

The Ampersand

UIC Honors College

October 2002

Important Upcoming Dates

Oct. 25	HCAB Bake Sale (9:00 a.m.)
	HCAB Halloween Social (3:30-5:00 p.m.)
Oct. 26	Make A Difference Day -Pumpkin Patch
Oct. 28	HCAB General Body Meeting (5:00 p.m.)
Oct. 31	Society of Future Physicians- Halloween Party
Nov. 4	Spring Timetable Available in CCC
Nov. 5	ASB Live and Silent Auction (jkim110@uic.edu)
Nov. 7	HCAB Luncheon (11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.)
Nov. 11	HCAB General Body Meeting (5:00 p.m.)
Nov. 14	Golden Key National Honour Society Induction Ceremony
Nov. 18	Spring Registration Begins
Nov. 19	Honors College Blood Drive (10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.) (appointments: amoads1@uic.edu)

ASIAN TATION 2002 – A UNIFIED VISION FOR ASIAN AMERICANS AT UIC

by Jenniann Yi

After enduring a summer filled with anticipation and questions of “So what exactly is Asiantation?” students were finally given their answers on Tuesday, September 17th, when UIC students experienced the first ever Asiantation, a day-long orientation for Asian American students at UIC. This event was sponsored by the Asian American Coalition Committee (AACC), Student Activities Funding Committee, and many other Asian American student organizations and campus units. This year’s Asiantation marked yet another historical first for both students and UIC.

The day began with an outdoor student organization fair in the Lecture Center Plaza. Over 30 student groups, campus offices, and outside organizations planned a blood drive, and various games and activities. One of the most popular games of the fair was a reproduction of the well-known “alllookslike.com” test online. This game incorporated pictures of a mixed group of Asian Americans and UIC students were asked to try and identify that person’s ethnicity for a prize. A fun and engaging activity on the surface, the game also served a deeper purpose: to demonstrate the diversity of Asian Americans and dispel the common myth that “all Asians look alike.” Other attractions throughout the day ranged from a basketball shootout sponsored by Campus Recreation, to a meditation demonstration by the Falun Dafa Association, to interactive cultural dance lessons taught by members of Filipinos In Alliance.

“I think it was a very successful start for the new school year,” says Asiantation day fair coordinator Elaine Aguinaldo, a sophomore at UIC and the programming chair of AACC. “I hope this event encouraged more people to support the Asian American population on campus and to show their enthusiasm for the steps being made to become an even more integral part of UIC.”

The evening program called “Night Vision” was held in the Illinois Room. It showcased the many Asian American student organizations on campus through a wide variety of performances, including cultural and hip hop dances from Filipinos in Alliance (FIA) and Asian American Students in Alliance (AASIA), step shows from Alpha Kappa Delta Phi and Chi Sigma Tau, and a martial arts demonstration by the Japan Karate Association. Also featured was the night’s special guest “Mango Tribe,” a renowned Asian/Pacific Islander American (APIA) women’s performance collective comprised of 22 APIA women from across the nation, including UIC senior Jill Aguado. Mango Tribe performed vignettes from their recently released production “Sisters in the Smoke,” a “collaborative fusion of theater, music,

FOCUS ON A FELLOW – DR. JENNIFER WILEY

by Joseph Morgan



Psychology is a multi-faceted branch of social science, with many of these facets never being seen by undergraduate college students. “When most people think about psychology, they immediately associate it with therapy. The fact is, most psychologists are not interested in therapy,” says Dr. Jennifer Wiley, Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology. Wiley is a cognitive psychologist. Cognitive psychology is a branch of psychology that deals with how people think and learn, how they use language, problem-solving skills, and memory. Dr. Wiley is a professor in the cognitive and developmental psychology labs, along with fulfilling her duties as a researcher. She earned her undergraduate degree in English/Poetry at Duke University. She had enough credits for a degree in Art History, but did not declare that major. She then went on to earn her PhD in Psychology at the University of Pittsburgh.

