

THE SIGNAL

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The tangled Web the Internet weaves

Cryss Godoy
The Signal Staff

The quest for proof of the origins of the universe – and the search for intelligent life throughout it – help engineer the future of human communication and give birth to distributed computing; we will call it “the Grid.”

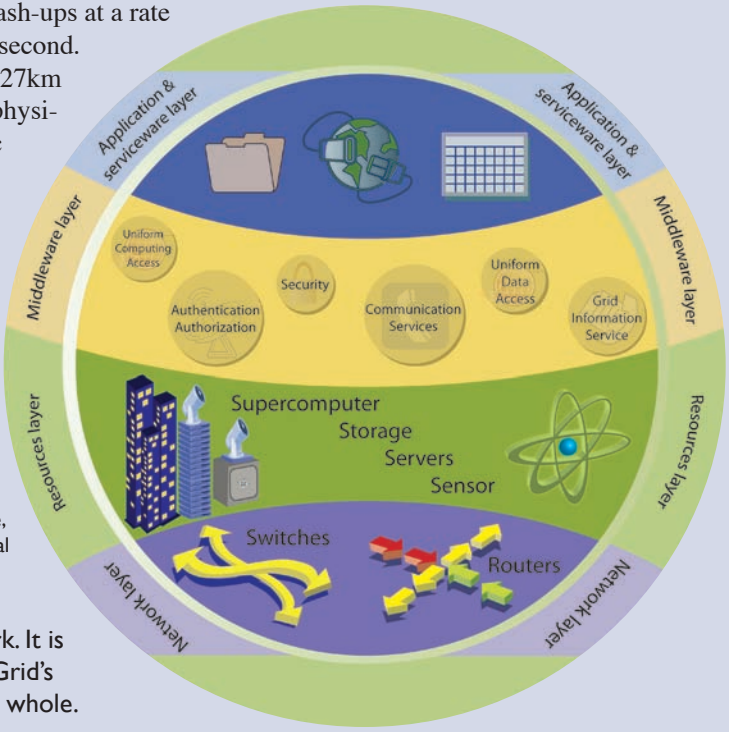
CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research and the birthplace of the World Wide Web, will bring its particle accelerator’s newest collision detector, the Large Hadron Collider beauty experiment, on-line in Geneva, Switzerland, later this year. The LHC, the biggest and most powerful accelerator in the world, will soon use 120 megawatts of electricity to produce head-on collisions between beams of either lead ions or protons traveling at nearly the speed of light in an attempt to recreate a “Big Bang” that is theorized to have been the beginning of all matter in the universe. Well, actually the goal is more like thousands of mini “Big Bangs.”

The LHC beauty experiment, independent of CERN’s three other detectors and their experiments, will observe these miniscule, energy-producing particle smash-ups at a rate of about 600 million collisions per second. Data collected all along the LHC’s 27km circular vacuum tunnel will allow physicists to tread new paths to scientific discovery in fields related to space, matter, antimatter, energy and even time.

Although it was designed with the potential for unprecedented scientific discovery, CERN was aware by 2002 that the computing needs of the LHC could not be met with computer hardware available or projected

Original graphic: found on CERN website, re-designed by Kourtney Pace, The Signal

Through the use of “middleware,” end-users gain access to the network. It is the middleware’s job to organize a Grid’s disparate resources into a workable whole.



The Grid: continued on page 10

New semester brings new policies to UHCL

Jenna Lewis
The Signal Staff

Beginning fall 2008, the University of Houston-Clear Lake is implementing new admissions requirements that will affect incoming juniors. The university is also revising existing academic suspension and repeated course policies.

“We have been evaluating the policies, looking at them in terms of the impact that it has on student progression in graduation, and comparing them to the policies from other institutions,” said Yvette Bendeck, associate vice president of enrollment.

The current suspension policy at UHCL, as well as at other universities across the nation, has always been for the student to sit out for a year. UHCL administrators feel that they are discouraging students from continuing their education by asking them to sit out for an entire year.

The current policy says that if a student is put on academic suspension, the first time he/she will have to sit out one year; the second, two years; and the third time results in suspension of the student indefinitely. The new suspension policy going into effect this fall has changed suspension times to one semester for the first suspension, one year for the second, and if a student is placed on suspension for a third time, he/she is suspended indefinitely.

“What we are trying to do is make our policy more in line to our other Texas universities, basically the standard practice around the country,” Bendeck said. “Anybody who is coming back from suspension will also be required to attend mandatory advising. There is a strong feeling that we do not help students coming back from academic suspension and give them guidance on course combinations. So by helping these students lay out an academic plan, we hope that will eventually lead them to graduation.”

The new policy only applies to academic suspension; disciplinary suspensions are not covered by this policy. Those suspensions will be handled by the Dean of Students.

New Regulations: continued on page 10

Barbara Morgan to speak at commencement

Astronaut Barbara Morgan will serve as the featured speaker during University of Houston-Clear Lake’s commencement ceremony 2 p.m. May 10, in Reliant Arena, 8400 Kirby Drive, Houston, 77054.

Morgan holds a bachelor of arts in human biology and a teaching credential. For 25 years, she taught elementary school at various schools finishing her last 19 years at McCall-Donnelly Elementary School in McCall, Idaho. Morgan was selected as the backup candidate for the NASA Teacher in Space program in 1985 and trained with Christa McAuliffe and the Challenger crew at NASA’s Johnson Space Center from September 1985 to January 1986. Following the Challenger accident, she assumed the duties of teacher in space designee.

In 1986, Morgan was selected by NASA as a mission specialist. Since that time she has logged more than 305 hours in space, completing her first space flight in 2007 as a mission specialist on the crew of STS-118 and assembly mission to the International Space Station.

Her honors include the NASA Headquarters Special Service Award and NASA Public Service Group Achievement Award. Other awards include the Idaho Fellowship Award, University of Idaho President’s Medalion Award, National Space Society Space Pioneer Award for Education and Women in Aerospace Education Award.

During the ceremony, 815 of the 997 students who applied for graduation will walk across the stage.

A graduation reception sponsored by the university’s Office of Alumni and Community Relations will be held for all graduates, their family and friends from 5:30 to 7 p.m on May 9, in the UHCL Bayou Building, 2700 Bay Area Blvd., Houston 77058.



Photo courtesy of NASA’s Johnson Space Center

Astronaut Barbara Morgan will be the featured speaker during University of Houston-Clear Lake’s Commencement Ceremony Saturday, May 10, 2 p.m.

VASE Gold Seals bring beauty to UHCL

The Texas Art Education Association’s Visual Art Scholastic Event (VASE) is the largest high school art competition in the nation.

Artwork from more than 1,700 Texas high school students chosen from more than 17,000 entries, was on display at University of Houston-Clear Lake during the VASE even April 12.

More than 1,500 high school students from around the state attended the event which included art workshops led by local and international artist scholarship competitions, guest artist demonstrations and student portfolio reviews.

Nineteen colleges and design schools sent representatives to VASE to provide portfolio critiques and/or recruit students.

Art fans are invited to enjoy the works of the top high school art students in Texas during VASE. The Gold Seal Exhibit will be on display through April 30 in the Bayou Building, Atrium I, second floor.

