

THE SIGNAL

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SEPTEMBER 26, 2011

New survey could put policy up in smoke



CODY HARDIN: THE SIGNAL

A new zero-tolerance cigarette dumping policy is in place on campus as a result of the recent burn ban in effect across Texas. The policy carries a \$50-500 fine.

Cody Hardin
The Signal

UHCL officials are currently looking at options that could spell lights out for UHCL faculty, staff and students who light up.

The University Life Committee recently conducted a survey to determine popular opinion regarding the smoking policy for UHCL, with a completely smoke-free campus among the options.

“The smoking policy has been reviewed/examined just about every semester since the University Life Committee was formed, so this isn’t a new change, but rather a continuance of our regular business in ULC,” Carman said.

The options include: 1) a completely smoke-free campus, 2) keeping the current policy, and 3) only allowing smoking in parking lots, Carman explained.

Assistant Dean of Student

Diversity Linda Contreras-Bullock, who is allergic to cigarette smoke, is one UHCL faculty member in support of a smoke-free campus.

“I fully support a fully smoke-free campus,” Bullock said. “Many universities have tried unsuccessfully to implement a plan such as ours; however, eventually they make their institution a smoke-free campus.”

Bullock feels the current plan is faltering, partially because of the dual-role non-smokers have had to take.

“Enforcement of the present policy would be one solution [to a compromise].” Bullock said. “Presently, it is left up to us to police. When I have asked someone to please to go the smoking area, the response was ‘Lady, there ain’t no No Smoking sign here.’”

UHCL Chief of Police Paul

SEE SMOKING , PAGE 6

Breaking the barriers *Hispanic enrollment on the rise*

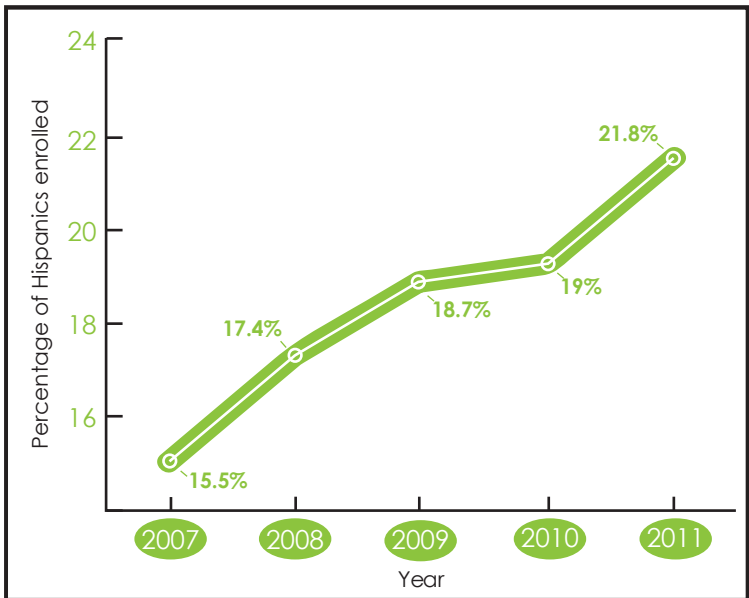
Rose Pulido
The Signal

College enrollment among Hispanics between the ages of 18 and 24 has increased by a record-breaking 24 percent between 2009 and 2010, based on a recent Pew Hispanic Center report.

This analysis of the Census Bureau data shows that Hispanics are the largest growing minority group in the U.S., which accounted for 16 percent of the population in 2010.

“We have this diverse stream of values and thoughts about higher education,” said Linda Contreras Bullock, the Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education president-elect and UHCL assistant dean of student diversity. “Anytime you talk to people about sending their kids to school they all say ‘yes, but’...there’s always that but. ‘We don’t have the money. We can’t afford it. We don’t want her to go away. We are protective over our kids.’...It’s not that we don’t value an education, it’s always those other outlying factors that go into the education.”

One of the primary factors why Hispanics have trailed behind in higher education is due to a lack of knowledge regarding the available resources.



JADEWISE: THE SIGNAL

“Finances in particular are a challenge, always have been, not just for Hispanics but for first-generation students in Texas generally,” said Dominic Chavez, senior director of external relations for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. “A great number of students that are coming through our education pipeline are of limited means.”

Many first-generation students, including Hispanics, are not familiar with financial aid and how it can help assist with the cost of a higher education. Many lack the general knowledge of how to go about applying to a college and what

steps need to be taken to successfully become enrolled at a university or a community college. Once students decide on the college they are attending, they have to go through a series of steps to meet the requirements requested by their college of choice.

“Going to college is complicated and particularly for foreign-born, young Hispanics, but also I would say Hispanics, whether they’re foreign born or native born, but if they have parents that are immigrants,” said Richard Fry, Pew Hispanic Center senior research associate. “They don’t have a parent, most

SEE HISPANIC ENROLLMENT, PAGE 6

Log in, drop out *Online students more likely to fail*

Valerie Russell
The Signal

Flexibility may be the leading reason college students take online courses, but poor grade performances and high dropout rates tell a disappointing story.

In a time when educational budget cuts are soaring and educators fight to stay below their bottom lines, money generating strategies, such as online courses, are appealing, but concerns have been raised about students’ ability to make the grade.

A new research study by Di Xu and Shanna Jaggars with the Community College Research Center at Teachers College (CCRCTC) of Columbia University revealed that community college students who enrolled in online courses were more

likely to drop or fail than those students who took hybrid or face-to-face courses. The study also discovered that students who enrolled in online courses in early semesters were less likely to return to the community college for future semesters or transfer to a four-year university.

