



Students I’ed, then F’ed

Dana Lizik
Corey Benson
The Signal

Several international students were accused of violating the academic honesty policy last spring and were given a grade of “I” or “incomplete” as a sanction until the assignment could be resubmitted. This decision, however, resulted in the students potentially being out of status, facing deportation and led UHCL admin-

istrators to reexamine a policy prohibiting international students from receiving an “I” instead of a grade. The 2010-2011 UHCL Student Life Policy Handbook states on page 23, “In the event a case of academic dishonesty is not resolved prior to the deadline for reporting final grades to the registrar, the student shall receive a grade of Incomplete (‘I’) until the appropriate grade can be determined.”

A grade of “I” must be resolved before the next long semester in which it was assigned. The policy governing incompletes in the both the undergraduate and graduate catalogs states, “Failure to resolve the “I” will result in its conversation to a final grade of “F” on the students’ permanent records.” For several international students, however, the issue was not resolved before the end of the term, which caused the students

involved to receive an incomplete and fall into a gray area within both the Academic Honesty Policy as stated in Student Life Handbook and a conflicting Office of Admissions policy. The contrasting international admissions policy, which appears on the “Maintaining Your F-1 Status” flyer found in the Office of Admissions, states, “You may NOT, under any circumstances, I’ed, F’ed: continued on page 6

Another dream deferred

Carla Bradley
The Signal

Status. It can be everything to a college student. However, a certain group of underrepresented students, namely immigrants living undocumented in the U.S. are denied in this country. On Sept. 21, the U.S. Senate hindered voting on the defense authorization bill concerning undocumented immigrants, the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, more commonly known as the DREAM Act, causing it to now become a ‘dream’ deferred.

If the DREAM Act had been signed into law, undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. would have had the opportunity to complete a minimum of either two years of secondary education or military service during the first six years of legal residence to become eligible for permanent residency status and qualify for a green card.

Since the U.S. Senate did not vote on the DREAM Act, DREAM activists are rallying as much support as they can get before it is presented again. “Students who fit the DREAM Act criteria would have a pathway to citizenship, not to mention a chance to give back to society, pay social security and federal taxes, which in turn supplies money for things like medical services,” said Linda Contreras Bullock, assistant dean of student diversity. “If [immigrants] graduate from school or are willing to serve in the military, why can’t we give them the right to be citizens?” The DREAM Act has been met with resistance largely by Republicans. It has been inactive since 2001 when Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill, and Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, first introduced it as a way bridge over current immigration holes.

Hatch withdrew his support
Dream: continued on page 6

Kelly Crittenden
The Signal

Hard hats. Piles of dirt. Dumpsters. That is the scenery outside the Arbor Building as renovations are being made and space is being added. Some staff members are excited about the benefits of the updated and remodeled Arbor Building. “Most exciting to me is being able to update the oldest building on our campus,” said Ward Martaindale, assistant vice president of facilities management and construction. “Not only to bring it up-to-date with current ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and Life Safety Code requirements, but to give the occupants of the building a fresh look and a building that more com-

pletely meets their needs.” Planning began in early 2007 and architects were hired later that year. “The plans are for two additions: one built to the south of a little over 12,300 square feet and one built to the north of about 21,400 square feet,” said Daniel Wilson, director of planning, interior design and contract. Amenities in the Arbor Building are changing, from plumbing to lighting, and floors to ceilings. “The major part of what has to be done is to refurbish the infrastructure of the original building,” said Anne Coppenhaver, director of Center for Educational Programs and clinical associate professor in educational leadership, who teaches

Arbor: continued on page 6



James Jones:The Signal

As construction continues on the Arbor Building, this view will be the norm until completion in fall 2011.

No recommendation without authorization

Terann Hilow
The Signal

Students wishing to list UHCL faculty or staff members as references have formal paperwork to fill out if they would like their references to disclose any information or provide an evaluation to third parties. Per a notice recently sent to UHCL faculty members from the Office of Human Resources, there is a standard form that must be completed by students prior to providing any references in regards to applications for employment, scholarships or awards and admission to other educational institutions. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act guidelines assert that institutions have the responsibility to notify enrolled students of this requirement at least once a year by whatever approaches are determined best to reach the students. “The question was raised by a faculty member about the FERPA requirements as it relates to providing references for students, former or current,” the notice announced, going on to convey that this new form is a result of “recent FERPA training provided by [University of Houston System] legal counsel.” While this notice may raise concerns among faculty and students, Katherine Justice, director of human resources, said this policy is nothing new.