Photo courtesy of the Office of University Advancement
Graphic designed by Kourtney Pace

Programming Challenge ‘08

Brandon White
The Signal Staff

At a school like the University of Houston-Clear Lake, building a good rapport with surrounding community college students is a valuable part of the recruitment process. The School of Science and Computer Engineering at UHCL took innovative to another level with the Programming Challenge ‘08 held April 19.

“We want to make sure that the junior college community is aware of our university,” said Krishani Abeysekera, systems administrator and lecturer of computer science and computer information

Challenge: continued on page 10



Tour of Virginia
See page 7



Biker Rally
See page 6



International Festival
See page 12

Goodbye Analog, Hello Digital Television

Tracy Moody
The Signal Staff

On February 17, 2009, as the clock strikes midnight, television in America will change forever. All full-power television stations in the United States will stop broadcasting in analog and switch to digital. The FCC reports there are still 15.5 million Americans tenacious enough to view TV over the air using rabbit ears. If these Americans choose not to purchase a government approved digital converter box by the fateful night, they will not even be watching static.

So, where are these digital converter boxes and how much will they cost? The average cost will be \$40 - \$70, although you can get more expensive ones. Most of them are about the size of a cable converter box; maybe the rabbit ears can sit on top of it.

To help consumers, the government established the Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program. Every U.S. household is eligible to receive up to two coupons, worth \$40 each, toward the purchase of a converter box. If you plan on requesting them, start now; it is first come, first serve.

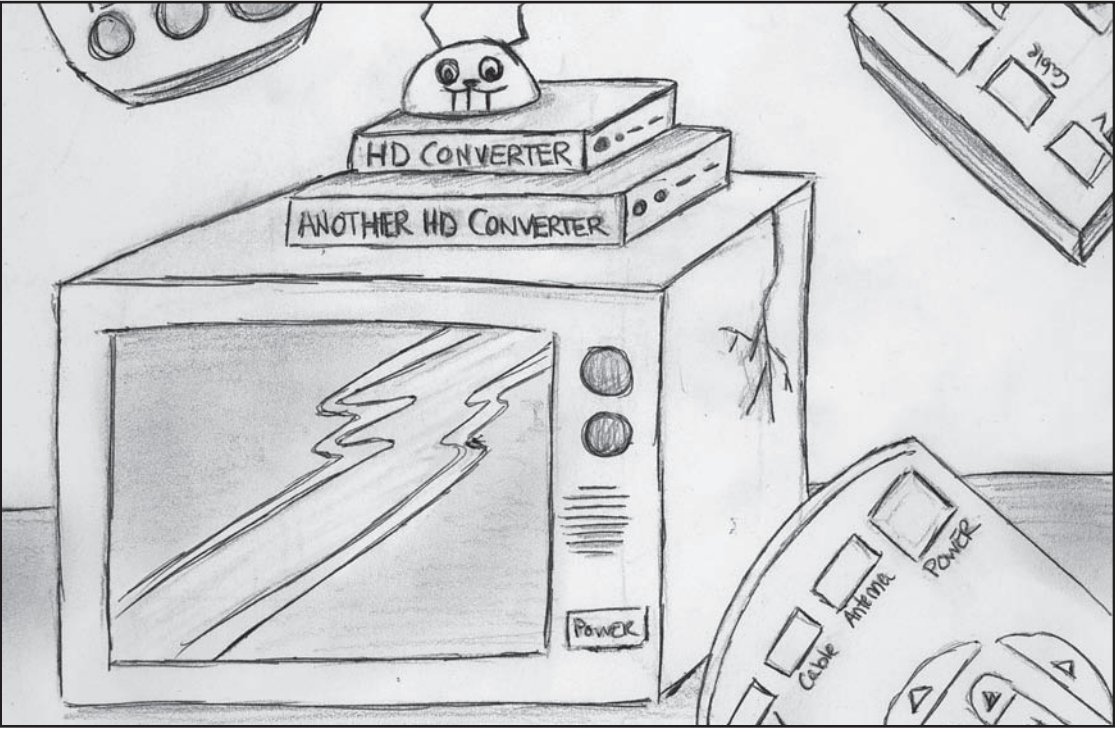
Just what every household needs, another black plastic box, probably made in China, to clutter up the already bulging entertainment center. By the way, in case you were getting used to the number of remotes you already have, add one more.

Why the switch? The number one benefit the FCC asserts is that it will free up parts of the broadcast spectrum for public safety communication, better known

as the police, fire departments and rescue squads. They will auction off the rest of it to companies providing wireless broadband. Perhaps, instead of auctioning it off a better use could be creating an advanced emergency system to notify laptop users and cell phone users of an impending disaster, or auction it off to hospitals, educational institutions and care centers to create a better communication network for people in need?

The second reason is that consumers will benefit because digital broadcasting offers improved picture and sound quality and is more efficient than analog. Digital broadcast gives the choice of a high definition digital program or multiple layers of standard definition programs, a process called “multicasting.” Basically, multicasting offers several channels of digital programming simultaneously, using the same amount of spectrum as one analog program. Translation – more choices for viewers, including interactive video and data services.

Think about it. Are more choices really what we are being offered, or just more of the same mindless programming and still nothing worth watching? Honestly, how many times have you channel surfed only to find nothing worth viewing? If you want real choices, visit the Houston Public Library; its holdings are 4,200,301.



Krystal Mongan:The Signal

Subscribe to Netflix; there are over 100,000 titles, for less than \$20 a month, including documentaries. Who needs planned programming with those offerings? Make your own. At least visiting the library or personally choosing DVDs gives us some form of individuality and freedom, not to mention no advertising.

The 2006 Nielsen ratings reported our society has more TVs than people! The average household has 2.73 TV sets with 2.55 people living there. We spend an average of four hours and 35 minutes a day watching TV, close to 32 hours a week. For those who are unable to go without or are addicted to more TV than they realize or

want to admit, visit www.dtv.gov for more information about the conversion.

For Americans who believe they are masters of their own universe, this last push to digital could be a wake up call. Americans could spend time reading, from the millions of choices available, free by the way, at libraries across the country. Better yet, parents could read to their children each night for an hour, now that is a worthwhile endeavor. Live in 4-D; explore the new park downtown; peruse an art museum or volunteer time to help others. Visit with the sweet, elderly lady next door while helping her figure out why her TV suddenly does not work.

CrossSignals

The Signal staff members share their opinions regarding pet peeves. Join the discussion by logging on to The Signal blog at:

http://www.myspace.com/signal_UHCL

I can't stand it when I get in my truck and my vents are turned to one side or the other. I want all my vents to face forward and to be perfectly straight. If a person is riding in my truck and is cold then they need to either turn up the heat or close the vent, but do not ever push my air vents to the right or the left.

-Britney Samperi-

I really don't like it when people use my computer and ironically things mess up only when they are on it. "Um, Jorge, I think your computer just messed up!"

-Jorge De La Garza-

My biggest, biggest pet peeve is when someone stands over me. Especially when I am eating. That is something I cannot stand!

-Brandon White-

One pet peeve of mine is when a person talks loudly on a cell phone in public. No one wants to hear that.

-Jennifer Ferguson-

My best peeve is when people call to talk about absolutely nothing! This drives me insane. This also happens in class. Some people just like to hear their own voices. If you don't have anything to say, please don't waste my time.