The study found that students who choose to enroll in online courses are typically employed part or full-time and have families, which is why they are drawn to the flexibility of online classes. That is where the main struggle for these students occurs: time management.

“There’s no scheduled classes,” said Jaggars, senior researcher at CCRCTC. “So typically there’s only a schedule of when to turn in assignments

SEE ONLINE PERFORMANCE , PAGE 6

ONLINE in this issue

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A night with the Iron Butterfly

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Lone Star College-Cyfair
faculty art show

Use your smartphone to scan the QR code below to check out what’s new on The Signal Online this week.



Making the transition to online classes

Balancing responsibilities proves crucial to students' and teachers' success

Education has gone digital. As of fall 2011, UHCL offers seven graduate programs, five under-graduate degrees and eight certificate courses fully online.

With online classes becoming a significant part of mainstream college education, it is now important that both students and faculty are trained to make the most of these classes.

The 2010 Sloan Survey of Online Learning reports approximately 5.6 million students in more than 2,500 colleges and universities took classes online, a figure that rose by one million from 2009. The same study points to almost 30 percent of the total college and university student population taking at least one course online.

It is obvious that there is a high demand for online courses, but low grades and poor completion rates compel us to take a closer look at this defeating trend. Students and faculty need to find an effective learning middle ground on the online turf.

The demand for online programs comes from the flexibility and convenience these classes offer. UHCL is a campus with a diverse 8,000-strong student body, and online course offerings are a great advantage to many students.

EDITORIAL

Students have to be proactive in staying on task and keeping up with the pace of a course in the absence of a regular class time. For all procrastinators out there, that means a semester's worth of work cannot be done in one weekend. Self-motivation is a prime pre-requisite for online classes, a fact many students ignore.

Online classes become a struggle for those students who think these courses are an easy option. The very reasons students seek out online courses become the same reasons for their falling behind. Without the discipline of face-to-face interaction, work and family demands easily push schoolwork to the back burner.

The lack of preparedness for the online format is a primary reason why the dropout rate for online classes is higher than face-to-face classes. This is a key area where the students can be tutored on how to ready themselves for their self-paced learning, in step with the teacher's expectations.

The UHCL Distance Education webpage, <http://prtl.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/DE/OnlineCourseQuiz>, has a guide that helps students check how

ready they are for online course-work.

With online education programs aiming to reach a bigger, non-traditional student audience, online orientation must be emphasized. Technological support must help students use all the online course tools to maximize learning, and students need guidance to resolve the technical snags they face.

The Office of Online Programs provides access to many troubleshooting resources and includes a comprehensive orientation guide. Also, the Student Success Center offers tutoring sessions in Blackboard.

While students need to stay organized and accept responsibility, the faculty also must undergo training with instructional designers to present their class effectively on an online platform. Dumping scrolls of lecture notes, posting links for textbooks, or creating assignments and quizzes without clear instruction is the result of lazy teaching, a process that frustrates students and turns faculty into mere graders.

They need to establish good rapport with the students, ensure that students understand the content and collaborate well with fellow students, all without the advantage of direct interaction.

WANTNEEDO

BY: KALAN LYRA



Both students and instructors need to stay actively involved in the online learning process. The typical response time students should expect from faculty is 48 hours on weekdays, but it is not uncommon for faculty to feel they are always "on call when teaching an online class."

Faculty and students need to be alert, respectful and realistic while interacting on discussion boards, chat-rooms and e-mail.

In the current transition from WebCT to the Blackboard 9.1 system, a total of 526 out of 636 teachers, accounting for 83 percent of the faculty body, have been trained to use Blackboard.

Further, the university offers voluntary faculty workshops in the Digital Academy for Online Learning. It is time that students access their training resources as well, to makes online classes a viable educational reality.

Stork delivers load of issues

Jessica Casarez
The Signal

With all the information at your fingertips today, a person can pretty much become an instant expert on anything, right? Wrong. It appears it is going to take much more than a series of books and YouTube videos to teach my husband and myself how to prepare and care for our upcoming baby.

It is not like we can blame our ignorance on our "young" age. We stopped qualifying to appear on "Sixteen and Pregnant" more than a decade ago. This whole experience is just so new and unexpected to us. While we are both extremely excited about becoming parents, there is also a slight feeling of terror.

The other day we made a simple visit to Babies "R" Us to browse the aisles and familiarize ourselves with the overabundant choices of baby products. Talk about information overload. Every baby product we came across is available in so many sizes, shapes and prices. How the heck are first-time parents supposed to choose?

As we walked by a stroller that caught our attention, we stopped to examine it more closely.

"Let's see how this works," I said to my husband as I tried to fold the stroller. It wouldn't fold.

After seeing me fail miserably, my husband decided



STAFF COLUMN

to put some muscle into it. He had a smirk on his face, like the big strong man was going to show his damsel in distress how it's done. That stupid stroller did not even budge.

Remembering that we were still in the public eye, we tried to act cool and put the stroller back in its original place. We agreed perhaps it would be wise to return to the store and attempt these gadgets at a later time when fewer people were around. Needless to say, we are still in the market for a stroller that is more user friendly.

Since my husband had agreed to my idea of going to Babies "R" Us, he convinced me to go to another place to shop for a baby "necessity." Imagine my surprise when we pulled into a car dealership. He tried to justify himself by explaining how his current vehicle would not have the room and accessibility for a baby. Leave it to a man to utilize this opportunity to buy a new truck.