After graduate school, Dr. Wiley completed her post-doctorate at the University of Massachusetts – Amherst. A post-doctorate is the equivalent of a residency for a medical student; students study for a post-doctorate between graduate school training and gaining a faculty position. Dr. Wiley went on to serve as a faculty member at Washington State University for two years before she joined the faculty of UIC three years ago.

Dr. Wiley’s shift into the field of psychology is an interesting one. Upon graduation from Duke University, Wiley felt there were few job opportunities with a degree in English, so she turned to other options for graduate study. She had taken one introductory psychology class as an undergraduate. Just prior to graduation, Wiley had a conversation with her psychology professor. He asked her what she was going to do upon finishing her studies. When she responded that she didn’t know, the professor offered her a position as a Research Assistant in his lab. After a year of work, Dr. Wiley knew that psychology was the field she intended to study, and she entered graduate school.

At UIC, Wiley studies many different areas of psychology. She classifies her two primary areas of study as “one being practical and one being fun.” Her practical research deals with if and how people understand what they are reading on web pages.

“People sit and browse and scan web pages for the information they are looking for. But the information is not complete. A lot of the time, people leave their computers feeling like they just ate a bunch of junk food,” Dr. Wiley explained. Her question is, “Can people understand what they have read on a web page, and if they can, how do they do it?” Wiley employs many different techniques to test this topic. First, she and her research team study the layout of different web pages. “I am very anti-scrolling,” Dr. Wiley muses. Basically, one of her hypotheses states that scrolling has a lot to do with the information we DO NOT gain from a web page. To research participants, she will present two different versions of the same web page (one with scrolling, the other without) and then she will garner how much information is retained from each page. Another tactic she uses to research this topic is eye tracking, where she will study the eye movements of participants as they view different types of web pages.

Upcoming Scholarship Deadlines!

Udall Scholarship

The Udall Foundation awards approximately 75 scholarships of up to \$5,000 per year to undergraduate students who study the environment and related fields, and to Native American and Alaskan Native undergraduate students in fields related to public policy and tribal health care. Applicants must be sophomores or juniors studying an environmentally related field with a minimum GPA of 4.5. Applicants should also have a strong record of activism in their field and career goals related to the environment. UIC selection deadline is November 4, 2002. Visit the web for more information: www.udall.gov

The Mellon Fellowship

The Mellon provides up to \$14,000 plus tuition and fees for a one-year fellowship in humanistic studies for students committed to teaching and research. Applicants must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents, have a high GPA and GRE score, and be a senior or graduate who has not yet enrolled in graduate study. Applications are due on December 18, 2002. For more information visit the Mellon website at: www.woodrow.org/mellon

The Elie Wiesel Prize in Ethics Essay Contest

The Elie Wiesel Prize in Ethics Essay Contest is an annual competition that is designed to challenge college students to analyze the urgent ethical issues confronting them in today’s complex world. Cash prizes of \$5,000, \$2,500, \$1,500 and \$500 are awarded for first, second, third, and honorable mention essays. Applicants must be full time juniors or seniors and must have a faculty sponsor. Applications are due December 2, 2002. For more information and essay topic suggestions visit the Elie Wiesel Foundation web page at: www.eliewieselfoundation.org

For more information on any of the awards listed above, please contact:

Office of Special Scholarship Programs
University of Illinois at Chicago
MC 115, 851 South Morgan Street, 120A SEO
Chicago, IL 60607-7043
phone:(312) 355-2477

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and dance,” that touched on topics ranging from Asian American issues to women’s rights and more personal struggles of the performers as well.

Attended by an estimated 300 students, “Night Vision” even attracted members from outside UIC. “I loved the performances, especially the cultural ones,” stated Anupama Topgi, a second-year student from the Illinois Institute of Technology, “I think it was great the way they promoted cultural as well as social awareness.” Asiantation co-coordinator and AACC interim Vice-President Jim Vasavanont moved the crowd with a stirring speech addressing the need for awareness of the history and culture of the Asian American heritage, the need for UIC to invest in an Asian American studies program and the need for an Asian American Resource and Cultural Center. Though Asiantation was an event open to the general public, it was developed to target the incoming freshman class in particular. “Overall, I was really inspired by the night as a whole,” says freshman Madhan Krishnaraj.