“FERPA requires that students give written permission in order for us to release any information about them,” Justice said. “The form, which has actually been in the UHCL system for several years, is just a tool to use to help faculty and students.” While completion of the Reference Request & FERPA Release form is required for current UHCL students who wish to list UHCL faculty members as references, the Office of UHCL Alumni Relations & Development Office assures alumni that they need not worry. This requirement only applies while still a student. “The guidelines that relate to the alumni community don’t fall under FERPA,” said Dion McInnis, associate vice president of university advancement. “There are some FERPA-like regulations, but this form does not apply once a student has left and becomes part of the alumni community.” Addressing further concerns that faculty members and students may have regarding FERPA compliance, Clifford Ramirez, president and founder of Cliff Ramirez & Associates, said that it is a typical procedure for universities to utilize forms similar to the one being used at UHCL. Ramirez, who has written two books on FERPA training, is considered a national FERPA expert. Regarding penalization for faculty mem-

bers who fail to comply with FERPA regulations, the penalty “depends on how ‘wronged’ the individual feels whose information was disclosed without authorization,” Ramirez said. “FERPA compliance is directed solely at institutions and the penalty for a violation may be the withholding of federal funds.” Concerning storage and submission of the signed forms, each school within UHCL will determine where the forms will be collected. Faculty members are to submit the signed forms to the appropriate depository as designated by their school. Chuck Crocker, UHCL associate director for career services, views this form as a good way to keep students from making assumptions that their references will provide a positive evaluation and will keep references from being surprised if they are contacted by a third party. “This form can cause people to be more intentional about talking to their references,” Crocker said. Students who are considering using a faculty member as a reference should notify the faculty member who can provide access to the release form. For more information regarding FERPA, visit the U.S. Department of Education’s website at www.ed.gov.

STUDENTS FORCED TO KEEP DREAMING

Jefferson’s unalienable rights ignored, DREAM Act stalled

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Thomas Jefferson’s vision of equality and justice in the Declaration of Independence should hold true no matter the time or place. It should also apply to anyone within the borders of the U.S., not only those who were born within them.

Last week, the DREAM Act, or Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, which would have allowed young people who were brought to the U.S. as undocumented children before the age of 16 to earn legal status upon graduating high school or earning a G.E.D. by enrolling in an institute of higher learning or serving in the armed forces, was struck down.

A Senate filibuster hindered the passage of the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, a piece of legislation that included both the DREAM Act and the repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.

On Sept. 21, inequality prevailed over equality; inaction prevailed over action; injustice prevailed over justice.

Each year 65,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools and would be eligible to benefit from the DREAM Act. Congress, however, effectively denied these young people the

opportunity to contribute all that they can to society. Upon graduation, these individuals are left with very few options since they are legally unable to work in the U.S., encounter barriers to higher education and are at constant risk for deportation to an unfamiliar country, despite the fact that most

have called America home since fore the majority of their lives. These students may be undocumented and not seen from a legal standpoint as American citizens, but the fact of the matter remains: these individuals belong here.

While opponents of the DREAM Act

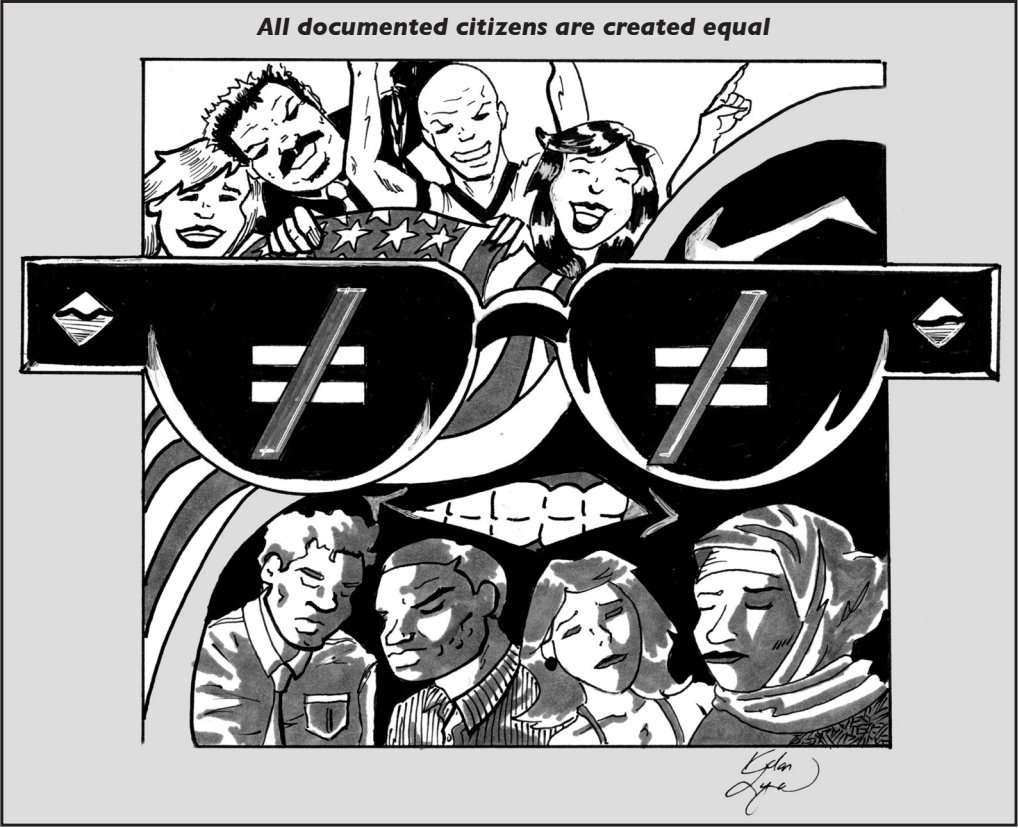
believe that immigrants pose a strain on tax payers, once educated legal residents, they will earn higher incomes and therefore be able to pay more in taxes, which in turn can help boost the U.S. economy.