Perhaps his incentive for this new vehicle began growing when we were looking at baby monitors. Long gone are the days when a baby only required a sound monitor to hear them in the other room. Nowadays, there are video monitors, which come with all kinds of resolution, touch screens and screen preferences.

I think I better be in charge of selecting the monitor or my husband might bring home a new 80" plasma television.

I am supposed to begin registering for my baby shower soon, and I have no idea where to begin. How can there be so many items for one baby? How can something so tiny occupy so much space and require so many things?

Although we have so much to learn about becoming parents, my husband and I are prepared to work together as a team and embrace it with a positive outlook. We may need to attend some preparation courses on some of the essentials, such as how to properly install a car seat so our son's head doesn't end up in his lap.

Our baby is due to make his appearance in about three months. As we continue preparing for his debut, we keep telling ourselves the same thing to ease the process: it could have been twins.

Letter to the editor:

Please go online to view the latest letters to the editor.

<http://uhclthesignal.com/wordpress/tag/letter-to-the-editor/>

THE SIGNAL

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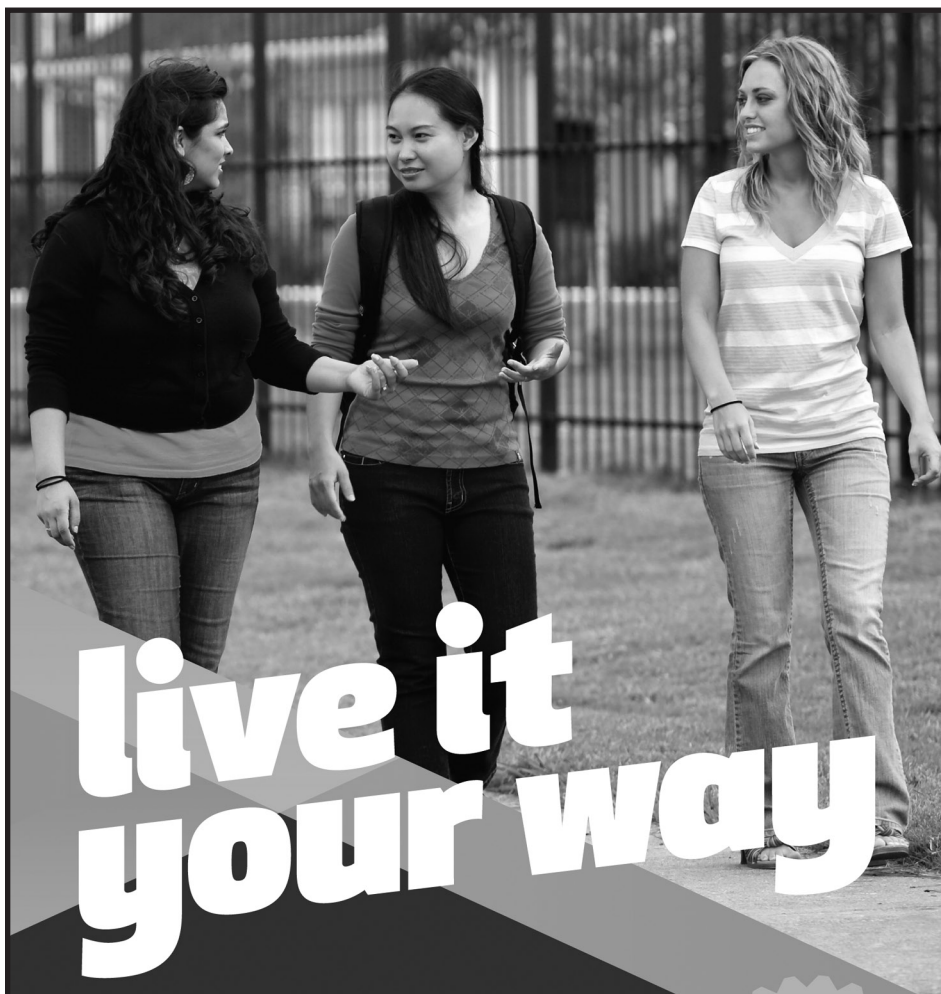
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- Letters must be signed and include the writer's full name and contact information.
- The editors reserve the right to refuse letters, announcements and contributed articles deemed libelous.

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(FAREWELL)
Christian Carion
2009 / 112 min.



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8
LA GRAINE ET LE MULET
(THE SECRET OF THE GRAIN)
Abdellatif Kechiche
2007 / 151 min.



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15
POTICHE
(POTICHE)
François Ozon
2010 / 103 min.

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Feeling stressed?



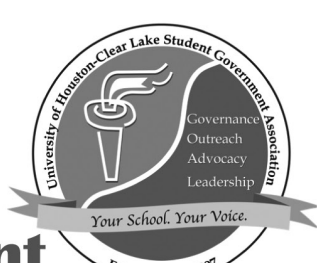
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Udeshika Amarasinghe – Special Events Director

Thrills, chills and romance “department thirteen” review

Ashley Smith The Signal

Spy thrillers are not the easiest novels to write. Authors have to immediately capture the reader’s attention from the first line and keep them guessing until the last page. James Houston Turner does just that in his new book “Department Thirteen.”

“Department Thirteen,” sucks the reader immediately into action, with KGB, secret meeting places and a cold-blooded killing – all within the prologue, which takes place during the Cold War.

