

# UHP Newsletter

Spring, 2007

Vol. 1 Iss. 1

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Activism and Service

The Sugar Project

## Director's Message

It is a great pleasure to write the Director's message for the Honors Advisory Council's inaugural newsletter. At the heart of university Honors programs is the idea that bright and highly motivated students are both capable of and responsible for their own education. This idea animates seminar courses in Honors programs, for instance, as it also informs organizations like the Honors Advisory Council. The HAC was conceptualized at the first national meeting of Jesuit Honors programs in Los Angeles in 2006 (to which, naturally, Honors students were invited), and in only its first year, it has accomplished a great deal, as you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, including this newsletter, new course offerings in Honors, the President's Reading Series, social justice events, and a questionnaire to help us understand what courses Honors students would like to have as designated Honors sections. I hope you will take a moment to thank the members of the Honors Advisory Council for this significant work.

The Program is currently recruiting the Honors cohort for 2011. Interest in the program among students admitted with distinction is quite high, and there is every expectation that this will be one of the finest classes yet assembled. I hope you will also welcome a record number of students who have applied and been admitted to level II of the UHP, including John Howard, Marisa Nakasone, Andrea Marquis, Alexander Krengel, Richelle Neal, Sean Yopez, and Jacob LaPinta. Keep in mind as well that spring quarter is an excellent time for juniors to begin working on applications for major fellowships and for freshmen and sophomores to begin planning. Please see me if you have any questions. I wish you all a wonderful spring and an intellectually challenging and rewarding summer.

~ Mr. Osberg

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AJCU Honors Conference

## Upcoming A Passion for Social Justice

by Ricky Alexander

First organized during Winter Quarter of this school year, the Honors Social Justice Committee serves as a forum for active and engaged Honors students to pursue social justice issues and campaigns. The committee is part of the Honors Advisory Council (HAC) and as such has a vital role to play in fostering more student involvement in Honors activities. The Council has been most helpful in assisting with logistics, planning, and funding of events organized by the Honors Social Justice Committee.

All Honors students are invited to be part of the committee, helping to steer its direction going forward. If you would like more information or are interested in joining, please e-mail Ricky Alexander at [RCAlexander@scu.edu](mailto:RCAlexander@scu.edu). (more on Page 2)

## Our First Jesuit Mission

by Nicole Van Groningen

At the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) Honors Conference last February, representatives from Jesuit schools across the country agreed to initiate a national social justice campaign that will focus on one issue each academic year. The AJCU Student Council chose "War in Iraq" as the theme of its pilot project. The honors programs at each school would sponsor a series of events to educate students on the Iraq War and involve them in different events, such as speakers, video showings, and possible volunteer opportunities. All Jesuit Honors Programs have agreed, however, to sponsor a school-supplies drive in the month of September for Operation Iraqi Children, an organization that collects pre-made packages of school supplies and delivers them to schoolchildren in Iraq.

SCU's UHP hopes to receive donations of school supplies from students, community members, and local businesses, and assemble them

into packets to ship overseas. Interested students, or students with suggestions about this campaign, should contact Nicole Van Groningen, [nvangroningen@scu.edu](mailto:nvangroningen@scu.edu).

## New Honors Courses

Fall 2007 by Michael Enright

Next year will bring a plethora of new content to the University Honors Program. Perhaps the largest addition can be seen in the sciences where Biology 176, 177, 189, and Chemistry 11H are to be offered as new honors sections. Such additions should be welcomed seeing as about 19% of honors students are majoring in the sciences. Additionally, enrollment in the new biology courses will not be limited to honors students, allowing the characteristics of honors sections to diffuse more freely.

Expansion in the social sciences will also be seen. For the first time, the Economics Department will be offering an honors section with the implementation of Economics 3H, instructed by Dr. Kris Mitchener. The course will aim to take the already analytical level of the department's introductory international economics course to the discussion-based setting of honors sections, while also satisfying the World Cultures requirement. Having such a course should do well in meeting some of the requirements of the UHP's business and social science students, as well as the needs of those outside the UHP to whom the course is also open for enrollment.

A variety of other exciting additions will be seen next year. For example, an honors section of Math 11H will be available to strengthen the preexisting honors presence in mathematics. Also, Dr. Sunwolf will be instructing an honors section of Communications 100 (Friendships and Romantic Relationships), which will make for new options in the Communications Department. Moreover, an impressive list of sections will also be offered by the Religious Studies Department to complement their already impressive portfolio of honors options.

