

College degrees put to the test

Padmashree Rao
The Signal

Rising college enrollment, escalating tuition costs and student loan debt, the prolonged recession and a bleak job market have sparked a national debate on whether or not a college degree is worth the effort.

Tuition costs rose again by 8.3 percent this year, doubling since 1990. Student loan debt has overtaken credit card debt with defaulted federal student loans going from 7 percent to 8.8 percent in the fiscal year.

“It is troubling that kids are spending so much money on degrees that don’t matter,” said Penelope Trunk, national blogger and co-founder of Brazen Careerist, a career management tool for next-generation professionals. “It is troubling that student debt now is higher than credit card debt. Students are graduating with debts that they can’t get jobs to pay off. It is not fair. We have a university system that doesn’t teach what you need to know for a job.”

Linking college degrees to job training has long created controversy. Educators would argue that what is at stake is not just higher earnings through degrees but higher thinking.

“You can definitely get by

and make a decent living without a college degree,” said Jason Meyer, who built a career as HR liaison for 483 employees at the Valero Texas City refinery without a college degree. “But, that is what you’ll be doing – getting by. A degree gets you where you want to be. So, currently, I am in college to get a degree. That being said, we have a management level No. 2 in charge who doesn’t have a degree. He makes quite a lot of money. He has been with the company for 32 years and getting to where he is now took a long time and hard work.”

College degrees were not always required for jobs. In the manufacturing economy of 1973, people with high school education or less made up 72 percent of our workforce.

“Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018,” June 2010 report released by the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University indicated that nearly 60 percent of American jobs now require at least a bachelor’s degree. That figure was 28 percent in 1973, 59 percent in 2008 and is expected to rise to 63 percent over the next decade, the report said.

In the employment sector, the U.S. Census Bureau data showed

that those with a bachelor’s degree earned an average of \$58,613 in 2008, while those with a high school diploma earned \$31,283. The most recent analysis by the Pew Research Center revealed that the typical college

graduate earns an estimated \$650,000 more than a high school graduate in a 40-year-work span.

“The bottom line is that any kind of education is going to make you more competitive in the job market.

Many jobs require a basic degree to even consider you,” said Sue Cruver, marketing communications coordinator and public information officer at Workforce Solutions which is a comprehensive human resource service for

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JADE WISE: THE SIGNAL

Dropouts lower economic growth

Debra Machemehl
The Signal

Every day in the State of Texas 719 students drop out of high school. High school dropouts drain the national and state economy by lowering local, state and national tax revenues. Even when employed, they earn significantly lower wages than high school graduates.

“For the class of 2010 graduates, 7.3 percent dropped out of high school, a decrease of 2.1 percent from the class of 2009,” said Susan Marchman, communication information officer for Texas Education Agency.

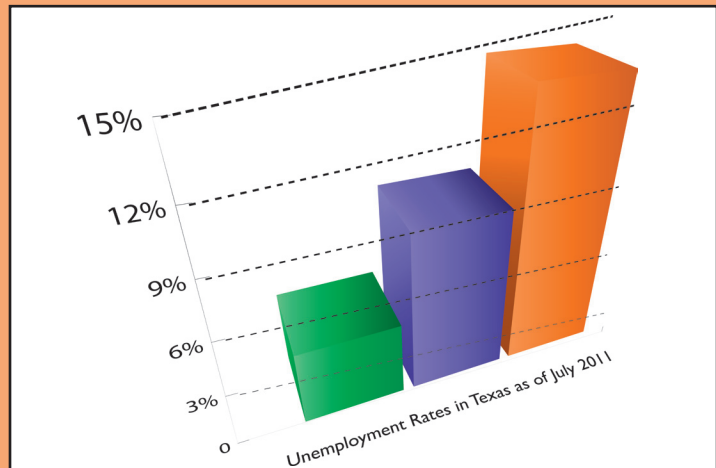
Texas once again ranks in the bottom third of states in

high school dropouts. Students leave high school without a diploma, a high cost to themselves and society.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private child advocacy group, released its annual Kids Count Data Book reported that only nine states in the nation (in descending order they are Arizona, Colorado, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Montana, New Mexico, West Virginia and Nevada) have a higher percentage of teens not attending school than Texas’ 7.3 percent.

The American Community Survey, a survey conducted by

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PAUL LOPEZ: THE SIGNAL

Students block censorship efforts

Rachel Miranda
The Signal

Late November Sam Houston State University (SHSU) dropped its proposed social-media policy that would have allowed university administrators editing privileges to all campus-related online accounts.