From there, the book jumps to the present where protagonist Aleksandr Talanov, a retired KGB agent with ties to the United States, has established a new life in Los Angeles with his wife Andrea, who has no clue about Aleksandr’s past.

The couple soon departs to Australia, where Aleksandr’s past crashes into his current life in the form of members of KGB’s non-existent Department 13, threatening to take all that Aleksandr cares about with it.

An alumnus of UHCL, Turner returned to his alma mater, where the ideas of his first book, “The

Identity Factor,” began to kick off his “Too Ugly Tour.” The Alumni Association brought him to campus after connecting with Turner through Facebook.

After graduating from UHCL with a Master’s in history, Turner went through several odd jobs including journalism and a smuggling.

During Turner’s time as a smuggler in the 1980s, he smuggled books, food and other miscellaneous items behind the Iron Curtain. During that time in his life he became acquainted with members of the KGB. That experience inspired the events and characters in this book, especially Aleksandr.

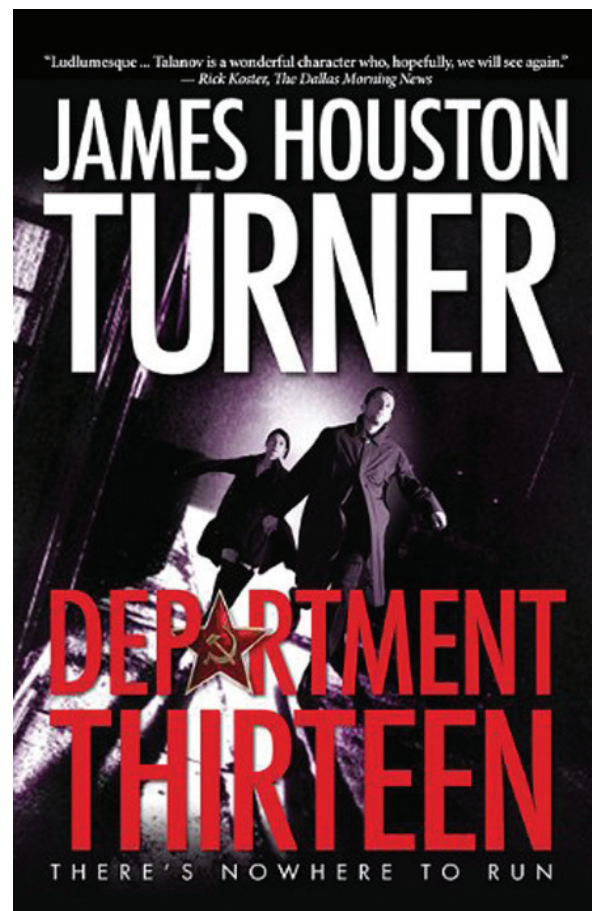
On the outside, Aleksandr is a trained spy and killer with a cold and standoffish exterior. During the course of the book, the writer reveals the heart underneath, the love for his former comrades and the growing love for his wife. As early as the prologue, when Aleksandr is disgusted by a needless death, readers develop a fondness for him and throughout the chapters gain a desire to see him succeed.

The same cannot be said for his wife, Andrea. At the beginning of the

book, Andrea is perceived as somewhat vapid and clueless to the world around her. The stark contrast between Andrea and Aleksandr’s personalities causes the reader to question why a relationship ever developed between them knowing that Aleksandr deserves better.

This original feeling of dislike is the reason why she becomes such an interesting character. Though Aleksandr finally opens up and begins to allow people in, Andrea becomes the character who grows the most. Turner delves behind the glossy cover of her character to help the reader discover the depth of her personality by showing readers how far she is willing to go to save the one she loves.

The only complaint about “Department Thirteen,” comes at the end, or where the book should have ended. The book should have ended with the second to last chapter. This chapter satisfies by resolving the initial conflict and showing that even though Andrea and Aleksandr have

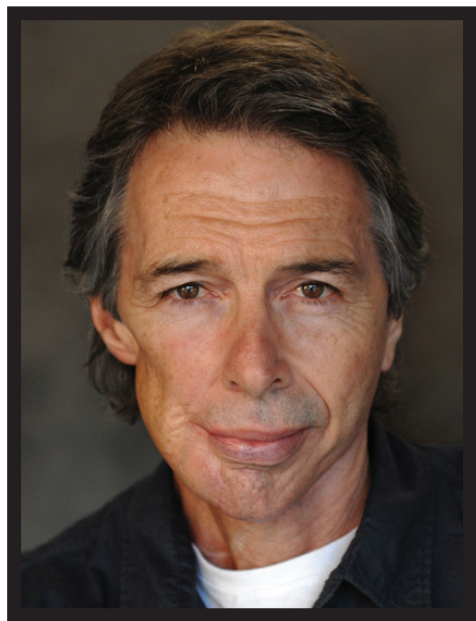


been through so much heartache, they are stronger because of it. But then Turner had to write one more chapter. The addition of this final chapter will infuriate readers, causing them to stare at the blank inside cover, willing more pages to appear because of the open-ended last scene and the new conflict it opens up.

Turner plans to write a sequel to “Department Thirteen.” The idea to further the series must have been Turner’s motivation to write that last chapter, ensuring that those who have read it will be first in line for the sequel.

ALUMNUS KICKS OFF BOOK TOUR AT UHCL

Wardah Ajaz The Signal



A writer’s journey begins like a roller coaster, full of unpredictable ups and downs, leading to a successful career only if the writer has the passion to continue facing the challenges.