# New Committee for Activism and Service

by Ricky Alexander

At the end of Winter Quarter, the committee organized a Workers Appreciation Breakfast for our Bon Appetit cafeteria and cafe employees whose diligent service to the student body cannot be appreciated enough. Honors students volunteered to help set up tables and organize the continental breakfast. Over forty workers took part in the breakfast and talked with the approximately twenty student volunteers who participated. The workers were given roses and lavished with many thanks and smiles. Their numerous expressions of gratitude were a testament to the selflessness with which they serve the Santa Clara community.

During the first week of Spring Quarter, the committee sponsored a Socially Responsible Investing Seminar. It was a very educational and engaging event regarding the intricacies and ethics of university investing. The panel of speakers included four distinguished guests. Sally Osberg, CEO of the Skoll Foundation, and Richard Fahey, the CFO of the Skoll Foundation, discussed how their organization invests in social entrepreneurs who show promise in developing solutions to contemporary social problems. SCU Professor Meir Statman, who has written extensively on the topic of ethical investing, spoke about the

economics of different investment decisions. Finally, John Kerrigan, the Chief Investment Officer here at Santa Clara University, spoke about the university's Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) policy. Following the panel, there was a period of question and answer about the issues presented. Approximately thirty students attend the seminar.

The Honors Social Justice Committee will continue pursuing the issue of socially responsible investing at SCU. Additional future events and campaigns will be determined by the committee according to the interests of its members.



# The Suger Project

by Michael Enright

In which disciplines are honors students concentrating their studies? Prior to this year, general information was kept but a quantitative scheme for determining the needs of students had not been devised. Such a situation paved the way for Suger, a database which tracks honors students' academic programs and the honors courses students take. Named after the famous Abbot Suger, who updated the Abbey of St. Denis to a new level of excellence, the Suger Project aims to provide statistical data that allows the University Honors Program to upgrade and match the specialties of its students. The method of data collection is quite simple.

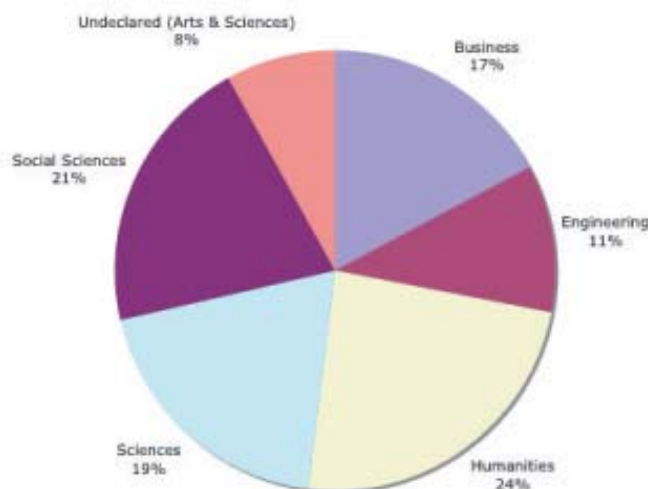
When an honors student takes an honors course, the enrollment is recorded in the UHP's files and consequently Suger, creating a data warehouse for analysis. Such querying has been done for the classes of 2007, 2008, and 2009. Not shockingly, findings indicate the humanities subjects compose a large share of the total registrations.

Such a flavor of the humanities

makes sense due to the current composition of the honors student population. As shown, students majoring in the humanities account for about 24% of all honors students; however, attempts are being made to expand course offerings to match the programs of those majoring in other areas.

Suger provides the UHP with a detailed statistical abstract of the program. Therefore, as the requirements of the new University Core Curriculum draw closer, the UHP will have the ability to make quantitative decisions and approach Santa Clara's new ideas and educational genres with confidence.

Honor Students' Majors



# The Flattening World: President's Reading Series Part One

by Natasha Lindstrom

Sixteen UHP students gathered around a long wooden dining table with SCU president Father Locatelli last month to discuss Thomas Friedman's *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* over a three-course meal.

"The conversation was engaging, enlightening and disturbing," junior Liam Satre-Meloy wrote about the event in a Jan. 25 column in *The Santa Clara*. "We discussed the social and cultural ramifications of our newly 'flattened' world—specifically considering the clash of disparate religious viewpoints engendered by technology."

The Jan. 16 dinner marked the first event of the President's Reading Series, one of the newly-formed UHP advisory council's first projects. The first book chosen was Friedman's 2005 *The World is Flat*, which describes a brief history of global business changes and innovations that make the world of the 21st century increasingly globalized and smaller.