Although already a well-established event at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, this year was the first time Asian American students had attempted to have Asiantation at UIC. Students organized this event to address the lack of an institutionally implemented summer orientation targeting Asian American students, in contrast to the programs already in place for other minority students at UIC. There is a distinct absence of Asian American-specific resources, despite the fact that this population comprises almost 30% of the UIC student body.

Asiantation aimed to bring together the Asian American students at UIC in a fun and welcoming atmosphere, but the program’s greater goal was to “better acquaint Asian American students to the resources available to them at UIC and also to further the awareness of this growing minority population’s needs in students, faculty, and the general population,” explains Vasavanont. These goals were firmly kept in mind while planning the program. True to the slogan for the event, Asiantation 2002 was indeed a “unified vision for Asian Americans at UIC.”

Alternative Spring Break’s 5th Annual Silent and Live Auction to be held on November 5th!

On Tuesday, November 5th, you will have the opportunity to take a step back into the days of antiquity by attending Alternative Spring Break’s 5th Annual Silent and Live Auction: “My Big Fat Greek Auction.” The auction will be modeled after an ancient Greek agora which, in days of antiquity, served as a public space for assembly of the citizens, and hence, the political, civic, social, and commercial center of a city.

The Silent Auction will be held during the day from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. in Room 330 and the White Oak Room on the 3rd floor of CCC. A reception featuring Greek delicacies and entertainment, including fortunes told by the Oracle of Delphi, will be held at 5 p.m. followed by the Live Auction at 5:30 p.m. in Room 329 on the third floor of CCC as well. The auctioneer for the Live Auction will be UIC’s very own Ray Clay who was the voice of the Chicago Bulls.

This is a great chance to pay really low prices of a variety of services and items! Auction items include gift certificates to local restaurants, a bookcase entertainment system from Sony, and a chance to have lunch with Provost Michael Tanner! Starting bids will all be only a fraction of the retail value of the goods. All proceeds will be used by Alternative Spring Break to subsidize trips that send groups of UIC students all over the nation to volunteer for and become immersed in a variety of social issues.

Getting to Know an Honors College Student Athlete

by Kamala Saha

Junior Amol Desai knows how to balance his act. Besides being a psychology major and GPPA student, he is also starting his third year as a member of the UIC Men’s Tennis team.

A normal week of tennis includes 3 hours of regular practice each weekday, weights twice a week, plus home and away matches that can last entire weekends. Somewhere in there, Desai must find time to attend classes and maintain good grades as an Honors College student. However, he wouldn’t think twice about his decision to play sports at UIC.

“It gives me something to do besides just school. Being a student-athlete is a commitment, but it keeps me from being bored.”

Desai believes his experience on the UIC Men’s Tennis team has provided him with the perfect outlet from his heavy course load. By playing a sport, he has learned to build positive relationships with team members. In addition to living with two other tennis team members and good friends, Desai has built a strong friendship with his coach, Hans Neuseld.

However, the life of a student-athlete isn’t an easy one. After long practices, homework is always waiting to be done. Desai, like other Honors College athletes, has had to learn how to prioritize. While staying committed to the tennis team is important, he must make time to keep up with the fast pace of classes. He believes most of all, the support from his family and friends helps



him stay focused and do his best, whether it be on the courts or in the classroom. Good Luck UIC Men’s Tennis Team!!

Project ESTEEM

by Aparna Vemuri

Can you think of the last time you put forth great effort into an academic assignment like a paper or a project? Or perhaps think back to the last time you studied really hard for an exam. Now fast forward to the end of the event (the exam day or the day of the presentation). Granted, predominant emotions were probably anxiety or nervousness, but wasn't there also a great sense of relief and satisfaction? For college students, this particular situation is one out of many. Every semester, in every class, we are presented with many opportunities to work hard and reap the benefits. Although working may seem like a chore at times, the end result is usually satisfaction that results in greater self confidence.