James Houston Turner, author of “The Identity Factor” and “Department Thirteen,” has worked relentlessly to get his thrillers published. Turner is currently in North America promoting his books and the lessons he learned in life on his “Too Ugly Tour.”

“Becoming an author is not an easy task,” Turner said. “Rejections become your best friend and reality hits you hard.”

Turner’s life is an example of how

the highs and lows play a major role in building personalities and discovering passions. Turner found his direction at University of Houston-Clear Lake.

“I was trying to find myself when my friend invited me to come down to Houston,” Turner said. “I drifted through a series of jobs until I happened to see an ad for a new University of Houston campus.”

Turner received his bachelor’s degree in religion from Baker University located in Baldwin, Kansas. Since he loved doing research, he started his Masters of Arts at UHCL. During his time at UHCL, Turner met Professor Robert Weghan, who inspired him in a new direction – writing fiction novels.

“This book was born here,” said Turner, picking up a copy of “The Identity Factor.”

The story was inspired by the biblical book of Genesis that Turner discovered during his time at UHCL.

“I stumbled onto a unique literary construction of the biblical book of Genesis, which became the backbone for my international thriller, ‘The Identity Factor,’ making that novel over 35 years in the making,” Turner said.

After graduating with his master’s degree in 1976, Turner moved from Houston to San Diego, where he self-published a book of poetry that reflected upon his life growing up in

Kansas. He also published “101 Ways to Fix Potatoes,” which gained him popularity and led him into the field of journalism.

With part-time jobs on the side, Turner started smuggling books, Bibles, medicines and other items to Poland. There he met a lot of people who had suffered during the Cold War and were in need. Smuggling items into the Iron Curtain landed him on the KGB watch list.

“I did it [odd jobs] because I was willing to do whatever it took to support my family while pursuing my writing,” Turner said.

In 1991 Turner had a cancerous tumor removed from his face. He felt like his career was going nowhere, so he applied for a customer service job with a large company in Adelaide, Australia.

“The company said, ‘we can’t have someone looking like you in the company doing that kind of a job,’” Turner said, “They were referring to the facial scars that I carry from my 1991 successful battle against cancer.”

That is when Turner solidified his goal and turned back to writing. This incident inspired him to name his book tour the “Too Ugly Tour.”

“I decided to dedicate my tour to that moment when I was called too ugly,” Turner said. Instead of becoming discouraged, he made his comeback as a writer, hard and strong.

One of the books Turner is

promoting on his “Too Ugly Tour,” which officially launched at UHCL on Sept. 15, is called “Department Thirteen.” This book was inspired by his time behind the Iron Curtain and the people he met there.

“We are honored to have him choose to launch his book here,” said Kristine Thompson, special events coordinator in the office of University Advancement.

Turner got in touch with the UHCL Alumni Association through Facebook and really wanted UHCL to be included in his tour since it played a huge role in his political thriller, “The Identity Factor.”

While promoting his books, Turner will also convey the message he has learned in his life.

“Don’t let the hard knocks of life defeat you,” Turner said. “Sometimes, those hard knocks are blessings in disguise.”

Use your smartphone to scan the QR code below for more information about Turner.





FEAR LOVE UNDOCUMENTED
DISAPPOINTMENT
HOPELESSNESS AWARENESS
DEPORTATION
THE AMERICAN DREAM
REFUGEE

MEET HOUSTON FILMMAKER JESSE SALMERON

Courtney Bowen
The Signal

A young man has it all, and then has to face losing it all because of his status in society.

Jesse Salmeron is the director and writer of “Dreamer,” a fictional account of real-life drama for children of illegal immigrants growing up in the U.S. in fear of being found and deported.

Salmeron says he was motivated to tell this story after the DREAM Act came so close to passing, but did not.

Dreamers, as they are referred to in the film, are undocumented children brought into the U.S. by their guardians, who either crossed borders illegally or remained here after their visas expired.

The DREAM Act, a proposed bill for “Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors,” gives them hope of what they could accomplish if they earned citizenship on their own merits.

“It’s really a sad situation,” Salmeron said. “I was undocumented until we received protective status, because we came during the Salvadorian Civil War. Originally I was unaware of it until later on, what that meant, but my mom managed to document us. And now I am a permanent resident, but I can’t imagine there are 13- and 14-year-olds who are aware of their status. You know it’s tough enough being a

teenager, but also to have that at the back of your mind, it must be torturing.”

His family fled El Salvador when he was 3 years old, Salmeron grew up in Houston and attended the University of Houston. He had difficulty settling on a major until he began taking English classes as his electives. Then every class he took at UH was either film, theater or English.

“I think it’s because I love literature so much,” Salmeron said. “Literature is just about the human condition and realizing that struggle is just a part of life, and that there are a lot of great moments along the way. You come out stronger and a better person afterwards.”

He graduated in 2004 with an English/creative writing major and a minor in theater. As a first-generation college student, he considered his education “the greatest accomplishment” of his life, having learned “with some really great people,” including Edward Albee and the late David Stern.

“Dreamer” will be Salmeron’s third film and second narrative film, though it has not gone into production yet. Salmeron premiered the first snippet of the trailer for the movie, which included a voice-over reciting of Langston Hughes’ poem “Harlem (Dream Deferred)” at “Dreamer: Meet Filmmaker Jesse Salmeron,” held in the Garden Room Sept. 15 as part of a series of events celebrating Hispanic

Heritage Month.

The event started with a presentation from Christine Kovic, associate professor of anthropology, to acquaint the audience with the dilemma faced by Dreamers, and then Salmeron answered questions as well as commented when people shared their own experiences.

