organ donor. In the time leading up to the registration drive, all Honors College members

were encouraged to consider organ donation by reviewing the facts on the need for organ donation, as well as discussing their desire to be an organ donor with family, friends, and loved ones.

HCAB's hard work paid off, and on the day of the luncheon, 33 students (more than 10% of the luncheon attendees) signed up to be organ donors, and a significant number more took home information to send from home about donation registration. This was one of the most successful registration

drives across UIC's east and west campuses - so thank you, Honors College students, for your support and your willingness to give the gift of life!



**Coordinator Nilay Shah signs up Juliana Prado for the new Organ Donor program**



**Professor Mary Lou Bareither enjoys lunch with Honors College students at the Honors College Luncheon**

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*House Settlement,* and *Cultures of Southeast Asia.* I am constantly impressed by the range of expertise represented by our contributing faculty. Check the Honors College web page for all the fall course listings.

Finally - it's that time: graduation! We are honored to have Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez as this year's Honors College Convocation keynote speaker. Ms. Alvarez made history on December 1, 2008, when she was the first woman and first Latina to ever be sworn in as Cook County's top prosecutor. Her life has been marked by public service and a commitment to ethics and reform, reflecting values that the Honors College instills in all of its students.

In closing, I'd like to extend my best wishes to all graduating seniors. Good luck wherever your life takes you next. Remember that there are many paths to success, and remember what UIC has taught you about finding those paths. Now, don't forget the Honors College when you go off and become rich and famous... we'll be right here waiting for you and your talents!