Allowing undocumented individuals to attend college and become legal citizens would be mutually beneficial to both the individuals and America. The individuals would be better able to contribute to American society. The U.S. would benefit from the knowledge and skills these students give in their contributions.

To qualify for the DREAM Act, undocumented individuals must have lived in the U.S. for at least five consecutive years before the bill would have gone into effect. In theory, this would mean a minimum of five years of education gained from the U.S. school systems where these students learn about American language, culture and politics. In this sense, these students are raised as Americans, so why are they not allowed the opportunity to earn legal status?

The passage of the DREAM Act would have been a step in the right direction for building policies that further the pursuit of liberty and justice, instead of building walls and creating division.

In a social climate rife with polar opposites, we need to remember that we are all in this together. Equally.



Kalan Lyra: The Signal

COLUMN

Debit card cash cow: the price to swipe; \$5 will cost you \$40

Jessica Faz

The Signal

When I open my wallet, I see many things: a coupon for McDonalds that I’ll never use, a tooth-shaped sticker reminding me of my next dentist appointment, an array of expired student IDs chronicling my previous academic institutions and a few plastic cards with shiny VISA logos.

Like most college students, these cards are my go-to method of payment. Whether my purchase is \$2 or \$20, I always pay with plastic. Indeed, my affinity for swiping my card has caused me to replace it twice before its expiration date due to the weathering of the magnetic strip.

It’s true. I love my debit card. However, I recently learned why debit cards are not as convenient as they seem.

A couple of weeks ago, I purchased a frappuccino at Starbucks. At first, nothing was out of the ordinary. I shoved the crumpled receipt in my pocket and enjoyed my drink. Although all seemed normal, I had unintentionally used a shadow line of credit.

My checking account had been empty. When I checked my account a few hours later, I discovered that I had unknowingly received a \$4 loan accruing an extremely high fee. My \$4 frappuccino actually cost almost \$40 due to a \$35 overdraft fee.

This incident led me to discover the dysfunctional nature of the market. I soon learned banks have devised an extremely profitable system designed for customers to rack up outrageous fees.

It wasn’t long ago that if I had no money in my bank account, my debit card would have been declined. If that were the case, I would have left Starbucks thirsty but not in debt. Alas, I am left wondering, when did it all change?

Currently, most banks process debit

card transactions, bill payments and checks from the highest dollar amount to the lowest dollar amount instead of in the order the transactions occur. This nifty trick helps drain customer bank accounts faster, resulting in more overdraft fees.

Therefore, customers like me who use their debit cards for multiple small purchases could be charged hundreds in overdraft fees simply due to the order in which their purchases clear their bank.

The Federal Reserve Board estimates the banking industry makes up to \$38 billion a year in overdraft fees. These practices are nothing short of profiteering. Fortunately, that will soon change for one major bank.

On Aug. 10, a federal judge in California ordered Wells Fargo & Co. to stop posting transactions in high-to-low order by Nov. 30 and to reverse overdraft fees that were charged to customers from November 2004 to June 2008, in response to the class action lawsuit Gutierrez, Walker, Smith et al. v. Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.

A study cited in the decision put the restitution at more than \$200 million. While this number is huge, it is a mere fraction of the more than \$1.4 billion in overdraft penalties Wells Fargo handed out in California alone between 2005 and 2007.

While Wells Fargo will undoubtedly appeal the ruling, it is a score for consumers. Hopefully, the decision will set a precedent for similar suits in other states against approximately 30 banks including Bank of America, Citibank, Chase and Union Bank.

This decision comes on the heels of the Federal Reserve’s November 2009 ruling that overdraft fees cannot be charged on most transactions unless

the consumer consents to having overdraft coverage. The new rule came into effect Aug. 15.