-Kourtney Pace-

My biggest pet peeve is people who do not listen. Being in the service industry for several years now, I have come to genuinely ask people how they are doing and if their day is going well. Too many people do not listen and will respond with a quick, "No, thank you," "Goodbye," or "I'm not interested." More people need to

listen and realize that when they are outside of their homes and interacting with other people, even those in the service industry, that we are human beings as well and deserve to be treated with respect and kindness as they, of course, would like to be treated.

-Tosha Griffin-

People who talk on their cell phone during a movie. Why buy the ticket? Also, all the people who throw things on the floor instead of putting them up at department stores.

-Tracy Moody-

I worked in a kids clothing store while I was in high school. Hours and hours of straightening clothes and hanging them on hangers facing to the left has left me with a pet peeve to this day of clothes not

being hung on hangers correctly!! I let my kids hang their clothes up and then I go behind them and straighten them!

-Aubrey Harbin-

One pet peeve that bothers me is when people talk with their mouth full; especially when someone sits right across from me. I can't listen to them talk because I'm too afraid their saliva filled food will fling out of their mouth any second and will land either on me or in my plate. If it does happen and they don't acknowledge it, then I wonder if they realized it or not. Because if they didn't realize food was flung from their mouth, I wonder if they'll do it again.

-Krystal Mongan-

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LETTERS POLICY

The Signal is a public forum and will print letters to the editor subject to the following: letters must be no longer than 500 words. Where necessary, letters will be edited for grammar, spelling and style requirements. Letters must be signed and include the writer's full name, address and phone number. The editors reserve the right to refuse letters, announcements and contributed articles deemed libelous.

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Life in 4-D



Jennifer Ferguson
The Signal Staff

The salty smell of the sea lingers in the air and the beautiful, orange reflection of the sunset glistens on the liquid horizon. The familiar sounds of seagulls echo as a mist from the ocean is overshadowed by a brisk splash of cool water.

It sounds like any ride on the Bolivar Ferry, a day trip to Crystal Beach, or a walk on the Seawall. But, not this time.

This time it is a visit to a 4-D theater. An experience lasting a whopping six minutes and costing about \$10 per person.

For just \$10, you too can enjoy the sights, sounds, smells and feel of nature. You can sit comfortably in a wet theater seat wearing a pair of very chic plastic glasses. Lose yourself in the cool, dark indoors amidst crying children and glowing exit signs.

For six whole minutes you'll enjoy the chilling effect of alternating mists and bursts of cool air. You can even have the pleasure of watching underwater snakes and feel the sensation of them poking you in the back; all for the price of some sunscreen and snacks.

When the credits roll and the house lights come up, please wait patiently in line and exit to your right.

But wait, what is this? You mean you can smell the fresh cut grass outside and feel the sun beaming down? You can hear the world around you in surround sound and see people in three dimensions, even without the accessories?

Welcome to your world, in all four dimensions. No \$10 ticket is required. No six-minute time limit will be imposed. There will be no lines or blinking exit signs pointing your way out.

The next time you have \$10 to spare, pack a lunch and top off the tank. Get out. Soak it up, literally. Life is 4-D; glasses optional.

Good Job Bluetooth

By Brandon Rowan



The irritating activities of mankind, A.K.A. pet peeves

Pet peeves are the little things in life that don't seem so little. The dictionary defines a pet peeve as: "something about which one frequently complains; a particular personal vexation." This article was originally meant to encourage people to stop doing inappropriate things, but I think it has snowballed into a rant that has been frothing at the mouth to escape.

I'm going to kick off this tirade with one of the worst forms of pet peeves: talking with food in your mouth. It's like watching a horror movie in slow motion. There have been times when people have tried to talk to me with a mouth full of food, and I didn't hear a word they said because I was too busy worrying about food flying out of their mouth. I have a healthy fear of partially masticated projectiles. I wonder if there is a word or a term for accidentally spitting food, maybe something like "culinary friendly fire."

The dinner table is not the only place where bad manners can be found. It sometimes amazes me how rude people can be on a phone. I absolutely detest when someone calls me and then puts me on hold. If that has happened to anyone reading this, I am accepting donations to fund development on a teleportation device; it will physically send me through the line so I can beat these people with their own phones.

The new hands-free Bluetooth technology is really cool. However, a couple of times I have been around people who were using a Bluetooth and I didn't know it. I



Stanley White III
The Signal Staff

was in an elevator and some guy walked in, the doors closed and a few seconds later he said, "Well, what do you think?" That really freaked me out; I didn't know how to respond to that. So I said, "I'm sorry, what?" Then he said, "I don't know."

At that point I wanted to call a paddy wagon to come take this guy back to Toontown, but then he walked out of the elevator and I finally saw the Bluetooth in his ear. That had to be the most awkward time I have ever spent in an elevator.

Speaking of phones, I have a cell phone from one year ago; technologically speaking I have the stegosaurus of cell phones. It seems like I can't buy any kind of technology without it becoming obsolete in a month; that is so irritating!

Still, phone pet peeves don't seem to bother me as much as driving pet peeves. For instance, I have no idea why someone would spend \$80,000 or more on a Mercedes roadster and drive 10 mph under the speed limit. Don't those people feel the slightest bit of shame when they are passed up by a Toyota Prius? Isn't there some kind of vehicular commandment that states, "Thy Mercedes shalt not grant mercy

upon thy neighbor's Prius?"

Also, it really bothers me when people drive Hummers and slow down to go over speed bumps or train tracks. That drives me insane. Stop being such a wimp and drive your Hummer the way it is supposed to be driven!

Parking lots are breeding grounds for pet peeves as you might already know. For instance, drivers sometimes drive down a one-way lane in the wrong direction. When that happens, I'm not sure if I should be angry at them for driving the wrong way or if I should be envious of their blissfully ignorant existence.

I would criticize and complain about people talking on cell phones while driving, but that's been done to death. Besides, why should I bad mouth the people who talk on phones while driving when there are people out there reading the newspaper while driving? No, really, I've seen it. The comics must have been killer that week.

Although pet peeves may not be serious or harmful, we all have them and they are difficult to ignore. Even though pet peeves are negative, they are something we all have in common and they help us relate to one another as human beings. In the most positive sense, we can find humor in these imperfections and I hope my words have helped you find a new wittiness in absurd behaviors.

DISCOVERING A GREENER HOUSTON

Tosha Griffin
The Signal Staff



A park unlike any other in Houston was introduced to the city April 13 by Mayor Bill White. The park was intended to both create and conserve a green space in the heart of Houston that would preserve the environment and use sustainable sources.

It has been a major endeavor by both White and Discovery Green Conservancy to conceive the public urban park.

“A park like this in downtown Houston is something Houston can be proud of and enjoy for many years to come,” White said. “It is Houston’s new front yard.”

The day began with the ribbon cutting, which was followed by celebration and enough events for all the guests to find something they enjoyed.

Discovery Green, designed by Hargreaves Associates, PageSoutherlandPage and Laura Griffith Associates, is a 12-acre park in downtown Houston that is conveniently located next to George R. Brown Convention Center, Minute Maid Park and Toyota Center.

The park features mature trees, expansive lawns and organic, natural resources throughout.

The Jones Lawn is the largest lawn. On opening day Jones Lawn featured families playing sports and people of all ages flying kites.