After outcries from students poured in protesting the censorship on grounds of violation of students’ right to privacy and free speech, the university decided to put an end to the issue by ceasing its work with the current policy.

“As a frequent Twitter user, I know we become anxious when we can’t access,” said Candice Lamb, a SHSU undergrad. “Partly because we feel like we’re missing out on something. With instant access to news, we don’t miss much. With censorship comes the limits to outlets we have available to express creativity, social interaction and ourselves. We, as citizens, have the right to free speech and I

believe we’re all grown here; we know what’s appropriate for a campus-related social network and what is not. Administrators being able to have full access to usernames and passwords seems a bit far-fetched if you ask me.”

Although the policy was rescinded, the incident raises questions on how much access college administrators and professors should have to students’ Facebook and Twitter sites.

Some colleges encourage its professors to interact with students via social networks. Some universities’ administrators closely monitor students’ Twitter and Facebook account.

For instance, the University of Maryland (UMD) “may be actively monitoring and regulating the speech of the members of its football team,” asserts the Washington Post.

“Social media is a part of our world, it’s a part of our life and probably the majority of contemporary students are interacting

in that way, and we need to go to the student where he or she is,” said David Rachita, interim dean of students. “So if that’s Facebook, that’s Facebook. If it’s Twitter, it’s Twitter. So the pros are; we have direct access, it really does lend itself for open dialogue, sharing ideas and thoughts, not just between one or two people but even with a group of people. But the con is, it’s open dialogue; that’s the pro and con.

“If you’re opening yourself up to that free, open access that Facebook is, then you’re going to need to be ready to tolerate some of the messages that are shared and be open to ways of expressing ones self that maybe you don’t appreciate. Also, as a faculty or staff member, we have a responsibility and obligation to protect our students and our university. We could be put in an uncomfortable position by

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Scan the QR code below to check out what’s new on The Signal Online this week.



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EDITORIAL Click dislike for campus restrictions

Potential social media policy could silence student online presence

KaraLove: @sashacutie Oh man, I just had to pay tuition. This college charges way too much!

SashaCutie: @karalove I know!!! I hate this school sometimes!

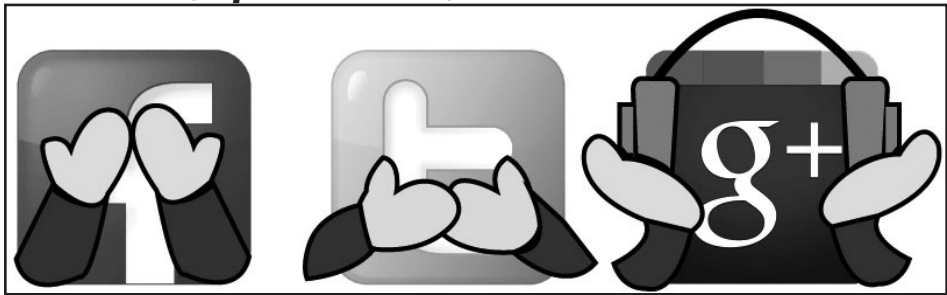
CLUniversity: @sashacutie @karalove Your posts have been removed due to non-compliance with CLU's social media use policy.

In this technology-driven society, social media has become the way to connect with friends and family, and to have your voice be heard. But what if the university you attended had the right to control what was said about the institution?

In October, Sam Houston State University proposed a social media policy that would give the university authority to edit all university-related social media accounts. The blanket policy would have potentially included student organizations with Facebook pages or Twitter accounts and even the school newspaper.

After students, including the student newspaper staff, protested the policy, administrators dropped the draft, but the potential for another social media policy to happen again in any university is out there.

See no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil



College is where young adults figure out who they want to be as a person; they question authority and learn to think outside of the box.

Such policies contradict the whole ideology of college. It turns the college experience into a police-state environment where students are afraid to speak their minds in fear of being censored by the very institution that is supposed to open their minds.

UHCL does not have any social media policies, but what the university has implemented this semester is malware detection software. The detection software is supposed to help students, faculty and staff from getting onto sites that could pose a security threat to the UHCL network, but in the process, it also blocks

sites the UHCL community needs for day-to-day business.

It is similar to child protection programs that block sites that may be too adult for children on home computers. In theory, such programs are a good idea, allowing parents to feel safe knowing their children will not see anything they are not supposed to, but in reality, it works too well. The software blocks so much it becomes more of a hassle and grievance than a helpful tool.