However, these are mere baby steps in the right direction. The rule fails to address the most deceptive problem with the overdraft feature: processing transactions in high-to-low sequence.

In essence, the banking industry is harvesting billions of dollars from the poorest Americans. And let’s face it, as college students we are among their favorite targets.

It’s a scary world out there for many consumers. The banking industry’s unfair and deceptive practices are beginning to make me hate to love my debit card.

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CORRECTION

In Volume XXXVIII, Number 8 issue of The Signal dated Sept. 13, the article “Accreditation raises concerns” by Anthony Nguyen quoted Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Mrinal Mugdh as saying, “Students had the opportunity to influence the QEP by sharing their educational expectations and experience at UHCL.” His quote should have read: “By participating in the QEP process students will have a unique opportunity to provide input into the process that shapes the development and implementation of QEP on their campus. Since QEP addresses student learning outcomes, students will have an opportunity to influence the QEP by sharing their educational expectations and experience at UHCL.”

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CENSORED

Banned books continue to challenge sensibilities

William Garfield
The Signal

“There is no such thing as a moral book or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all.” – Oscar Wilde, author of “Picture of Dorian Gray,” a frequently challenged book.

The American Book Association created Banned Book Week as a way for people to understand rights granted by the First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

Banned Book Week celebrates its 29th anniversary, which began Sept. 25 and runs through Oct. 2.

Book banning begins as a challenge, an attempt to remove or censor ideas or books. Most challenges are unsuccessful, but when a book is banned it involves the actual removal of materials, usually by the government, said Martha Steele, associate director for public services in the Alfred R. Neumann Library.

Books are banned most often for one or more of the following reasons: use of language, suggestion of homosexuality, nudity, sexually explicit, sexism, racism, religious viewpoints, inappropriate for age groups.

Parents are the number one reason for book banning, states the American Library Association website. However, books are banned by governments, religious groups, political factions, and schools.

In public schools, the book banning process begins

by alerting schools that parents do not want their children to read a particular piece of literature. Parents then form organizations or hire attorneys to formally request literary works of art in question to be removed from libraries or schools.

Forms of governance affecting the curriculum are consulted and a decision is made.

If there is a consensus that a book is not in a child’s best interest to read, then it is banned from the school library.

When a book is banned, patrons cannot readily access the book from libraries. If a reader wishes to read a book that has been banned, the reader will have to either purchase the book online or find a library that is not subject to the book ban imposed.

Berit Kjos, author of “A Twist of Faith,” supports book banning and states her concerns on newswithviews.com about the Harry Potter series, maintaining it is tougher for children to evaluate good and resist witchcraft that threatens their religious faith.

The American Library Association Bill of Rights states book banning infringes on academic freedom, “a person’s right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.”

Steele said people have to entertain ideas in order for change to take place.

“Just think if we banned every book that contained a nugget of information that may be considered taboo, the evolution of our society would stop; new ideas could potentially be curbed and progress could possibly come to a screeching halt,” Steele said.

Books that frequently make the banned book list include, but are not limited to, the following titles: “1984” and “Animal Farm,” by George Orwell; “To Kill A Mockingbird,” by Harper Lee; “Brave New World,” by Aldous Huxley; “Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,” by Mark Twain; “The Catcher and the Rye,” by JD Sallinger and “The Color Purple,” by Alice Walker. A list of the top 100 banned books can be found on the American Libraries Association list at www.ala.org.

Judy Blume, author of challenged books “Places I Never Meant to Be” and “Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret,” has been tweeting about the upcoming banned book week.

“Censors don’t want children exposed to ideas different from their own,” Blume said on her website. “If every individual with an agenda had his/her way, the shelves in the school library would be close to empty. I wish the censors could read the letters kids write.”

In celebration of National Book Ban Week, Mike Driver, legal chair of the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas, Houston Chapter encouraged people to attend the ACLU’s Banned Book Discussion.

The discussion will surround J.D. Salinger’s “The Catcher in the Rye,” the sixth most frequently challenged book of 2009.

The Banned Book Discussion will be held at the Houston Central Library, 500 McKinney, 77002 on Oct. 11, from 11 a.m. to noon with a read-out to follow.

“Ideas shouldn’t be shut out,” Driver said. “The minority seems to control the government and manipulate what people are trying to read.”

Eight U.S. publishers have been put on trial for publishing “The Grapes of Wrath.”

“Ulysses” has been publicly burned in the U.S., England, Canada and Ireland.

“The Lord of the Flies” was originally challenged in 1974 by residents of Dallas.

In 2001, “The Lord of the Rings” trilogy was burned in Alamogordo, NM with other Tolkien novels.