Project ESTEEM (Enrichment of Science Through Exposure to Experimental Models) is a program that is student-created and run, based precisely on this concept of using academic work to bolster self esteem. In the spring semester of 2001, Project ESTEEM was developed by Honors College student Gaurav Gaiha. His goal was to take the idea that academic success increases self confidence and share it with disadvantaged children living in the city.

To prepare for the program, students first researched and found a shelter that was receptive to the idea. They then came up with 8-10 science projects which taught important scientific concepts that were appropriate for a 4th grade level. The idea is to visit the shelter twice a week, and conduct science projects with the kids. While doing the projects, the goal is to incorporate a buddy/mentor system in order to get closer to the kids and develop a meaningful relationship.

Project ESTEEM is held at the Maryville Children's Shelter in Chicago. The kids who live there range between the ages of 10-18. Most are learning below their expected grade level and almost all have experienced major setbacks in their lives that have affected their education. For these reasons, many of them do not have high self-esteem when it comes to academics. This is where the results of Project ESTEEM can be seen. UIC students who have participated in Project ESTEEM will tell you that they saw a visible difference in how the kids interacted with them at the beginning of the sessions and at the end. At the beginning, the kids were somewhat quiet and wary, but by the end of the session they were almost always excited and open to new ideas. Sue Etminan (second year, biological sciences) commented, "It was very gratifying because we could see a definite change in the kids. By the end of the session, they were interacting and participating more, and eagerly soaking up whatever information we made available to them."

This year Project ESTEEM meets twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays from 5:30 until 7:30 p.m. On Mondays, the group meets with the girls and on Thursdays, they meet with the boys. This year, a slight change was made in how the program was run. It was observed last year that the girls were less receptive than the boys to learning science than when the scientific aspect was the only component. This year, Project ESTEEM changed the way they approached the experiments with the girls. Instead of simply focusing on science, art was incorporated alongside the experiment. The girls were more eager to do the project, and at the same time, learning the same material.

Students may participate in Project ESTEEM for honors activity credit with the consent of their fellow. For more information, contact Gaurav Gaiha at ggaiha1@uic.edu

Happy Birthday Golden Key

by Nirav Shah

This year Golden Key celebrated its 25th anniversary at the International Convention in its hometown of Atlanta, Georgia. In 1977 a group of highly motivated students decided to start an honor society to recognize the excellence in students. What was once a small organization only found at Georgia State University is now the largest honor society in the world and awards more scholarships annually than any other organization. Past president of Golden Key at UIC Juliana Choi received a scholarship as a Golden Key Scholar, the society's highest honor. With all that it does, Golden Key has spread across the globe in these 25 years, making it the premier society to join.

Over 1200 members attended the convention in Atlanta, Golden Key celebrated its past and looked forward to its future. Guest speakers included Coretta Scott King, the widow of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Liz Murray, who went from homeless to Harvard through her commitment to succeed. Together, Golden Key chapters around the world have volunteered over a hundred thousand hours of work, ranging from helping the homeless to cleaning up the environment. Students who attended the convention also volunteered at food banks across Atlanta to continue Golden Key's commitment to helping our society.

I never knew the greatness of this organization until I attended this convention. Golden Key does so much for the world around it, and just as much for the students who have worked hard to succeed academically. I am very proud to be part of Golden Key and the President of the UIC chapter. I hope to have our organization rise to the level of other Golden Key chapters around the world. Next year's international convention will be held in Chicago. We will get a chance to show off our chapter of Golden Key and our commitment to society. With the help of all of you, our great students, I know that Golden Key will continue to flourish at UIC.

Thinking of taking the GMAT?