That is what the UHCL malware detection software has become for The Signal staff, a grievance. The Signal has had issues with being blocked from the administration side of our own website – making it impossible to post stories, moderate comments or perform upkeep

on the site. Staff members have also been blocked from sites used to fact check or research articles and sites that enhance our videos and slideshows.

There is a process the UHCL community can go through to unblock sites they need, and we have contacted UCT whenever we have had an issue. UCT employees have been helpful, promptly unblocking each site, usually within a day or two. The problem is, we usually need access now, not in a day or two.

Politician and educator Edward Everett said, “Education is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army.” What if the ones responsible for educating are also the ones oppressing our rights?

The Signal staff can appreciate the necessity of protecting the university against online security threats. Malware detection software should have the ability to be set at many different levels of security. Perhaps UHCL needs to adjust our level?

The Signal staff would like to know if we are the only ones on campus having issues with the software. Anyone experiencing problems accessing websites because of UHCL's new malware detection software is encouraged to complete a brief, anonymous survey. See page six.

Defining yourself by character, not physical beauty

Ashley Smith
The Signal

Every morning after my shower, I stand in front of the bathroom mirror, and try to force myself to look at my reflection for 10 seconds. I have never lasted the full 10 seconds.

When I look into the mirror, I see the muffin top that has become my stomach, my sagging breasts, the stretch marks on my sides from past weight loss followed by rapid weight gain, the jigging arm fat that hangs down, the double chin and the short stumpy fingers that remind me every moment of my day of one fact: I'm fat.

“I'm fat” is a small statement, but it can elicit completely opposite reactions – from the empathetic “oh honey, no, you're pretty,” to the apathetic, “well, you did it to yourself; go eat a salad.”

Why does being fat have to be such a negative thing that needs to be fixed? There was a time when being heavier was seen as beautiful and worthy of praise. Artists like Botticelli or Rubens sought out fat men and women to paint as the epitome of beauty. These same paintings are now worth millions. One Botticelli painting has an estimated worth of \$12 million.



STAFF COLUMN

Ideal beauty changes as society changes, and in this day and time, fat is worthy of ridicule. Facebook is full of fat-hating groups with pages like “I wanted to burn some calories, so I set a fat kid on fire,” and “Beautiful girls all over the world, except you fat bitch.” Each of these pages have more than 200,000 “likes.”

There are hundreds of pages similar to these and more created every day. Where it seems society has become more politically correct in some aspects – like race, religion and sexuality – it has become socially acceptable to make fun of, or even shun, heavier members of society because “they deserve it.”

This concept of ideal beauty has become convoluted, always something to be reached for but never achieved.

Even those we look up to as epitomizing the idea of perfection, i.e. celebrities, are not perfect enough for society. They go through plastic surgery, extreme dieting, fake tanning and, if that isn't enough, photoshopping to obtain society's approval.

A recent example is Britney Spears, a spokesperson for Candie's footwear, who posed for a Candie's ad and then released the original untouched pictures. Comparing the final ad to the originals, Candie's removed cellulite from Spears' legs, flattened her stomach and evened out her skin tone.

What are these actions saying to little girls who see these images? It's telling these girls that you are not beautiful enough naturally; you have to enhance every aspect of yourself to get attention.

When no one can live up to society's idea of beautiful, even those society sets its standards by, something is very wrong.

I have dealt with my weight since I hit puberty; struggling between doing everything I can to lose it and accepting myself for who I am. I've had members of my own family tell me that I had the potential to be pretty if only I would lose weight.

Losing weight would not

change the look of my eyes, make my hair thicker or bouncier, or make my freckles disappear. More importantly, it wouldn't change who I am as a person.

How people react to my weight sent me into a dark place not too long ago. I became so obsessed with how I looked and how I would never be “pretty enough” that I decided I wasn't worthy of life. It took me hitting rock bottom to finally understand that beauty has to come from within or a person will never be truly happy.

My weight doesn't affect any part of my life; I'm still able to get up every morning and go to class; I can drive my car, do my job; I am able to hang out with my friends and family, and it doesn't keep me from doing anything I want to do; expect maybe squeezing into a size eight dress. The average size of a woman is 10-12, not 0-2 as society would have us believe. It shouldn't even matter what size our clothes are, a number doesn't define who we are.

On the outside we are just cells, fused together in random ways to make us look how we look. True beauty is not how we manipulate ourselves on the outside. What's important and truly beautiful is who we are on the inside and how our life experi-

ences have shaped our personalities. Judging people by who they are on the inside instead of what they look like is a beautiful sentiment, but in reality, until society changes, I will continue to be seen as fat above anything else.