“Every time I meet a Dreamer, every time I speak at a school, I always hear these great stories that make me want to go home and hide and write,” Salmeron said. “There’s so many out there. I definitely want to tackle some more topics.”

He also discussed filmmaking and writing.

“He draws directly on his experiences and passion to make his films,” said Charlotte Haney, visiting lecturer in anthropology and cross-cultural studies. “‘Dreamer’ is exciting because of the message but

also because it will be his first well-funded, well-acted film – so we will get a chance to see his maturing work.”



Use your smartphone to scan the QR code below for more information on “Dreamer.”



HISPANIC ENROLLMENT: continued from page 1

likely, who has been to college themselves, and so they don't have that family knowledge of how college works in America. I think that makes it difficult. That includes knowledge of financial aid."

Along with a growing population, the report also lists educational strides as the second factor in why Hispanic enrollment has increased.

Bullock points out first-generation students face the difficult challenge of educating their parents, who have these reserved values because of a strong work ethic, about the importance and the benefits a higher education can provide.

"Growing up, my parent's main concern was that I finish high school and start working," said Monique Martinez, business management major and first-generation college student. "This seemed to be a huge accomplishment to them since they didn't make it that far. To me it wasn't enough and I wanted to accomplish more."

Fry said the Census Bureau recently released numbers detailing what a typical Latino male

and female will make as their work life earnings over a course of 40 years.

With a high school diploma, a Hispanic male will make approximately \$1.3 million over a course of 40 years.

"Typical Hispanic male with an associate's degree will earn about \$1.8 million over his subsequent 40 years of work, and if that young Latino male completes a bachelor's degree, he'd be expected to earn about \$2.1 million over 40 years," Fry said.

Fry also noted the work life earnings of a typical Hispanic female over the course of 40 years, that, in comparison, is less than a typical Hispanic male.

"If they finish high school and do not complete any further education, we'd expect them to earn a million dollars over the next 40 years, but a typical young Hispanic [female] with an associate's degree earns about 1.4 million, an extra \$400,000, and if she completes a bachelor's degree, she'd be expected to earn about 1.7 million," Fry said.

"I think, still, that there is that place where in our culture we have always valued the male

as our provider," Bullock said. "And so if we have to choose between the daughter and the son, I think they're going to go with the son because they think the daughter can still get married and be supported."

Martinez argues that although she comes from the typical household where her father provided for the family, she will not conform to the same cultural values in which she was raised.

"I want to be able to support myself," Martinez said. "Traditions are changing, and I intend to work the same as my husband."

Martinez said she now has the opportunity to be an ambassador for other students who are interested in attending to college and learning about available resources.

"I'm glad I've been given this opportunity," Martinez said. "Since we are the fastest growing minority, I will have the opportunity to bring an educational awareness not only to my immediate family but also to my community."

SMOKING: continued from page 1

Willingham confirmed the number of smoking violation tickets issued is low.

"There have been two since the policy's been in place," Willingham said.

Willingham attributed the small number of tickets to the police force making an effort to educate faculty, staff and students first.

"We think it's a fairly new policy and we don't feel that the community has been given enough time to assimilate to the changes," Willingham said.

Aside from health concerns, job performance was also an issue that School of Business Administrative Secretary Candace Lehw was concerned with.

"If someone has to walk all the way to their car to smoke, it seems that their job performance would decrease," Lehw said. "It would take longer to get to and from their car than it would to walk to one of the designated smoking areas."

Lehw also noted the lack of education of the policy, as well as the lack of signage, especially around the Patio Café area.

"There are large blue signs for the designated smoking area, which is the majority of the pa-

tio," Lehw said. "The signs for the non-smoking area are small, gold signs that do not stand out and have faded in the sun since they were hung up; people don't realize they are in the non-smoking area."

Chau Nguyen, Marketing major and non-smoker echoed the lack of education on the policy.

"I don't really know it too well, but the smoking does bother me because I like to enjoy and sit out there and do home work," Nguyen said. "The smoking does distract me a little bit, but there should be room for compromise. It's not really a big deal, I mean, they [smokers] have their own area."

Aside from the policy on smoking, a new issuance has been introduced in the form of a zero-tolerance cigarette dumping policy.

Resulting from the recent burn ban in effect across Texas, as well as the drought and wildfires, the UHCL Police Department announced the new policy Sept. 15.

"What we're enforcing isn't smoking, but a state littering policy, which the main intent is because of the high risk for wildfires," Willingham said.

The policy carries a \$50-500 fine for individuals caught tossing cigarette butts from their car windows or on the ground, with the fine being determined by a Harris County judge, Willingham said.

"The whole point is, preferably, that we don't give citations and that people take the warning seriously and understand the danger that puts not only on the university community, but the community at whole," Willingham said.

As far as the smoking policy, an option available to students is to submit comments to the ULC.

"The ULC receives comments from students, staff and faculty about the smoking policy and the designated smoking areas each semester, and we regularly review those comments and make any changes the committee feels necessary to represent the interests of our constituents, in consultation with the FMC (Facilities Management and Construction),"Carman said.

The University Life Committee can be reached on the UHCL website at http://prtl.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/PRE/Shared_Governance/ULC.

ONLINE PERFORMANCE: continued from page 1

or tests. It's easy for students to forget about their online work, given that there's other places that they have to be at a certain time, and so they can sometimes be surprised by the fact that an assignment is due today or that a test is due tomorrow morning."