Photos courtesy of www.followinghuckfinn.com

Following Huck Finn

Maria Solis
The Signal

There aren't many people who can say they have journeyed up the Mississippi River, much less traveled it with a map that was created 125 years ago. Logan Sebastian Beck, a Houstonian, visual arts major at Rice University and photographer whose work consists primarily of unyielding documentation, can lay claim to this endeavor along with his self-proclaimed copilot, singer and songwriter Walker Lukens.

Following Huck Finn is a diptych photography exhibition at the Lawndale Art Center in Houston, of a long-distance bicycle tour and road trip following the trail of Mark Twain's book "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" up the Mississippi River to its ending destination of Hannibal, Mo, Mark Twain's hometown. This is an idea that Beck and Lukens had in the making for a long time.

"There was also this desire to see a part of our country that culturally and geographically is close to Texas but was mysterious and unknown to us," Lukens said.

After proper planning and finding some time in their tight schedules, the seed that had been planted began to sprout and grow. Beck and Lukens decided to keep the bicycle aspect of their trip even after Lukens had a fall a few weeks prior and would have to bike in a sling.

"I like the slowness; I really like seeing the changes in the landscape and the people, and on the bicycle, that's even more intense!" Beck said

"We love masochistic forms of travel and we were

“Beck said that by using this great American novel it allowed for several figures to materialize in what Beck called “the second Holy Trinity of the South: Mark Twain, Elvis and Jesus Christ.”

looking for a way to top previous road trips, bike trips, musical tours, backpacking adventures,” Lukens said “Taking a bike trip makes stopping and exploring much simpler.”

Beck and Lukens started a three-week trip up the Mississippi River using the story of Huckleberry Finn as the thematic backbone. Beck also stated that by using this iconic American novel it allowed for several figures to materialize in what he called “the second Holy Trinity of the South: Mark Twain, Elvis and Jesus Christ.”

Though Beck and Lukens didn't run into any characters similar to who Huck and Jim did in the novel, they did run into the realness of our world today.

“While we were in Grand Isle, New Orleans, I saw the aftermath of the BP spill and the booms that were soaking up the oil on the beaches,” Beck said “I think New Orleans is an amazing city, but we ran into some really wild things. There were people bathing in the Mississippi and that's unheard of- people don't swim in the Mississippi!”

The swimmers were protesting the BP spill by swimming in dirty water while wearing white clothing. Beck captured this event through a photograph that is now a part of his exhibit.

Like any trip, this journey cost money. Kickstarter is a website Beck and Lukens used to raise funds for their exciting expedition through a method that Beck referred to as “Crowd Funding.” The website allows you to find backers, people who are backing up your idea or project by donating funds. The original goal was to raise \$800; however their goal was surpassed with an ending total of

\$1,080.

The Kickstarter financial supporters received souvenirs of the project from Beck and Lukens dependent on the amount of their pledge. For example, if a person pledged \$15, that person would receive three handmade postcards that were mailed to them from different locations along the trail, plus a custom- mix audio tape of road trip music from the expedition.

Pledging a little bit more would earn, “a framed print and Walker would write you a song” Beck said.

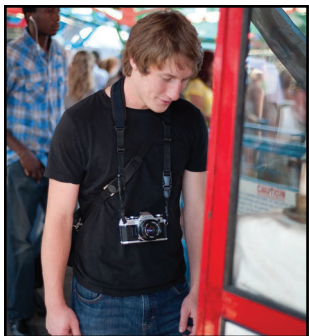
Beck had submitted a proposal to the Lawndale Art Center prior to the adventure. Dennis Nance, director of exhibitions and programming, explained that taking Beck three months to prepare for his exhibit was really quick compared to other artist who plan for months. The Exhibit opened Aug. 20 and ran through Sept. 25. Beck mentioned the possibility of moving his exhibit to New York, but at the moment he is undecided.

For their next project Beck and Lukens are thinking of doing a walking tour of the state.

“What's slower than bicycling? Walking,” Beck said.

“Logan's project is really interesting in that it's taking through photography the experience of a road trip, and it has a very specific reference point of the story of Huck Finn.” Nance said. “I think it's a great project and I think the way that he presented it in the end with the pairing of two images adds another level to it rather than being just one image. The combination is nice.”

Nance isn't the only one impressed with Beck's exhibit. “I think in terms of goal oriented, he is heading in the right direction,” said Patrick Nguyen, a medical student from the University of Texas-Houston and a part-time artist, who was viewing Following Huck Finn “I think he has what my friend would call moments of brilliance.”



Walker Lukens



Cairo, IL



Hannibal, MO



Logan Beck



St. Louis, MO

Dream: continued from page 1

for the DREAM Act because he does not agree that the DREAM Act bill is an appropriate addition to the defense authorization bill, but he would support it if it were to just stand on its own.