At the dinner in Adobe Lodge, Father Locatelli and students discussed and debated the ethical issues raised by globalization. Junior Nicole Van Groningen, the series' student coordinator, was pleased with the students' participation and energy. Some of the most important issues discussed included America's "lacking" education system and the impor-

tance of corporate responsibility.

"I think the problem with corporations and multinationals' irresponsibility and lack of accountability will have to be solved in a 'bottom-up' fashion, so having discussions about this is key," Van Groningen said.

Junior Jared Abercrombie submitted his application with hopes of finding a valuable outlet for him and his peers to share their insight and ideas.

"I applied hoping for a good meal and the chance to converse with students about topics that aren't normally broached around the dorm, yet are still relevant and necessary for any global citizen to consider," Abercrombie said. "I know that most students applying will be well-informed and have well-developed formulations and ideas, but have not had much of an avenue to express this until now."

Van Groningen came up with the idea of instituting a reading series at Santa Clara at the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities conference in Los Angeles last year, where she learned that other honors programs held a similar series called "Literati."

"I thought that this would be great in our honors program too, and out of all the ideas I got at the conference, instituting a

President's Reading Series seemed the most promising," she said.

Van Groningen talked with UHP program director about starting up the event, and then submitted a proposal to Locatelli, who approved the plan. To help plan the event and future honors programs events, Osberg and Van Groningen set up the Honors Advisory Council. The Council had two primary goals for the night: first, to give students practice feeling comfortable and at ease in an intimidating situation, and second, to give students in the sciences and engineering school the chance to read and discuss literature again.

While Abercrombie said there were a few too many guests to engage in the intimate conversation with Father Locatelli he had hoped for, he said the dinner brought to light aspects that were left out of the book, including equity, humanism and social justice.

"It was a good study in critical thought which brought together many different perspectives that I might not otherwise have been exposed to," Abercrombie said. The UHP Advisory Council plans to host two President's Reading Series groups of about 12 students each during spring quarter. The spring quarter reading chosen is Reza Aslan's *No god but God*. The Council looks for applicants who come across as "most enthusiastic" about the book and the event.

UHP students interested in applying for the President's Reading Series, or those with book suggestions for future Series should contact Carole Wentz, assistant to the UHP director, at [cwentz@scu.edu](mailto:cwentz@scu.edu), or student coordinator Nicole VanGroningen at [nvanVanGroningen@scu.edu](mailto:nvanVanGroningen@scu.edu).

"In a nutshell, I'd say this event is a great opportunity for honors students from a wide range of majors to meet with Father Locatelli to discuss books about relevant topics in our society," VanGroningen said. "Everyone can benefit from something like this."



# Understanding Islam: President's Reading Series Part Two

by Erik Hesla

In light of the terrorist attacks on 9-11, many Americans have subjected Islam to intense scrutiny. Is Islam a violent religion? Are the commonly-held perceptions of Islam even accurate? Ironically, most people lack a fundamental understanding of the religion and are thus ill-equipped to answer these questions. As a result, Islam is a source of mystery. Unfortunately, the "mystique" of Islam often breeds fear and hate, which is expressed in the harassment of peaceful Muslims.

Not surprisingly, many Muslims in the United States now live in fear of persecution. Hana, a Muslim UHP student shares her frustration: "I am Muslim, and before 9-11, I would have yelled it for the world to hear. Now, I pray I won't be jumped when someone recognizes my last name as a Muslim name."

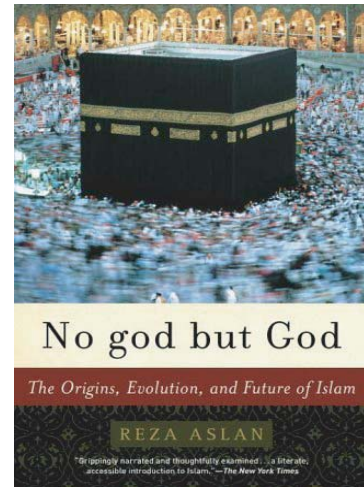
To confront the issue of Islam in an open and intellectual manner, Father Locatelli and UHP students discussed the book *No god but God: the Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* by Reza Aslan, in the second installment of the President's Reading Series. Due to the large number of students the previous PRS event amassed, two separate sessions, facilitated by the Honors Advisory Council, were offered this time around.

In *No god but God*, Aslan

discusses the historical events surrounding the formation of Islam, and provides an important context for the modern conceptions of the religion. A central tenet of the book is the assertion that Islam is undergoing a period of reformation. The struggle within Islam is between violent, radical fundamentalists and the majority of Muslims, who are peaceful. Aslan notes that the earliest Muslim community, founded by the prophet Muhammad in Medina, was based on peace. Hence, it is Aslan's contention that the latter rather than the former group represent true Muslims.