Laura Shamrock, a University of Houston-Clear Lake alumni and teacher at Zelma Hutsell Elementary was on Jones Lawn to represent the South Houston Area Recreational Kite Flyers. They had kites on display and some available to borrow.

Bolls were the favorites among children because they look like parachutes and take wind easily.

“Kites are a good recreational activity for families and they are clean for the environment because it only requires wind,” Shamrock said. “[It’s] awesome that they’ve built a park for everyone.”

John, Tammy and 18-month-old Ford Givens also relaxed on the Jones Lawn. The green efforts that are a part of Discovery Green are important to the couple because John works for a renewables company and Tammy is an environmental scientist. Tammy suggests that a good way to get involved in the green movement is to start by recycling.

The Givens family visited the park to “see what it had to offer and what kind of activities there were.” It was a consensus that they plan on going back to the park on a regular basis.

On the opposite side of the park is Kinder Lake, a popular attraction that includes a water garden and an area for remote control boats. In the fall, Kinder Lake will be transformed into an ice skating rink.



Tosha Griffin: The Signal

Right: A member of Kuumba Kids at the Kuumba house Dancers performs a dance on the Anheuser-Busch Stage.

Above: Children of all ages played in the Gateway Fountain on opening day of Discovery Green.

Discovery Green offers two stages. The most intimate is at Event Lawn, a 10,000-square-foot lawn with a small stage located near The Grove. The larger stage, the Anheuser-Busch Stage located in the Fondren Foundation Performance Space, is a small amphitheater that can seat up to 1,000.

The Anheuser-Busch Stage featured a variety of performers on opening day including the Dance of Asian America, Brazilian Arts Foundation, Houston Balalaika Society, Ballet Folklórico Ambassadors, Kuumba House Dancers and Anjali Dance Company, just to name a few.

Especially for children, there is the John P. McGovern Playground, which is situated on a tree-shaded hill and is close to the Gateway Fountain, where jets project 14-foot-high arches of water.

Dog owners can enjoy the dog runs that include crushed gravel, seating and fountains.

Built into the park is a one-half-mile jogging trail, bocce court, putting green, shuffleboard, horseshoes and chess.

North Houston Bocce Club’s Mike Todd, Greg Tsioros, Jesse Garza and Jason Martinez demonstrated their skills at the Carruth Foundation Bocce Courts 13, while at the nearby stage the Southern Backtones entertained the audience.

Discovery Green features locally and nationally renowned artists’ artwork throughout the park. It also highlights convenient dining at its two restaurants, The Grove and The Lake House. The Grove offers more lavish dining and a rooftop bar, while The Lake House offers casual dining that is family friendly.

Discovery Green will offer events every week, such as free exercise classes, workshops, discovery series for children and a green market every Thursday from 4 to 7:30 p.m. followed by a happy hour concert.

For more information about Discovery Green and an event listing, go to <http://www.discoverygreen.com>.

Display of creativity

Aubrey Harbin
The Signal Staff

Artwork created by local community college students will be available to the public thanks to a partnership between the University of Houston-Clear Lake and The Arts Alliance Center at Clear Lake.

“We’ve got some really excellent work here, very edgy, very fun,” said Linda Hamilton, director of The Arts Alliance Center at Clear Lake. “This exhibit is interesting because most of the work is more challenging and would appeal to a younger, hipper crowd. The idea of partnering with UHCL and opening [the exhibit] up to younger artists was to speak to younger art appreciators.”

More than 200 community college students in the Houston area submitted original works of art in hopes of being selected for the 10th Houston Area Community College Student Art Exhibit. Juror Sharon Kopriva, an internationally recognized artist working in Houston, narrowed the show to 82 participants. Selected works of art include newspaper sculptures, a painting on an umbrella, oil paintings, acrylic paintings and ceramics.

“[The juror process] gives students an excellent opportunity to submit their work to be judged by a



Karen Fiscus: Courtesy
Calculated Love by Sumbul Jain of San Jacinto College—Central campus.

professional, which they will be doing after they get out of school,” said Nick de Vries, professor of fine arts and gallery director.

At the opening ceremony April 24, two \$1,000 UHCL scholarships as well as first, second and third place cash awards, were presented to three participants. The first place \$500 award and \$1,000 UHCL scholarship winner was Kimberly Willson of San Jacinto North; the second place \$300 award and \$1,000 UHCL scholarship winner was Sumbul Jain of San Jacinto Central; and the third place \$200 award was given to Billie Weldon of Brazosport College.

The free exhibit is open to everyone in the general public and will be on display through May

29. The center is open Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

“[The exhibit is for] any person interested in art, especially high school students looking to attend college in the area, to see work and see how they measure up,” said Debra Kendrick, curator for The Arts Alliance Center at Clear Lake. “It is also for faculty to see the type of art going on at various campuses in the area.”

For more information, call 281-335-7777 or visit The Arts Alliance Center at Clear Lake’s Web site at <http://www.taaccl.org>.

Online Only



Rock the Dock blasts the Kemah Boardwalk with live musical entertainment all summer long.



Over the course of the summer there will be many new exhibitions and events happening in Houston’s museum district including: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Menil Collection; The Children’s Museum of Houston; The Museum of Natural Science and The Holocaust Museum.

Visit <http://www.uhcl.edu/thesignal> to read the full articles online.

** Student Life ** Student Life ** Student Life **

- Love UHCL?
- Want to help new students?
- Looking for a leadership opportunity?

Become an orientation leader!

We need leaders to help welcome incoming students during orientation day.

Sign up now!

Applications are available in the Student Life Office in SSCB or online:
www.uhcl.edu/newstudentorientation.

For more information please call 281.283.2560

Thank You to All of the SGA Representative and
 Congratulations to the 2008 Spring Graduates!



All of the members of the Executive Council of the Student Government Association along with its Advisor Andrew Reitberger and Student Coordinator of Leadership Development, Shannon Rountree would like to express their sincere thank you to **ALL** of the student organization representatives for the Spring 2008 semester. We appreciate your attendance, support, and your commitment to your positions in representing the over 50+ organizations on the UHCL campus.

To those of you who are graduating, we wish you much success in your future endeavors and to those returning/new student representatives, we look forward to seeing you in the Summer and the Fall. The first meeting of the Summer Semester 2008 will be Tuesday, June 3, 2008 at 11:30 a.m. in the SSCB Lecture Hall...Participate in SGA and become a leader on campus!!

Good luck! Joyce, Michael, and Nida...HICCA! HICCA! HICCA!

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Mercury Baroque Ensemble performs *Dido and Aeneas*

Sunday, May 18
 2 p.m. in the Bayou Theater

General Admission:
 \$10 presale/\$12 at the door

With UHCL ID:
 \$6 presale/\$8 at the door



Mercury Baroque brings you a concert version of Purcell's only opera Dido and Aeneas. Full of the passion and drama you have come to expect from Mercury productions, and this time in English, the opera promises to be the highlight of the season.

Complimentary reception will be held after the concert.

Viva Capoeira!

Clinton Mack
The Signal Staff

The music pulses, bodies twist and cartwheel, kicks strike out. The movements flow one from another into a rhythmic dance-like routine.

This is capoeira pronounced cap-oh-air-uh, a Brazilian martial art that combines fighting, dancing, music and play. Originated in Brazil during Portuguese rule in the 16th century, capoeira was developed by imported African and native Indian slaves. Many scholars believe capoeira emerged as a way to conceal that slaves were practicing to fight. This explains why the capoeira of today appears to be a mixture of fighting and dancing.