Republican critics of the act are concerned that the DREAM Act is a way to reward illegal delinquents with citizenship who have criminal pasts and work in the United States with falsified documents.

“The Act does not intend to reward ‘criminals,’” said Juan Ramirez, editor of the DREAM Act Portal. “It is just part of a comprehensive immigration reform approach that understands that border security is also important.”

The Federation For American Immigration Reform (FAIR) reports that the DREAM Act would cover up to 53 percent of undocumented immigrants under the age of 35.

“With the DREAM Act, we would be giving away higher education, in-state tuition, financial aid, federal grants and loans and scholarships to illegal aliens at the expense of U.S. citizens,” said Kristen Williamson, spokesperson of FAIR. “We are not trying to punish the children for the illegal acts of their parents, we are just not rewarding the illegal acts of their parents.”

In a study, “College Gender Gaps Appears to be Stabilizing with One Notable Exception, America Council on Education Analysis Finds,” the American Council on Education concluded immigration is a “key factor in the low educational performance among Hispanics, with significant differences in educational attainment rates between Hispanics born outside the United States compared with their U.S. born peers.”

“The act was not created for the purpose of helping the His-

panic population alone,” Ramirez said. “The act would benefit students that have come here from all over the world as children, not knowing of the consequences they later face in life as they try to go on to college or even have a job. The bill will [also] help students who have graduated from high school and plan to enroll in the military or college.”

On the U.S. Navy website, data from the Department of Defense stated that there are more than 65,000 immigrants (non-U.S. citizens and naturalized citizens) serving on active duty in the U.S. armed forces as of February 2008.

Senate majority leader, Harry Reid, who tried to push the act through by attaching it to the defense authorization bill, announced from the Senate floor his plans to keep the DREAM Act alive.

Attempts to contact Sen. Reid were rewarded with a transcript of what he said on the floor right after the vote.

“I also want everyone within the sound of my voice to know we’re going to vote on the ‘dream act,’ Reid said. “It’s only a question of when.”

“In our area, the University of Houston-Downtown and College of the Mainland, among other campuses, have active student groups working in support of the DREAM Act,” said Christine Kovic, assistant professor of anthropology. UHD President William Flores spoke in favor of the passage of the DREAM Act this summer. In doing so, Flores joins the president of the University of Texas, William Powers, and many others.

UHCL students are proposing to create a DREAM Act student organization. To find out more about joining, contact Linda Contreras Bullock at Bullock@uhcl.edu or Christine Kovic at Kovic@uhcl.edu.

Arbor: continued from page 1

in the Arbor Building. “I can’t think of anything that will remain exactly as it is.”

Many classrooms are expanding in size and facility space is being built to house more programs.

“I’ll have some built-in things, some things that function better and improvements for this area,” said Ann Waltz, director of Children’s Art School and lecturer in applied design and visual arts. “The department is gaining access to the arts building. There will be a place where trucks can come in and deliver big equipment or materials for some of the classes.”

The psychology program is gaining space from the renovations. They will have their own clinic space for training and research purposes. This will include a space dedicated to The Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities, said Dorothea Lerman, professor of psychology.

“UHCL administration has shown strong support for these programs by dedicating new space in the expanded and remodeled Arbor Building so that we may enhance our teaching, service and research,” Lerman said.

The School of Education will have updated technology and

spaces to continue to offer teacher training, Coppenhaver said.

They will also gain a “model classroom to teach education students how to teach the sciences,” Wilson added.

With the construction taking place, it appears the disruption has caused some of the wildlife on campus to become more visible.

“One benefit to our human occupants is possibly being able to enjoy seeing more deer during the day,” Martaindale said. “It appears to me that there are more deer out in the open during the day.”

The renovations also require building in the sports field.

“A portion of the existing sports field has been lost to the project to accommodate the required storm water retention area,” Martaindale said.

There are plans to shift the field to the south, as well as improve the lighting of the field in the future.

Each department has its own expected completion date, but the final phase is planned to be completed in the fall semester of 2011.

“The university really likes to serve students,” Waltz said. “We’re really excited.”

I’ed, F’ed: continued from page 1

receive an ‘I’ or ‘WX’ grade. An ‘I’ or ‘WX’ is an unofficial withdrawal. This brings you below full-time enrollment and out of status.”

“This was the first time that international students were given the grade of an ‘I’ as an academic honesty policy sanction – it was not the final grade,” said David Rachita, interim dean of students. “The thought process was that the ‘I’ would serve as a place holder until the students could resolve the situation and be awarded a final grade.”

The Academic Honesty Policy states that an instructor may require the student to complete another assignment to receive credit.