Based on the observations made by Aslan, Father Locatelli and the UHP students discussed the problem in associating radical, violent Muslims with peace-loving Muslims. Fr Locatelli pointed out that one would not associate the Oklahoma City bomber as characteristic of Americans as a whole. Why, then, should we consider radical Muslims as indicative of Islam as a whole? Yet, radical and moderate Muslims are frequently considered synonymous. Hana remarks, "I found that people were blaming Muslims for all the problems rather than just the terrorists."

The group also emphasized the need for moderate Muslims to



overcome the small, yet vocal radicals. However, the way in which to achieve this goal is far from settled. Ideas ranged from increased education to a need for more democratic and secular governments in the predominantly Muslim countries. Regardless of whether or not one should be optimistic that such changes will occur, at the very least, an open dialogue must be maintained. A step in the right direction cannot happen in a vacuum, but rather in a cooperative, yet critical environment.

The challenge that lies before us is one of communication. Amidst the pervasive anti-Muslim rhetoric and the strife within the Muslim religion between moderates and fanatics, instances of constructive criticism and peaceful debate are lost in a torrent of bitterness and hatred. But, as Fr. Locatelli and the UHP students have demonstrated, this challenge is far from insurmountable. As Hana describes, "[The discussion] really forced me to talk about the issues at hand and really try to communicate the problems I have encountered." By confronting the common questions about the future of Islam, this group managed to pierce through intolerance



# AJCU Honors Conference

by Hana Hashmi

While others were celebrating Valentine's Day, Dr. Osberg, SCU Honors Program director, Nicole Van Groningen, and I were spending our long weekend having a friendly debate at the second American Jesuit Colleges & Universities Honors Conference, hosted by Fordham University. Jesuit colleges and universities across the nation were represented; all had come with the same intention. How can we improve our honors programs?

The conference began much as I had expected; most directors had their students present their respective honors program. At this point, I was almost disappointed because this portion reminded me of when my two year old cousin, Imaan, sings and we all applaud and ask for more. We don't actually take her young opinion seriously-rather she just looks adorable. Therefore, although after these minipresentations, I had a wealth of ideas for our own honors program, it was not until the next sessions that I was truly impressed.

In the next series of sessions, the students and directors sat at the same table and asked each other for opinions. When I realized that the directors did not have all the answers, I was caught totally off-guard. Furthermore, I found that some schools had students working to improve the same problems directors at other schools were addressing. When all was said and done, students and direc-

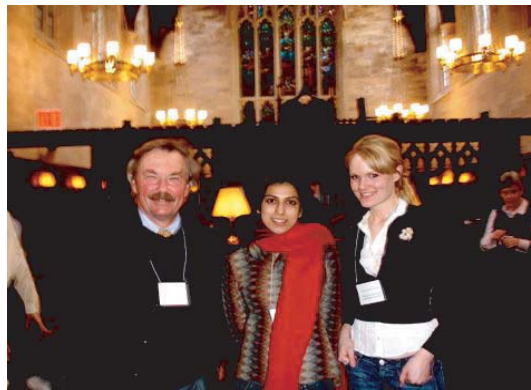
tors were reaching out to each other, giving advice back and forth.

Over the two days, we discussed pressing issues such as fundraising as well as academic problems including curriculum changes. The key issue students urged was the need for courses, which not only develop the mind but also mature us spiritually as well as interdisciplinary courses. The directors present proved their programs are truly dynamic and thus inspiring since many of them internalized the student criticism with intentions of changing their programs as per the requests.

Later, the students came together for a special session in which we discussed our purpose as students attending the AJCU Honors conference. We collaborated to decide the nature of our objectives. Social justice quickly became our first purpose, as empathy and altruism are major

characteristics of the Jesuit faith. As to start out small, we will begin with a school supplies drive this Fall quarter, so that we, as Jesuit school students, may support the children of Iraq. To coordinate this national event, we have created a Board of Directors, which ironically consists of students, including Nicole Van Groningen, a junior. And last, we battled the issue of communication, but thanks to our neighborhood friends in Silicon Valley, we can continue our project online.

While this conference has ended, we have come away from this conference only to pick up the conversation, so we, as the SCU Honors Advisory Council, may arrange more activities, courses, and community service opportunities for our honors students.



From Left: Dr. Osberg, Hana Hashmi, and Nicole Van Groningen.