The essential breakdown of Capoeira is: it is both a dance form and a fighting technique, art and self-defense. It is practiced in an atmosphere that blends dance studio with dojo. Capoeira has a deceitful air of informality. It is a serious art that takes years of dedication and study to master. It is just happenstance that the music is infectious and the fighting practice is called “play.”

Capoeira begins with a warm-up. Capoeiristas spend a large amount of time stretching and doing various exercises that help to ensure they do not injure themselves during the rigorous physical activity. Capoeira is not quite a spectator sport although it is captivating to watch. It is more often used to cultivate Brazilian culture. Many capoeiristas do use their physical and musical skills in other contexts.

“It’s self mastery,” said capoeirista Neil Russell. “Capoeira has a lot of applications to my life. It’s like jazz music and chess with the body. What makes it so different is the music and dance components. I recognize it for it’s modern expression.”

Capoeiristas form a roda (circle) in order to spar with and observe each other in a safe, friendly environment. Music is the key factor and is generally that of a berimbau, an African string instrument, and drums.

Standing and observing you cannot help but feel the music and get lost in the hypnotic rhythms. The majesty of the fluid movements changes pace along with the music. You have to marvel at the pure control and athleticism exhibited through the dance. There are no set rules as to what you can and cannot do while you are participating in the roda. The “opponents” grasp hands to begin and then begin the “dance.”

Intricate patterns of kicks, sweeps and other maneuvers are used and are dodged skillfully. Capoeiristas balance on their heads, leap backwards onto their hands and kick their legs in the air in an acrobatic manner.

The Brazilian Arts Foundation in Houston is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion and sharing of Brazilian culture. Founded and led by Mauricio “Gringo” Campos, the Brazilian Arts Foundation offers classes in capoeira, Portuguese and other arts. The cultural center, established in 2006, allowed Campos to further expand his programs in the Houston area.

“There is a very mixed crowd,” Campos said. “Everybody brings who they are and their energy. You have a freedom of expression and equality to all the players and performers. We all depend on one another to make the whole thing happen. It’s the unity and the collaboration between everybody that makes the art unique.”

Do not think that you would not be able to participate in capoeira. Campos is very adamant in his belief that capoeira “is for everybody, there is no age limit. It’s all about what you bring to the plate.” He encourages everyone to try it out. The Brazilian Arts Foundation offers the first class of capoeira for free.

For more information on the Brazilian Arts Foundation, capoeira or any of the other programs they offer, visit <http://brazilianarts.org> or call 713-862-3300.



Clockwise from top: Stretching is very important to the art of capoeira; Mauricio Campos sets the tempo on the drum;The “ginga” is a fundamental movement in capoeira.

Photos by Clinton Mack
Design by Wendy Westmoreland



Virginia is for Lovers... OF EVERYTHING!

Mandy Hess
The Signal Staff

That’s right, everything. History, culture, architecture, reenactments, landmarks, shopping, fine cuisine and beverages, romantic bed and breakfasts, picturesque landscapes-you name it, Virginia has it.

The journey begins in Alexandria, Va., which is just a short walk to Washington, D.C. Old Town, Alexandria is a historic village with 18th century row houses, cobblestone streets and old world charm. It is a perfect jumping off point for exploring numerous historic locations in Virginia, as well as the D.C. area.

Once every year, for about 14 days, Washington D.C. is awash in a sea of pink and white blossoms. Timing a trip to see the famous cherry trees in bloom can be daunting but extremely rewarding.

The first ornamental cherry trees planted in D.C. were a gift from Mayor Yukio Ozaki of Tokyo and were planted in 1912. First Lady Helen Herron Taft and Viscountess Chinda, wife of the Japanese ambassador, planted the first two of 3,000 gifted trees on the north bank of the Tidal Basin in West Potomac Park.

Every year the friendship between the U.S. and Japan is marked with a two-week celebration. More than one million people flock to D.C. for the National Cherry Blossom Festival.

Colorful blossoms set the backdrop for a myriad of impressive federal buildings and monuments. Several of them are architectural gems, including the Library of Congress.

The library consists of three buildings; the most impressive of which is The Jefferson Building and while only members with serious research needs are allowed in the book room, the main area is, thankfully, open to the public. Copious amounts of marble, intricate mosaic ceilings, carvings and inspirational words abound inside.

Thomas Jefferson had a serious love affair with books and knowledge, and it was with his collection of books that The Library of Congress made a fresh start after being burned to the ground by British troops in 1814.

Just a short two-hour drive away from Alexandria reveals rustic landscapes and Monticello, Thomas Jefferson’s hilltop home in Charlottesville. Jefferson, a true Renaissance man and self-taught architect, tore down and rebuilt Monticello multiple times before he was happy with the result.

About two hours southeast lies Colonial Williamsburg, home to the College of William and Mary and the original capital of Virginia and our fledgling nation. Here you can find pastoral countryside, historical reenactments and best of all, ghosts! Legends abound with tales of haunted houses and tormented souls, the likes of which show up as orbs in night-time photographs.

The Capitol and surrounding areas of Virginia contain interactive history lessons and memorable images that everyone should experience at least once.



Left: Great Hall in the Jefferson Building, Library of Congress, D.C.

Photos by Mandy Hess
Design by Wendy Westmoreland



Clockwise from left: Cherry blossoms cascade into the tidal basin, D.C.;“Nickel View” of Monticello, Charlottesville; U.S. Capitol, D.C.; Cherry blossoms frame the Jefferson Memorial, D.C.



Biker Rally RIDES INTO THE BAY AREA

Krystal Mongan
The Signal Staff

Sun, blue skies and warm weather kicked off the inaugural Bay Area Rally, April 10-13 at Space Center Houston.

Thousands of motorcycle enthusiasts from all over the United States came to see what the Bay Area Rally had to offer.

There were many activities in which to participate at the rally. People could listen to live music, shop at the vendors and look at motorcycles.

This event was not the typical rally; instead it focused on family, charitable events and women riders.

“This [rally] is where you can bring your kids,” said Patric Pearson, promoter for the Bay Area Rally.

Not only is the Bay Area Rally more family-oriented than traditional biker rallies, but “the money [made from the rally] goes to the Texas Children’s Hospital,” Pearson said.

Pearson added that the rally’s biggest focus is the women riders.

The Women’s Motorcyclist Foundation promoted breast cancer awareness and taught women how to ride motorcycles effectively on a course in the parking lot of Space Center Houston.

“It’s to practice some maneuvers, slow riding and breaking,” said Gin Shear, executive director of the Women’s Motorcyclist Foundation. “We are very safety conscious.”

At 10 a.m., April 12, the first David Beverly Memorial Ride took place to remember the life of the man who died in last year’s shooting incident at Johnson Space Center.

Pearson said the money from the ride, a \$10 minimum per rider, would go to the Children’s Miracle Network.

Police officers also participated in their own charitable event: a Police Rodeo Rider’s Competition.

“This competition will help benefit the Autistic Treatment Centers of Texas,” said Dennis Bedingfield, traffic accident investigator for Harris County.

Bedingfield said some of the solo officers who competed were from Sugarland, Pearland, Stratford, Coppell, Fort Bend County, Beaumont and Harris County.