The looks I get as I eat in public, the whispers I hear as I sit in a chair that squeaks when I put my weight on it, and the shame I feel as I go for another cookie continue to hurt me everyday. I still struggle with accepting myself for who I am and what I look like, but I am a work in progress and one day I'll make the full 10 seconds.

So yes, I'm fat. I'm also a sister, a daughter and a friend. I'm, by turns, compassionate, funny, caring and sarcastic. I'm a self-professed movie nerd, a student and writer. Not one of those attributes has anything to do with weight.

Use your smartphone to scan the QR code below to watch a video about body image.



THE SIGNAL

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Hookah popularity rises along with medical concerns

By Araina Edwards

The ancient past time of hookah is reborn as it gains popularity among students.

Hookahs, commonly referred to as “water pipes,” originated in the Middle East and have been around for centuries. In the past few years, hookah cafes, bars, lounges and retail shops have gained worldwide popularity, especially among high school and college students.

At first glance, a hookah might resemble a bong, a device commonly used for smoking marijuana. However, a hookah contains more parts (head, body, water bowl, hose and mouthpiece) and is used for smoking tobacco and shisha (an herbal smoke option).

Smoking hookah is often a group activity and individuals can choose from a variety of flavored tobacco or shisha. The tobacco or shisha is heated by charcoal, which creates smoke. The smoke is then inhaled through the mouthpiece, which is often passed around the group.

Hookah smoking is often touted as a “safer alternative” to

cigarettes because the smoke is filtered through water, but the medical community disputes this claim.

“There is no evidence to support the claim that it’s safer or healthier,” said Darryl Konter, health communications specialist for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The CDC produced a report about the negative effects of hookah. The report claims that “even after it has passed through water, the smoke produced by a hookah contains high levels of toxic compounds, including carbon monoxide, heavy metals and cancer-causing chemicals.” The report also states that there are dangers associated with sharing the mouthpiece.

Truett Manning, a University of Houston - Clear Lake communication major, explained that he and his friends do not mind the potential health risks associated with sharing the mouthpiece.

“Usually I go with my friends, two to three of us, and we don’t care, but I wouldn’t do it with a stranger,” Manning said.

Many hookah outlets offer an herbal option because it is often deemed “safer” than tobacco. However, there is insufficient research to support this belief. Even if the herbal smoke is found to be a safer alternative, research by both the CDC and Tobacco Free U reports that the charcoal used to heat the hookah produces smoke that

contains carbon monoxide, metals and carcinogens.

Hookah Town, an online retail store, opts to sell herbal molasses in order to offer cigarette smokers another option. The company’s founder, Nathan Mark, admits that there are risks associated with smoking shisha.

“Too much of anything is not good for you, so herbal [smoking] is healthier but not completely risk free,” Mark said.

“Hookah is something to relax and chill with. Instead of having a beer, you have a hookah.”

– Nathan Mark
Founder of Hookah Town

Mark describes hookah as a “social facilitator” for young people. His company uses the slogan “the new chill” to describe how having a drink at the bar is the “old chill,” while hookah is the “new chill.”

“Hookah is something to relax and chill with,” Mark said. “Instead of having a beer, you have a hookah.”

Those who enjoy hookah agree that the “new chill” experience is not just smoke and mirrors. Manning explains that he and his friends enjoy hanging out at local hookah bars.

“It’s fun, and there is also food and drinks at some of the bars,” Manning said.

Ashley Issa, 27-year-old store associate at Perk and Puff Lounge in Houston, is a social hookah smoker.

“Hookah is relaxing and a part of a social atmosphere,” Issa said.

Whether or not people agree, the fact remains that hookah is indeed starting a conversation. So, do you puff? Or will you pass?

Photos by Cody Hardin

Scan the QR code to watch a short video on hookah bars in the area.





FOOD ON THE GO

BY WARDAH AJAZ

Scan the QR code to watch a video exploring Houston food trucks.



The food truck trend is sweeping across states with new and creative street food delights. While cities like Austin, Portland and San Francisco have thriving food truck scenes, Houston is not far behind with its kitchens-on-wheels.

The aroma of the food mixed with loud booming music seems to attract long lines of customers. The old, dirty image of an unsanitary street vendor has turned into fun-filled party food trucks with lots of options, including low calorie fare.

“We try to keep everything under 200 calories and use seasonal ingredients that gives freshness in our crepes,” said Sean Carroll, owner of Melange Creperie, a crepe food truck in Houston.

As the economic downturn continues, more and more people turn toward running a food truck instead of opening a restaurant.