The UIC American Marketing Association will be hosting a "reverse auction" for a Kaplan Testing Services' GMAT course on Wednesday, November 6th, from 5 p.m. until 6 p.m. in Lecture Center D5. Any student is welcome to bid on the GMAT course, which traditionally sells for nearly \$1,200. A reverse auction differs from other auctions in that the price is first bid down to an acceptable level and then bid up again. Ms. Lara Kousaie, a Kaplan coordinator, stated that in previous auctions, courses have been sold for as little as 50% of their original price. The auction winner has the option to take the GMAT course at any time up to a year from the date of the auction. The course can be a valuable supplement for any student considering business graduate school, or who hopes to get an MBA.

The UIC American Marketing Association is a student-run organization devoted to advancing the science of marketing and assisting students who hope to further their knowledge in the advertising or marketing fields.

Medical Experiences in India

by Hima Vidula

During this summer, I traveled to Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, India to work as a volunteer at Kumar Nursing Home (KNH) and as an intern under Dr. Radhakrishna Hari, a neurophysician and internist. This public service project was financially supported by the J.W. Saxe Memorial Prize.

KNH is a small hospital that provides affordable, efficient healthcare services for underprivileged patients. As a volunteer, I had conversations with many patients about their medical histories, disorders, treatments, and lifestyles. My main duty was to educate illiterate people about basic healthcare concepts.

On my first day at KNH, the nurses made me sit on the best chair in the clinic and would not allow me to approach any of the patients too closely, fearing that I may be infected with a dangerous virus. Finally, I grew tired of all the respect and begged the staff to simply treat me as one of them. The nurses laughed and forced me to drink a cup of *masala* tea, saying the spices would give me the energy I needed to work until the evening.

Later that day, a woman asked about what she needed to do to keep her granddaughter healthy. I turned to the nurses for advice, but they only smiled encouragingly. I began to lecture the elderly woman about well balanced diets and boiled water, when I noticed how earnestly she was listening to me. I wished I had the authority and understanding of a doctor to more completely answer her questions, but I realized that my modest knowledge could also make a difference.

As I became better friends with the nurses, they told me to come to work an hour earlier, so that they could teach me how to administer injections, use hospital equipment technology, and dress simple wounds. These nurses were very frank with me and helped me to develop a more realistic picture of the Indian healthcare system and the difficulties that confront medical practitioners and patients.

During the evenings I worked with Dr. Hari, whose home clinic includes an

examination room, medical diagnostic center, and small pharmacy. Soon after I met him I realized that he is a physician who is truly devoted to public service and who does not mind working until 3 a.m., even though he knows that many of his patients cannot pay him well. I admire the way he takes a moment to share a joke with a patient or listen to a person's problems, even if they do not directly relate to a medical condition.

Working with Dr. Hari, I learned how to communicate with people in the compassionate, yet instructive, tone of a doctor. As my Telugu (local language) improved, Dr. Hari encouraged me interview patients about their medical histories. His talent to almost completely make a medical diagnosis by asking the right questions always amazed me. By observing the different patients that visited Dr. Hari, I learned about the effects of environment, socio-economic status, and culture on health.

Below are two entries from my journal that describe my experiences in India.

Journal Entry 1

A middle-aged woman is here for her endoscopy exam. I describe the procedure, emphasizing that she will not experience any pain as a long tube is inserted through her esophagus to observe her stomach. We are waiting for the doctor, when she begins speaking to me in Telugu. I have trouble understanding her particular dialect and a nurse nearby acts as an interpreter. The patient says she has come from a distant village and has sold her jewelry to pay for travel expenses.

Suddenly, her eyes well up with tears, and she whispers, "Do you think I may die?" I am confused about how to respond as she describes the symptoms of her disorder. She tells me her health began to deteriorate after the birth of her third child. "I should never have had any children," she cries. At this point, I am confident about what to say, and re-

mind her of how much her daughters must mean to her. Then she asks about cancer. She has heard about it in her village and is almost convinced that she suffers from the disease. I correct her views on cancer and explain that in the rare case that she is suffering from it, cures are available and many patients have survived. She smiles weakly.

The exam is over and she is diagnosed with a gastric infection. As she leaves the clinic, she warmly grips my hand and thanks me. I know I will not forget her.