Another major event that took place during the rally was the Bay Area Outlaw Music Festival. Some of the musicians who performed on stage where Billy Joe Shaver, Jackson Taylor, No Justice, Back Porch Mary and Sheila Marshall.

Not only did guests spend time at the biker rally at Space Center Houston, but they were able to go to other locations around the Bay Area.

Tickets for a one-day pass were \$25 and for the four days were \$35. Those who paid to attend the Bay Area Rally received a bracelet to wear for the four-day event. The pass allowed bikers and other people to go to places like Reno’s, The Art Alliance Center at Clear Lake and the Crawfish Festival at Clear Lake Park-Landolt Pavilion for free.

“Events in the region help promote our destination as a fun place to visit,” said Pamela Summers, president of the Bay Area Houston Convention & Visitors Bureau. “They also provide tremendous economic impact to our hotels, attractions, restaurants and retail from visitors who come from outside the region.”

In addition to local economic health, the thousands of people who attended the rally also contributed to the various charities sponsored by the Bay Area Rally.

“In a few years, hopefully, more people will talk about [the rally],” Pearson said. “We’d like it to grow.”



Clockwise from top left: Hundreds of motorcycles lined up in the parking lot in front of Space Center Houston April 12;The Athena Pro Street by Big Bear Choppers was one of the custom designs shown under the American Dreams Cycles tent; Gin Shear, executive director of the Women’s Motorcyclist Foundation, practiced stops, breaking and other maneuvers in the women riders practice area; Friends, family and other motorcyclists drove out of Space Center Houston to pay respect to David Beverly, the Johnson Space Center employee killed during last years’ shooting incident; Pearland police officer, Marc Davis, practiced turns around the obstacle course before the Police Rodeo Riders Competition began.

Photos by Krystal Mongan, Design by Wendy Westmoreland

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and celebrate the promise of your
future accomplishments.



William A. Staples
President

University of Houston  Clear Lake

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Spring 2008 Final Exam Period

April 30

Career Services Workshop:
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Registration encouraged.
Call 281-283-2590.

May 1

Co-Op Orientation Session,
10-11 a.m., SSCB 3.101

May 6

Co-Op Orientation Session,
5-6 p.m., SSCB 3.101

May 9

Spring 2008 Commencement
Kick-Off, 5:30-7:30 p.m.,
Bayou Atrium I & Garden Room
Tickets required for all attendees;
three complimentary tickets per
graduate. Additional tickets \$2
per ticket. Tickets available for
purchase/pick up through
May 9 in Bayou 1604.
Call 281-283-2019 for information.

May 10

Spring 2008 Commencement

May 15

Spring 2008 grades available over
UHCL Telephone Registration
System and E-Services

May 17

Film & Speaker Series: Caramel,
7 p.m., SSCB Lecture Hall
Speaker TBA
Admission: \$3.50
Call 281-283-2560.

May 18

Cultural Arts Series: Mercury
Baroque presents Dido and
Aeneas, 2 p.m., Bayou Theater
Tickets \$6 – \$12
Call 281-283-2560.

June 6

Fee Payment Deadline for
Summer 2008 Early and Open
Registration, noon

June 7 – 11

Summer 2008 Late Registration

June 7

Film & Speaker Series:
Trois Couleurs: Blue,
7 p.m., SSCB Lecture Hall
Speaker: Christine Paul
Admission: \$3.50
Call 281-283-2560.

June 9

First Class Day for Summer 2008

June 12

Fee Payment Deadline for Summer
2008 Late Registration, 6 p.m.

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Registration Dates
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(Payment deadline at noon)

June 7 – 11

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(Payment deadline
June 12, 6 p.m.)

Through August 22

Fall Open Registration

Finals & Summertime: *Feel the heat without the stress*

Amy Parnell
The Fitness Zone

It’s that time again: Finals! From April 29 to May 5 UHCL becomes exam central with students, faculty, and staff busily finishing one semester and preparing for another.

At this time it is easy to let our schedules take us away from healthy habits we were cultivating this year or at least thinking of beginning (those pesky New Year’s Resolutions). The weeks following Spring Semester Final Exams can be just as stressful as the tests themselves, with plans for graduation, summer jobs or preparing for short semesters requiring a great deal of stamina; it is easy lose sight of healthy choices. Add in our famous summer heat and you can have a recipe for burn out, and I don’t mean the sunburn you may receive walking across the parking lot or driving your car in our sunshine.

Here are a few tips, some old some new wellness tips to reduce stress and hopefully boost your immune system, insuring a happy and healthy finals week and Summer.

1. Sleep, Sleep, Sleep! If you attend and/ or work on this campus you are in the age bracket which requires 8 to 9 hours asleep per night. Sleep is essential to our physical and emotional health. It is during sleep that the body repairs the damage from the previous day and prepares for the adventures of the follow- ing day. Without the required amount of sleep, people experience reduced cognitive and phys- ical abilities and a suppressed immune system. In other words, when we decide to stay awake in order to “catch-up” on our studies or work,



PARNELL

we are, in fact, becoming less productive and more prone to illness.

2. Water, Water, Water! In order to hydrate the body and clean the kidneys, the human body needs 10 to 12 glasses of water daily. Living in our climate, drinking water is a requirement for good health and well-being. Although, we are tempted to grab the nearest soft drink instead, however, perhaps try some herbal iced teas. Iced Green Tea with Mint is a wonderful answer to the summer heat and desire for caffeine. If you really want a soda then simply plan to drink water immediately following.

3. Eat Well, Eat Well, Eat Well! In this hustle and bustle, grab and go world, many times we are tempted to eat what is convenient rather than healthy. Finals and Summer are challenging because of the mere presence of food our fellow students or staff members prepare and present as a way to “get in the mood” and “celebrate” the end of the semester

or 4th of July. What is wonderful about our summers is the large number of fruits available to us. Right now blueberries are everywhere and watermelon is such a great answer to a hot summer day. Try to eat at least one more serv- ing of fruit and/or vegetables during the day; you are less likely to crave unhealthy foods and more able to enjoy in moderation those treats your friends prepared.

4. Breathe, Breathe, Breathe! Seems simple enough, however, a common reac- tion to stress is holding shallow inhalations, a feeling which can mirror panic or anxiety for some of us. Take five minutes a day to sit in a quiet area, remove any distractions, close your eyes and breathe through the nose only. As you continue to breathe count slowly to 3 with each inhale and again count slowly to 3 with each exhale. You will be amazed what a dif- ference five minutes can make to help reduce stress and strengthen focus.

5. Schedule, Schedule, Schedule! Write down a ‘Things To Do’ list and schedule for each day, allow plenty of time for sleeping, eating and socializing. By creating a schedule you can promote feelings of stability rather than chaos. Create a study group with peers who you know will contribute to the group and promote a positive atmosphere – this isn’t the time to isolate yourself completely from peers or family.

I wish everyone the best as we begin to finish the semester and prepare for a much- needed and deserved break.

Peace,
Amy



Noted professor
of philosophy
speaks at UHCL

Robert E. Wood, professor of philosophy at the University of Dallas, gave a talk entitled, “Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Art of the World” April 3 in Atrium I of the Bayou Building.

“Dr. Wood is a well-known specialist in the history of philosophy and aesthetics,” said Assistant Profes- sor of Humanities Daniel Silvermintz.