“Our [academic honesty] policy, in general, allows the faculty member a lot of flexibility in working with the student,” said Darlene Biggers, associate vice president for student services.

Rachita believes the policy could have, in the past, been interpreted to permit instructors to assign a grade of incomplete to allow students adequate time to complete another assignment.

“In this case, the ‘I’ is a placeholder to allow the student an opportunity to pursue a formal or informal resolution to their academic honesty case per the student life policy handbook,” said Yvette Bendeck, associate vice president of enrollment management. “The final grade is assigned at the completion of the process, whether it goes to a formal hearing or resolved informally between the faculty and student. The ‘I’ is therefore acceptable.”

Bendeck does not, however, believe that international students may receive an incomplete en route to the resolution of an academic honesty policy violation.

“Based on my interpretation of the Student Life Handbook policy, an ‘I’ is not listed as a faculty or Academic Honesty Council sanction,” Bendeck said.

“However, if this happens, it must be brought to the immediate attention of our international student advisors. This is important because having an ‘I’ as a grade without an acceptable explanation may put students’ visa in jeopardy. An ‘I’ grade given by an instructor as result of sanction for violations of the academic honesty code does not meet the standard of making normal academic progress since it is not a result of extenuating circumstances beyond the control of a student.”

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security program uses the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, known as SEVIS to track and monitor schools and programs, students, exchange visitors and their dependents throughout the duration of approved participation within the U.S. education system.

UHCL and all other universities authorized to host international student visitors report the grades of international students to SEVIS to insure compliance with applicable federal laws.

“Different universities interpret the regulations differently when the regulations don’t address a point directly,” said Maria Zeller, SEVIS manager at the University of Colorado and member of NAFSA, the association of international educators. “The assigning of an incomplete could be considered a gray area and each university needs to con-

sider and develop its own policy as to whether or not to allow incompletes for international students. The problem with an international student receiving an incomplete is that if at some point the course is not completed and the credit is never assigned, then the student could be considered retroactively out of status for having failed to maintain full-time enrollment and they could lose their status.”

Federal regulations allow international students to fall below full-time status if there are extenuating circumstances outside the control of the student that prevents the student from completing coursework.

“UHCL’s Incomplete Grade Policy, found in the graduate and undergraduate catalog on pages, 75 and 81, respectively does not conflict with immigration regulation,” Bendeck said.

The policy stated in the university catalog, however, is in contrast to the policy listed in the “Maintaining Your F-1 Status” flyer.

“International students should not be afraid to ask questions,” Rachita said. “They should find a university administrator they feel comfortable with for guidance and more information.”

Many international students seek the counsel of Intercultural and International Student Services when faced with issues concerning their status and clarification on university policies.

“There is a perceived disconnect from what we say in student services and what the international advisors tell students.”

Linda Contreras Bullock, assistant dean of student diversity

“There is a perceived disconnect from what we say in student services and what the international advisors tell students,” said Linda Contreras Bullock, assistant dean of student diversity. “There is confusion about the policy and its implications for international students and the effects it could have on their status.”

University administrators agree that clarification is needed on what the policy means and how it is applied.

“I’m sure [faculty] do not know, because we didn’t even know,” Biggers said.

Rachita, who assumed the role of interim dean of students earlier this semester, agreed.

“Most faculty probably do not know the grade of ‘I’ can cause these problems for international students,” Rachita said. “There needs to be communication to educate faculty and international students.”

How the policy will be applied in the future is currently being reexamined by administrators by both UHCL administrators and University of Houston System Office of General Counsel.

“We will have to see what is acceptable and what are the best practices,” Biggers said. “Does the policy need to change or is there a way to work with it? We will have to talk to legal counsel to see what options we would have.”