Journal Entry #2

The patient is moaning slightly even under the influence of anesthesia, and the stained and frayed linen sheet that covers him quivers slightly. The room, with its faded paint and large steel containers of sterilized equipment, seems inadequate for so delicate an operation. The power fails again, the comfort of air-conditioning is gone, and I feel slightly dizzy. My belief in the surgeon's ability to emerge successful in these conditions is faltering, when a comment by the anesthetist changes my perception. "The patient places his entire faith in the doctor, and the doctor puts all his confidence in his own abilities, the power of medicine, and God. What else can we do?" As I ponder her meaning, the dreary operation equipment seems to disappear, and I only see the colorful, religious pictures that decorate the walls.

Overall, through my service experiences, I gained a greater understanding of the knowledge and personal characteristics necessary to become a successful physician and to improve healthcare services in India. Perhaps the most important skill I developed as a volunteer was the ability to listen. Sometimes, while I listened to India's patients, I could change cries to laughs and ease fear and pain with a few words of advice. But on many occasions, I realized that by simply listening, I could perform the greatest service of all.

JUST WONDERIN'???

by Joseph Morgan

Well, here you have it folks, the unveiling of HCAB's new article, "Just Wonderin'?". "Just Wonderin'?" is a feature devoted to you, the Honors College student, and what you have to say on a variety of different topics. This feature was inspired by Jennifer Kosco, Assistant to the Dean in the Honors College, who also helps us put out this wonderful publication every month. While Jennifer was in college, she was the editor of her college newspaper and printed an article in every issue that gave the anonymous opinion of her advisor on a variety of different topics. When we approached her about putting in a question of the week in every issue of the Ampersand, Jennifer told us this story, and we decided to follow suit and give it a similar title. All answers to the questions we will ask are meant to be in fun, and to give all of us a break from studying by reading information pertinent to the lives of the student body.

In this inaugural section, we asked a variety of students the following question:

"What is your favorite pick-up line?"

The pool of students came from a variety of different places, including the Honors College lounge, the Honors College computer labs, and the Honors Floors in Commons West. I will not maintain the suspense for any longer; here are the top answers to this, very important question. SIDENOTE: In order to preserve the fine art of picking-up a person, and in order to not interfere with the games some people play with those aforementioned objects of affection, the identities of our respondents are being kept anonymous. . . .)

- "Baby, if you were a sandwich at McDonald's, I'd call you McBeautiful."
- "Did it hurt when you fell from Heaven?"
- Walk up to a member of the opposite sex, check the tag on the inside of their shirt, and say, "Oh, I'm sorry, I was checking to see if you were made in Heaven?"
- "I lost my phone number, can I have yours?"
- "Are you from Jamaica? 'Cuz, Jamaican me crazy. . ."
- "Are you a parking ticket? 'Cuz you have got fine written all over you."
- "Are you tired? Because you have been running through my mind all day."
- "Hey baby, what's your specific heat?"
- "If I could change the alphabet, I would put U and I together."
- "I hope I didn't lose my library card, 'cuz I am checkin' you out."
- And, in honor of those crazy Spades games that ensue daily in the Honors College Lounge. . ."Hey baby, what's your trump card?"

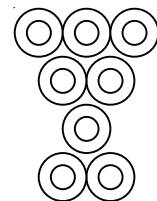
Author's Postscript: I apologize for the "cheese factor" of some of these. . . but they were the honest responses, and what type of journalist would I be if I changed the answers around?

DISCLAIMER: Usage of these pick-up lines DOES NOT mean that you will be guaranteed a date!!! Don't come to me with problems you may get yourself tangled in after usage. . .

If you have any ideas for the Just Wonderin' question for next month, please e-mail them to me, at jmorga7@uic.edu.

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Wiley's "fun" involves studies which deal with insight problems. These problems are basically puzzles that, when a person initially starts to solve them, they begin on the wrong path. At a certain point, the person has an "AH-HA" moment, and the answer is clear to them. Wiley is studying exactly what causes that "AH-HA" moment. Dr. Wiley presented me with one of these insight problems, and asked me to share it with the Honors College Student Body (and I can tell you honestly, I am still a little stumped).