Wood discussed his conception of the two poles of the aesthetic experience, in which individuals both take in the perceptible world and are drawn to a sense of the cosmic whole. Approximately 100 stu- dents and faculty members were in attendance.

Wood has published more than 50 scholarly articles on the history of philosophy, as well as three books including “A Path into Metaphysics: Phenomenologi- cal Hermeneutical and Dialogical Studies” and “Plac- ing Aesthetics: Studies in the Philosophic Tradition.”

Daniel Silvermintz: Courtesy

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We also need volunteers to help deliver the treats to the SPCA

Contact: Traci Freeman (281-221-2245/traci-maire@comcast.net) with questions or recipe needs.

The Grid: continued from page 1

to be available anywhere in the world by 2007 (when the LHC itself was initiated). CERN’s response was the launch of the LHC Computing Grid.

“The Grid” is actually a misleading name for CERN’S latest communications creation. After all, there is no single Grid. Instead there exists a global inter-connection of many different Grids with networks on every continent but Antarctica. Ultimately, these inter-linked networks will allow users to “plug in” to the system’s computing power and gain access to items stored throughout it without ever having to consider a PC’s computing power or from where files are being retrieved (much in the same way users tap into an electrical power grid when they plug in their toasters), hence the term “Grid.”

The future of distributed computing – often referred to as “cloud computing” – has the potential for seamless, on-demand communication and access to various applications in the future have media outlets across the globe on Internet death watch.

“The Grid is not a replacement for the Web or the Internet,” stressed David Britton, professor of physics at Glasgow University, Scotland and project manager for Grid PP, the United Kingdom’s dedicated Grid for particle physics research. “It uses some advanced features and new technologies within the Internet to distribute enormous quantities of data from the LHC across the globe.”

That is not to say that progressive improvements in Grid technology will not trickle down to the Internet’s average end-user.

“It is certainly helping to advance the technologies and the data transfer rate that are achievable,” Britton confirmed. “It is also tackling issues of security, usability and reliability – all of which may eventually contribute towards a better, higher performing Internet.”

“The Grid mitigates processing into the ‘cloud,’ permitting the allocation of processing needs to the most effective resources on the Grid,” explained Emory University’s Benn Konsynski, an acknowledged authority on Internet business applications and one of the first academics to publish a paper on Grid computing. “What this means is that the user cares less about ‘where’ something happens than ‘that’ it happens with the proper integrity and security.”

Although they will eventually benefit, the goal of the LCG was not hyper-gaming or fast movie downloads. The goal of the LCG is to take advantage of the type of public distributed computing that at that time was being harnessed for high volume data projects, such as Puer-to Rico’s Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence Institute’s SETI@home, a screensaver computing project that recruits “volunteer” PCs from all over the world to dedicate idle time in assisting SETI with its search for life – human or otherwise – throughout the universe.

“Volunteer computing exemplified by SETI@home involves the voluntary donation of computer time by people all over the world to projects which are usually, but not always university-based research,” explained the SETI Institute’s Principle Investigator David Anderson.

Through the use of BOINC, a type of software that acts much like an operating system, volunteers have assisted with a wide range of scientific projects including radio SETI, detection of gravitational waves, study of global climate change, biomedicine, virtual drug design, alternative energy and mathematics.

“The concept, and the timing of the concept, struck a cord with the High Energy Physics community who were wrestling with the problem about how to handle the enormous quantities of data that would be generated by the Large Hadron Collider,” said Britton.

One of the biggest differences between the Grid computing planned for use by the LCG and volunteer computing used by SETI@home is that the Grid uses dedicated resources in major high-speed computing hubs all interconnected with fiber-optic cabling, creating a network that is roughly 10,000 times quicker than broadband.

“Grid computing, which gets a lot more press, involves the sharing of computing power within and between organizations,” Anderson said. “Everything is carefully controlled and managed, and the computers are generally dedicated, i.e. not desktop PCs.”

Here, again, security will be the key to total interoperability. Advances already made in user interfaces from the original World Wide Web’s read-only sites to the multi-media offerings of Web 2.0 concepts such as virtual social networking may not be exceeded unless users operate in a totally secure network: one that does not compartmentalize information in self-defense.

“Think of all things being available,” Konsynski said. “Traditional applications are more easily built and many more things are possible that we have not even dreamed up yet.”

When all of the 240 European scientific community Grid hubs are finally linked together later this year, the LCG will act as the single most powerful computer in the world.

For the moment, however, that title is held by the U.S.’s TeraGrid. Coordinated through the Grid Infrastructure Group at the University of Chicago, TeraGrid is a scientific discovery infrastructure that combines resources at eleven American sites in order to integrate a persistent computing resource. At present, TeraGrid resources include more than 750 teraflops of computing capability (an equivalent of 24,000 quad-core processors) and more than 30 petabytes (an equivalent of 15,000,000 2G thumb drives) of online and archival data storage.

All distributed computer networks have the same common goal: to increase interdisciplinary exploration and collaboration in fields of research hitherto known or unknown. To date, and for the foreseeable future, the LCG’s unique computing technology will continue to be reserved for use by scientists and researchers with the need to use its processing power to analyze vast amounts of data.

Challenge: continued from page 1

systems at UHCL. “Most of the time they don’t even know about UHCL, so we want them to come here to our university and be here so when they drive past, they know that is UHCL.”

At the challenge, teams of students from both UHCL and area community colleges contended in a near three-hour “capture the flag” competition. The teams were placed into two divisions depending on experience: advanced and challenge. The participants were then sent to their assigned computer labs according to division. Each individual team sat at their computers, going through a list of programs and solving them one by one.

After solving a program, teams had to then prove to an agent that the program they solved was a working program. The team then sent one team member, the “seeker,” to take the completed task form to the ticket counter, where they received a search token that allowed them to search for the flag guardian for their respective division. Upon the seeker’s arrival, the flag guardian then began a countdown for the team holding the flag. The time was stopped once another team came along with a search token. The team holding the flag for the longest time at the end of the competition was declared the winner.

The first place team from the advanced division was the “Alvin Group” from Alvin Community College with a time of 35 minutes and 20 seconds. The team consisted of John Hayslip, Ben Alred and Alex Goodman.

The first place team from the challenge division was the “CodeBlasters” from UHCL with a time of 23 minutes and 50 seconds. The group consisted of Josue Salazar, Freya Harris, Tomasz Szymczyk and Eric Jastram.

The day concluded with a luncheon in which raffle prizes were handed out to participants. The first place team from the advanced division was rewarded for their efforts with a trophy, along with a 2GB video MP3 player and a \$500 scholarship to UHCL. The winners from the challenge division were awarded with a trophy and Nikon digital cameras.

The UHCL student organizers began putting together the event in January. The participating schools included UHCL, San Jacinto-South, Lee College and Alvin Community College.

“The event has been an enormous undertaking,” said Jenny Smith, project coordinator. “I have spoken with other colleges

who have put on an event like this and normally what they do is either hire a contractor who does professional programs, which is anywhere from \$30 to \$50,000 dollars or they have at least a year of planning and it is usually the instructors who are in charge of it. So, for us, it was considerably different because we found out in January that we were going to be doing this project and that it was going to be mostly students. It was a very exciting opportunity at my level as a student.”