Online courses were first introduced at UHCL in 1992. In spring 2011, UHCL offered approximately 700 courses on Blackboard. That number includes face-to-face classes with Web assistance, hybrid and fully-online classes. In the past three years, UHCL has increased its selection of fully online degrees from five to 12.

"Each semester, the number of students enrolled in online courses has increased, said Shanta Goswami, director of online programs. "In fall 2005, the total number of students enrolled in online courses totaled 1,297, and has grown to 2,480 in fall of 2010."

Goswami also said that online courses typically fill completely during the first week of registration.

Royce Walker, adjunct instructor in communication at UHCL and retired journalism chair at San Jacinto College, points out that online classes are not for all students, but that this method of delivery does provide education to students who may not be able to attend traditional classes due to situations such as work schedules, family responsibilities, distance and disabilities.

"I have taught both community college and university online classes over a number of years," Walker said. "Students enrolled in online classes differ from semester to semester much like traditional face-to-face classes. Research indicates that there is a high withdrawal rate of students in distance learning classes. My opinion is that online classes require the student to be disciplined, proactive and able to manage time and deadlines."

The report concludes students may not perform as well in an online course as a face-to-face course for three main reasons: 1) some students have difficulty with the technology, 2) students may feel disconnected from their instructor and other students, and 3) online courses tend to be less structured than face-to-face courses.

To address the issue of difficulties with the online platform, the Student Success Center (SCC) at UHCL offers Black-

board tutorials for students. "One common misconception I hear from students is they thought the course would be easier and not require a lot of work or much of their time because it is online," said Tim Richardson, director of the SSC.

Richardson says students considering enrolling in online courses should take into consideration the time commitment they are willing to put into a course, their learning style and if they are self disciplined enough to complete the work requirements.

How faculty members develop and design an online class is also an important variable to the success of students.

"The learning becomes more collaborative, contextual and active," Walker said. "Faculty members become facilitators while guiding students in their learning."

The Digital Academy for Online Learning is offered to UHCL faculty to develop the skills needed to learn Blackboard and how to switch a traditional face-to-face course to an online course. This semester UHCL has 20 members of its faculty enrolled.

"I have only received training at UHCL on the topic on the course site upgrade to Blackboard," Walker said. "The university provides support through instructional designers. During my years at San Jacinto College, I attended many seminars and workshops in developing, teaching and offering classes through online technology. Also, I belonged to a Blackboard support group. San Jacinto College now requires the faculty to be certified to teach online courses."

Students lean toward online courses because the schedules are more convenient and students can generally work at their own pace. An online environment can be more conducive to a student's learning by offering a level of comfort in anonymity.

"When I was completing my bachelor degree I worked full-time and enrolled in as many online classes as my college offered," said former UH student Jackie Rose. "I was self-disciplined, always turned my assignments in on schedule and made good grades. I did not have to tread through congested parking lots, I could work from anywhere, and I did have to have interaction with other students if I did want to."

UHCL student completion rates for spring 2011

School	GPA		Completion Rate	
	Online	Face-to-Face	Online	Face-to-Face
BUS	3.27	3.29	90.23	95.15
HSH	3.01	3.40	82.48	90.56
SOE	3.65	3.35	90.31	93.84
SCE	3.33	3.62	86.81	92.43
Statistics provided by the UHCL Office of Institutional Research				



HSH DEAN RICK SHORT

UHCL welcomes new dean

The University of Houston-Clear Lake School of Human Sciences and Humanities started this semester with new dean Rick Short. To read reporter Darby Staup's profile about Short, visit The Signal's website, www.uhclthesignal.com.

Voices of Colour carried on the wings of Iron Butterfly

Rachel Miranda

The Signal

This semester's Voices of Colour series "Pursue Your Passion" opened Sept. 14 with Master Choon-Ok Jade Harmon.

Born soon after the Korean War in 1956, Harmon grew up in Koje Do Island, South Korea, at a time of intense poverty.

Despite many challenges, including dyslexia, Harmon was committed by her "personal passion" to overcome poverty and succeed in the male-dominated world of martial arts. Harmon is the highest ranked, ninth-degree black belt female in the Korean martial art of Kuk Sool Won.

"She is the 'Iron Butterfly,'" said her husband Master Barry Harmon, who is also a ninth-degree black belt. "Her teachers gave her the name 'Iron Butterfly' because she is so pretty and looks delicate, but when she strikes, it is like being hit by iron."

Harmon was the youngest of six siblings. After her father passed away, when Harmon was nine, her mother supported the family by diving into the ocean to fish, a practice known as "haeyno." When the family moved to the mainland, Harmon started a new beginning.

Around the age of 12, Harmon found interest in Kuk Sool Won. At the age of 14, she committed to life-long training. "I told myself, I don't want to

quit, I want to continue; so I will never quit," Harmon said.

After years of practice and determination, Harmon "achieved her goal of self-fulfillment and financial independence as a martial arts master in the time and place where tradition dictated her future," said Ana Rodriguez, second-degree black belt and co-author of "The Iron Butterfly," a book based on Harmon's memoir.

"She inspires me and many other women to never give up on our goals and dreams, regardless of the obstacles we may find in life," Rodriguez said.

Along Harmon's journey, she realized in order to continue her study of Kuk Sool Won, she needed to leave Korea by possibly marrying an American. Her teacher, Grand Master In Hyuk Suh, matched Harmon with her future husband Barry Harmon.