The shapes above represent pennies. The pennies are in the shape of a wine glass.

Move ONLY two coins, so that the wine glass is turned upside down.

Dr. Wiley wants to introduce students to the areas of psychology of which they know little about. This is one reason she enjoys working as an Honors College Fellow. She says, "There is a lot of information out there that students are never going to get if they do not ask." She enjoys working one-on-one with Honors College students in order to provide them with this information if they need it. As a faculty member at Washington State, she served as an advisor (which was required of all faculty), so this isn't much of a change for her. "The only difference now is that I don't have to print DARS reports," Wiley jokes. "I am on the inside and it is useful for me to present information to students from that perspective. And remember, it wasn't very long ago that I was standing where you are now."

Congressional Apportionment

An Opinion by Mujeeb Abdul Rawoof

As the 2002 congressional elections draw closer, it becomes important to discuss the political power of each citizen. Exactly how much influence does one have over his or her congressman? The answer to this question lies in the proximity between a citizen and his or her congressman. In 1921, the number of House members was set at 435, creating a ratio of approximately one representative per 200,000 people. An increase in the population of each state in 1990 dissolved the political power of each citizen over a much larger district making the ratio roughly, one representative per 600,000 people. The 2000 census numbers indicate that each representative will now be accountable for 650,000 people. As the population of Americans continues to expand exponentially, how much more diluted will the political power of each citizen be, and at what point is a representative's constituency too large?

These questions can only be answered by understanding the purpose of the House of Representatives. The House was created to be one part of the bicameral legislature that allows the most populous states to wield the most political power. The states with the largest populations were afforded more representatives. However, as the population of the United States continued to expand, the government locked the number of representatives in the House at 435. The allocation of the number of representatives depends on the proportional increase in population of a state.

This methodology comes with a flaw: even though a state may have increased in population, it may *lose* representatives. For example, according to the 2000 census, Illinois and Texas both increased in population, but Illinois lost one congressman while Texas gained two. This is because Illinois did not increase in population at a greater *rate* than Texas. As a result, the average Illinoisan has less political power than the average Texan. In fact, it has come to the point where most Americans wield so little political power that they remain politically apathetic.

This outcome runs contradictory to the purpose of the House. The framers of the constitution intended the House of Representatives to serve as the closest connection between the average citizen and the government. By locking the number of representatives, the political power of each citizen is drowned out as the population continues to expand.

The antiquated reason behind setting the number of House representatives in 1921 was logical at the time because it seemed impossible for the business of the House to be complete with such a large body of members. However, the population of the United States has increased considerably since 1921, and a ceiling of 435 members now decreases the connection between a citizen and his or her government, and it becomes harder for a congressman to represent such a large constituency. Therefore, in order for the House to serve its primary purpose, it makes sense that the number of representatives be increased to reflect the growth of the nation and allow for a representative to be accountable to a constituency that is neither too large nor too small.

Some may ask that if the number of House members increases, at what point does Congress become too large and unmanageable? The answer to this question relies on the technology of the time. When the House was first created in 1791, it was unthinkable to have 435 House representatives. At the time, it would have been impossible to introduce, debate, and pass bills among 435 different members representing a diverse constituency. However, as time has passed and technology has permitted, it became possible to conduct House business with 435 members through electronic voting and other technologically-aided means. Today, an increase of members is possible through various technological improvements. For example, House members could vote on bills being debated in Washington remotely via a secure computer network. Video conferencing could allow committee members to debate bills without actually being on Capitol Hill. Technology will allow representatives to be held more closely accountable by their constituencies.

Until then, as the population continues to expand exponentially and the majority of Americans remains apathetic towards its government, it is clear that the branch of government that is supposed to be closest to the citizenry is drifting further and further away from the average American.

HCAB would like to remind you to exercise your right to vote on November 5, 2002.

Thank you to the contributing authors of this issue.
If you are interested in writing for *The Ampersand*,
please contact an HCAB representative.