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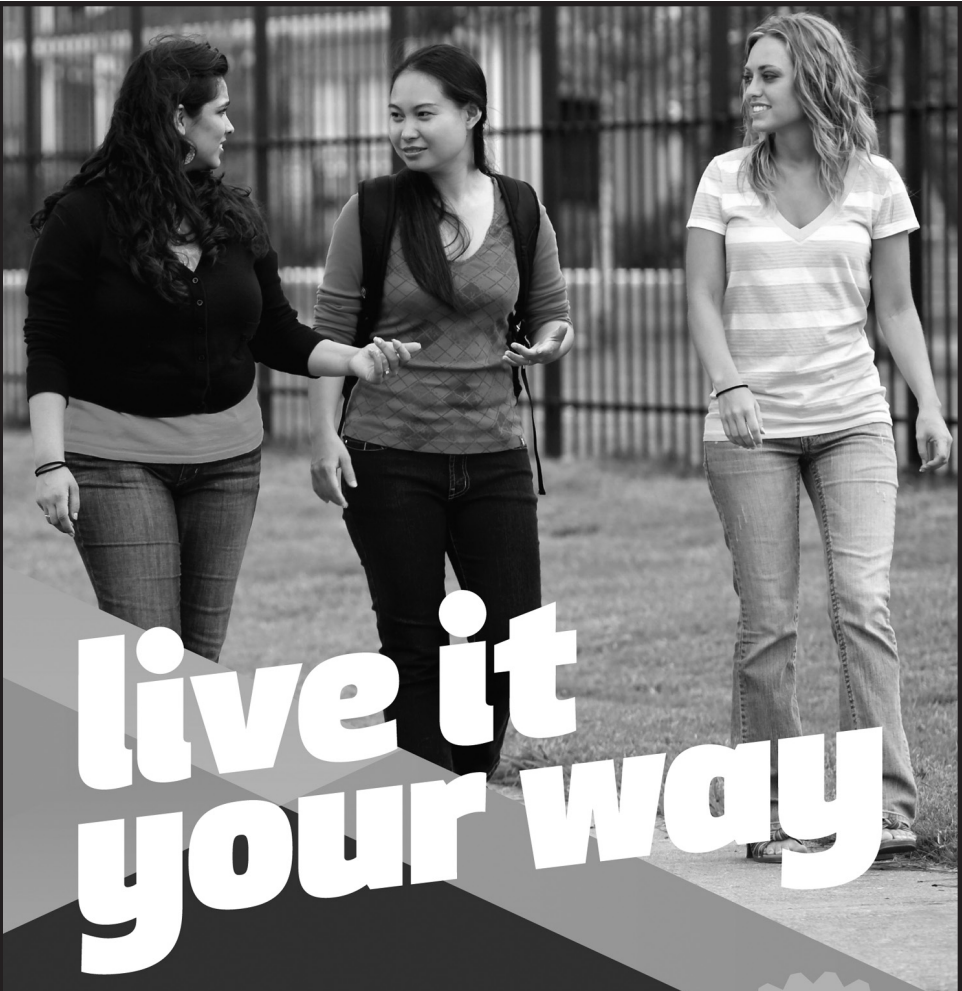
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Jessica Faz and Britta Gamino:The Signal

Karen Hernandez, business major, looks at the Hispanic Leaders of Today display in Bayou Building, Atrium II as part of Hispanic Heritage Month at UHCL. Read the entire article online at www.uhclthesignal.com.



Hannah Pietsch:The Signal

FBI Special Agent Raymond Oglesby talks to Jeff Ray, a MHA/MBA student, about career opportunities at the Gulf Coast Science and Technology Job Fair Sept. 23. For more on this year's Gulf Coast Job Fair, read the article on The Signal's website.



David Rachita: Courtesy

UHCL students volunteered their time to Habitat for Humanity by helping to build a house for a family during Community Outreach Day in 2009, sponsored by Student Leadership, Involvement and Community Engagement.




Leo Chan: Courtesy

Blake Dumesnil, digital media studies major, shows his award-winning piece, *Spark of Imagination*, the second place winner of the Siggraph award. For more on the Siggraph award, read the article on The Signal's website.

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<div>26</div> <div>Banned Book Week</div>	<div>27</div> <div>Safe Zone Ally Kick-Off Brown Bag Lunch, noon - 2 p.m., SSCB 1.202.07</div>	<div>28</div> <div>Neumann Library Open House, 3:30 - 6:30 p.m., Bayou Building</div>	<div>29</div> <div>G.P.S. Workshop: Navigating Academic Resources at UHCL, 4 - 5 p.m., SSCB Lecture Hall, 1.100</div>	<div>30</div> <div>Deadline to apply for Fall Graduation</div>	<div>1</div> <div>Workshop: Smashing Stereotypes and Embracing Cultural Diversity, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., SSCB 2310</div>	<div>2</div> <div>Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure UHCL Open House, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.</div>
<div>3</div> <div>October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month </div>	<div>4</div> <div>October is L.G.B.T. History Month - visit the IISS Office for more information</div>	<div>5</div> <div>Workshop: Rationality and Leadership, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m., SSCB 1202.07</div>	<div>6</div> <div>Workshop: Academic Skills for Success, 3 - 4 p.m., SSCB Lecture Hall, 1.100</div>	<div>7</div> <div>Accounting Association Recruiters Reception, 5 - 7 p.m., Bayou Building, Atrium II</div>	<div>8</div> <div>Workshop: Leadership and Culture, 10 a.m. - noon, SSCB Lecture Hall 1.100</div>	<div>9</div> <div>Film: "Welcome", 7 p.m., SSCB Lecture Hall, 1.100 Cost: \$3.75 or free with UHCL student ID</div>