After the two were married, they moved to the U.S. They performed demonstrations together for 31 years and are now retired from competition. They have two daughters, Emerald, fourth-degree black belt, and Jada, second-degree black belt.

"My mother is the strongest person I know; no matter what problems or hardships she has faced and our family has faced, she has always been the rock that held us together," Emerald said.

Today, Harmon and her



RACHEL MIRANDA:THE SIGNAL

Master Choon-Ok Jade Harmon demonstrates fan techniques with her husband, Master Barry Harmon, at the UHCL Garden Room. The fan is a common weapon used after earning your third-degree black belt, with its skeleton made of metal and optional bladed edge.

family own Kuk Sool Won of Clear Lake - Family Martial Arts Center, a place where anyone can learn the entire spectrum of established Asian fighting arts. For more information on Harmon and Kuk Sool Won of Clear Lake, contact 281-486-5425 or visit www.kuksoolwoncl.com.

During the Voices of Colour presentation, Harmon spoke about her struggles and desire to

overcome those disadvantages by becoming a martial artist. Emerald, Jada, and fifth-degree black belt Terry Heaps presented a traditional Korean drums performance. Harmon and her husband demonstrated joint locks from various types of grabs, as well as fan techniques, palm striking and pressure point striking. Harmon ended the event with a book signing.

The next Voices of Colour "Pursue Your Passion" presentation will be Oct. 12, from 5 to 6 p.m., in the Garden Room of the Bayou Building. The speaker will be Fiona Dawson, human rights and LGBT activist. For more information regarding the Voices of Colour program, contact Julie Smith, women's & LGBT services coordinator, at 281-283-2578 or smithj@uhcl.edu.

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Parlez Vous French Cinema Festival?

Daniel Agee

The Signal

UHCL students get a glimpse of France with the Tournées Festival. The French-American Cultural Exchange (FACE), in partnership with UHCL Cultural Arts, the Foreign Language Program and University Advancement, is bringing the Tournées Festival to campus now through Oct. 15.

The Tournées Festival is a program that offers a wide variety of French cinema to university campuses all over the U.S. Its goal is to encourage universities to begin their own French film festivals by distributing around \$200,000 in grants annually.

"This is a huge deal because universities all over the nation compete for this grant," said Sonia Hernandez, cultural arts assistant. "It's very competitive to receive this grant and UHCL has been selected to receive it."

The money received from the grant is applied toward screening the films on campus.

"It is really important to reach a maximum amount of students to attend this event," said Andrew Reitberger, associate director of student life. "Everyone should engage in foreign films and become familiarized with this cinematic experience. When we can expose people to another culture, people develop a new perspective, a new experience; people are then exposed to different ideas, and initially, this is how we can create a better world."

Reitberger explained the many different reasons why specific French films are chosen for the festival.

"The significance of the films chosen



L'AFFAIRE FAREWELL, COURESTY OF TOURNEES FILM FESTIVAL

usually relate to subject matter appropriate for the times we are in today," Reitberger said. "Foreign films send out a different tone than one is familiar with. These films display lessons of leadership, coming together as one, decision-making skills, the challenges one may face on a daily basis, and the different points of view on what is justice and what isn't."

Before every film is screened, there is a brief French lesson taught by Christine Paul, foreign language and English enhancement program director at UHCL. Paul not only teaches the attendees how to speak a few words in French, but she also helps translate some of the meanings inherent in the films.

Although all the films are subtitled for the viewers, the translation can become lost and could be interpreted as something

different than what is presented.

"I preview all the films ahead of time and pick out some of the vocabulary that could be confusing, then have the students repeat it to help them understand it," Paul said. "The students really enjoy it."

"Of Gods and Men" and "Inspector Bellamy" played this past weekend, but those interested can still catch the remaining three films that will run through Oct. 15. All of the films will start at 7 p.m. in the Student Service Building Lecture Hall. Anyone can attend the Tournées Festival film screenings. General admission for the Tournées Festival is \$3.75 for each film and is free for students who present their student ID.

THE TOURNÉES FESTIVAL

New French Films on Campus



"L'affaire Farewell," October 1
7 p.m. in SSB Lecture Hall



"La Graine Et Le Mulet," October 8
7 p.m. in SSB Lecture Hall



"Potiche," October 15
7 p.m. in SSB Lecture Hall

BALLS OF FURY



ASHLEY SMITH:THE SIGNAL

Shine Lin, accounting major, makes the winning shot, sending him to the final round at the Fitness Zone's Ping Pong Tournament, Sept. 16. After an intense battle with last semester's champion John Wade, Lin emerged victorious. Watch the video online at www.uhclthesignal.com.

Lone Star faculty showcase artwork



DEBRA MACHEMEHL :THE SIGNAL

Guest, faculty and artists attend gallery reception Friday, Sept. 16, for the Lone Star College-CyFair Faculty Art Exhibition. View the slideshow online at www.uhclthesignal.com.

STUDENTS!

Is there a professor whom you would like to honor? You can!

Nominate your favorite professor for the Minnie Stevens Piper Award!

The UHCL Piper Award Committee is selecting one professor to be honored for Excellence in Teaching. This professor will then represent the university in competition for the 2012 Minnie Stevens Piper Award, a prestigious and valuable teaching prize. Your nominations for this honor are essential. It takes only a few minutes of your time, and it is one way of saying thank you.

Nomination forms & ballot boxes are located at the main entrances of all buildings and in the Dean of Students' office, SSCB 1.201.

ALL NOMINATIONS due:
NOON, Sept. 28