The challenge even gave one of its community college participants a self-assurance boost as far as working with computer programs in the career field as well as encouraging him to attend the university after completing his core curriculum.

“Actually, [the challenge] made me a little more confident,” said John Alpha, a competitor from San Jacinto College-South campus and the self-proclaimed “Alphaman.” “Now I’m thinking that I could probably do pretty well if I came here.”

Alpha and his team, “Iron-Bunnie,” placed second in the challenge, just three minutes behind the winning team from the advance division.

“I was gunning for the scholarship,” Alpha said with a laugh.

New Regulations: continued from page 1

One of the motivating factors propelling UHCL to come forward with a new repeated courses policy is the new state mandated six-drop rule. Right now students transferring from a public institution in Texas, at least at the undergraduate level, will be limited in the number of courses they can drop. In the past, students who were not doing well in a class could drop an unlimited amount of courses without penalty as long as they withdrew by the official drop date. The way the six-drop course rule is written states that once students have hit their six-drop limit, either they drop completely from the university or they must take an F in the course.

The averaging of repeated courses is the current policy. Right now if a student made a D and retook the course with a B, his/her final grade would be a C. If someone decided to repeat a class for a third time all three classes would be averaged into a final grade.

UHCL’s new repeated course policy will record students’ grades so that all of their attempts will be reflected on their transcripts, but when it comes time to calculate their semester and cumulative GPA, only the last attempt counts, whether it is higher or lower.

“We are looking forward to spring and summer 2009 and trying to figure out how it will affect the freshman coming in with the six-drop rule,” Bendeck said. “How are we going to deal with them and encourage them to continue studying when they are faced with a wad of situations based on legislative mandates that restrict them and [their freedom]?”

With the three-peat rule, the university loses funding from the state if a student attempts to take a course for the third time. The university does not receive any funding and instructional support from the state for that third course, therefore, a student repeating a course after his/her second attempt will have an extra fee.

The repeated course policies transferred in affects only students coming from a Texas public institution of higher learning.

“We are getting different differential treatments because these rules only applied to students enrolled in public community colleges in Texas, so if we have out-of-state students coming in, they get a clean slate because they have never been in a public school in

Texas,” Bendeck said. “If you transfer from a private school in Texas, for example, St. Thomas University, they also come here with a clean slate and have six hours to drop, but if you transfer from San Jacinto Community College, they don’t get that privilege. So we are trying to find a balance between allowing students to achieve their career and personal goals, graduate and then look to see how we can balance those based on the legal environment we are in.”

At production time, administrators at UHCL are still finalizing the admissions requirements for new students enrolling in the fall. For example, in order to be admitted to this institution, instead of having Composition 1 and 2 as requirements, now the state mandate is likely to read Composition 1 and either Composition 2 or Technical Writing. The technical writing course is geared more toward people who are going to have to write graph reports or technical works for a business. There is also a course called Business Writing that will be a new requirement for business majors.

“I believe both new requirements are good,” said Joan Bruno, associate dean of business. “Both improve student access while maintaining academic integrity. Many of the associate degrees require Technical Writing rather than English Comp II. Students with these degrees have been excluded from admission to UHCL. Now they will be admissible, but they will still have to fulfill all of the curriculum writing requirements. The change in the grade requirements for admissions requires students to have an overall acceptable GPA, but does make an allowance for a student that may have performed at less than a C grade in 3 hours out of the 54 minimum hours.”

Before students who enroll beginning fall 2008 can graduate, their new 120-hour degree plan also has to include nine hours of English as specified by the 2+2 plan.


The university will look at the new policies in four years and evaluate the impact that this change has had on students’ GPAs and how it is being used, and make adjustments if necessary. UHCL will be monitoring the repeated course policy to see how well students are doing, how many students are being impacted because they fall under the six-drop rule limitations and how students perform academically under the new policy.

“One of the motivating factors propelling UHCL to come forward with a new repeated courses policy is the new state mandated six-drop rule. Right now students transferring from a public institution in Texas, at least at the undergraduate level, will be limited in the number of courses they can drop.”

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Houston International Festival



By Ericka Paetz



Design by Brandon Rowan, Photos by Ericka Paetz

Downtown Houston was transformed into a street fair and celebration of culture during the annual International Festival. A combination of food, music and cultural commerce provided patrons with a look into the rest of the world and this year’s feature “Out of Africa.”

The event spanned two weekends and several blocks of downtown Houston stretching around City Hall, Tranquility Park and Sam Houston Park. Taking place the weekends of April 19-20 and April 26-27, the festival welcomed artists and craftsmen from all over the world who

brought a taste of their customs to share. Tracy Golden, marketing director for the Houston International Festival, said that the festival welcomed more than 6,000 volunteers and numerous participants who helped in the production of the event.

“We have 52 food vendors, more than 400 artists’ vendors and 65 sponsoring companies that have a presence on site,” Golden said. “It’s impossible for us to know how many people attend iFest, but judging from the crowds, I would say that there were several thousand visitors.”



These African paintings use brilliant color and technique to relate the experiences of their culture.

A focus on culture is the founding concept of the International Festival and is accomplished through incorporating a strong emphasis on education. The “Out of Africa” theme was celebrated by Houston-area scholars, who arranged a symposium series that took place April 24-25 and April 28, which focused on three stages of the African journey from West Africa’s archeological origins, to the forced migration out of Africa, and then finally on Africa in modern times and the effects of globalization.

Kerry Ward, assistant professor of history at Rice University, helped to organize the symposium in connection with the Houston International Festival, along with other scholars from Rice University and Texas Southern University.

“Houston has a rich and diverse connection to Africa in the heritage of African Americans and various African communities who are part of our city,” Ward said. “The focus on ‘Out of Africa’ recognizes and honors these connections through the ‘three journeys’ that constitute the theme.”

As the crowds zigzagged through the many sections of the festival, they could quench their thirsts and appetites, as well as their curiosities. African-inspired specialties and other traditional fare from the diverse cultures at the fest provided every option from turkey legs and boudin to gyros, pastries and an immeasurable amount of deliciously fried delicacies. It would have been impossible to wander the aroma-filled streets without indulging in the smoked, steamed and barbecued cuisine.

Several zones comprised the festival where performers from various cultures provided music, poetry and dance. The event offered a vast area to amuse the kids, too, and offered free admission to those under 12. The kids’ area featured everything from giant inflatable slides and jumping gyms to face painting, magic and art booths. Children rode ponies, frolicked in the petting zoo and played miniature golf on the African-themed course that was set up near the kids’ stage, which offered interactive entertainment.

With such an abundance of activities, fun and food, the Houston International Festival was a genuine display of ethnicity and customs. The fusion of art and entertainment in the downtown setting evoked a connection with the city and with the world’s many cultures. ■



Grupo de N’Golo performs Capoeira Angola, an Afro-Brazilian martial art that fuses fight and dance.

The Houston International Festival has been entertaining, educating and pleasing the palates of Houston-area residents since 1986. Each year the festival honors a different culture and geographic region including Asia, Europe, South and Central America, the Caribbean, Australia and many more since its inception.

With the theme of this year’s festival, African communities from various countries brought their handmade arts, crafts, and cultural paraphernalia to show and sell. Woodcarvings, woven baskets, jewelry, paintings, prints, clothing, tapestries and toys were just some of the many products on display along the streets of downtown.