“A restaurant costs up to half a million dollars while it costs about 60 – 80 thousand dollars to own a truck and set-up the business,” Carroll said.

The growing food truck businesses are coming up with new and creative food items at affordable prices to attract customers. The wide variety of menus feature foods ranging from a bowl of rice at around \$3 to juicy grilled burgers at around \$5.

“When something is new, people want to try it and see if it is any good,” said Naila Johnson, food cart customer. “If it falls under the right price range, then why not give it a try?”

The fact that food trucks are able to

literally go to their customers also makes them appealing. Food trucks have the advantage of choosing their location everyday and if one location does not work, they can move to another. You can find them at parking lots, parks and even universities.

The Melange Creperie is located in front of Mango’s Café at the corner of Westheimer and Taft in Houston.

“Most of our customers are people from the neighborhood we are in,” mentioned Carroll, “we have people who moved here from different locations, walkers, bicyclers, construction workers and even the postman.”

Food trucks have become popular due in large part through the use of the social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter to keep their customers up to date about their hours of operation and locations. They use the sites to advertise specials and to attract new customers.

“Eating from a food truck is an experience, and that is why I am a regular food truck eater,” Johnson said. “I like the variety of finger foods and desserts that are offered.”

Far removed from the old “roach coaches” feared in the past, today’s food carts are inspected annually in order to have their permit renewed.

“We are inspected twice as much compared to a regular restaurant,” Carroll said.

As the popularity of food trucks increase in Houston, The Houston Department of Health and Human Services Bureau of

Consumer Health Service conducts city-wide programs to prevent food diseases and ensure healthy food is being sold by restaurants, including those on wheels.

“We want to have a safe food supply,” said Robert Stine, mobile food unit supervisor. “We also make sure that the food trucks are not causing any environmental violations.”

One of the things health inspectors focus on is the water service. Water for restaurants is provided by the city whereas, water for food trucks has to be provided by the owners. It is illegal for food trucks to dump their dirty water on the streets.

“I usually judge a truck by its appearance from the outside. If it isn’t clean from the outside, I don’t trust it to be clean on the inside,” Johnson said, “I also look at the trucks rating before eating.”

Food trucks are the new trend capturing a lot of people’s attention with a large selection of easy to eat, affordable food items and desserts.

The owner of Melange Creperie points out two good things about food trucks.

“They are fast,” Carroll said. “And they are like a drive-thru with easy access.”

Reaching the consumers on wheels, keeping them updated, and following the health and safety regulations play a huge role in a food truck’s success.

“I would not eat that food from the cafeteria,” said Rachel Hoffman, behaviour analyst program graduate. “If we had a food truck on campus with good food I will eat it and pay for it.”

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businesses and residents of the 13-county Houston-Galveston Gulf Coast region. “The Gulf Coast Workforce Board that oversees the Workforce Solutions job-matching system has done a report card to be released next year. It will talk quite a bit about the need for good education to maintain and grow the workforce of a future because it is a real problem.

“We don’t have enough educated people to fill these high-skills, in-demand jobs. It will make us, as a region, less competitive. As a country, it’ll give us a very big disadvantage if we can’t get people educated. And, education has to go beyond high school. People must pursue whatever level of education needed to compete, to succeed.”

Cruver went on to explain that continuing one’s education did not necessarily mean earning an academic degree.

“Then again, we need a lot of people in the area of trained skills,” Cruver said. “That doesn’t take a college degree, but it still requires some type of education – maybe a certification from a community college. The important thing for anyone is to think in terms of what they want to do and take a skills-assessment to see what they are suited for. And then, get the best education you can for what your skills may be.”

Associate Director of Career Services at UHCL Chuck Crocker points out that several factors make a college degree worth it as a basic credential.

“It is not enough to simply get a degree,” Crocker said. “It is how you use the degree and what you do within your experience in college that also has an impact. Employers want people that have developed leadership skills, who can work effectively in teams, communicate effectively with critical thinking.

“Within most college degrees, from liberal arts to business, to science and engineering, there are opportunities to work in teams, on projects, to think critically. Especially in the global workplace, where we are going to be dealing with different cultures, people with different world views, you’ve got to be able to see things from different perspectives.”

Timothy Michael, associate professor of finance, voiced his opinion of a degree’s value.

“From an economic standpoint, one reason we have college degrees is certification,” Michael said. “Not only do you learn cultural awareness and critical thinking skills, but you demonstrate to someone in

the institution that you learnt something and the experts in the university have certified that ‘this person has attained some level of accomplishment.’ It is also a function of the opportunity costs. If you just slide through some program, do not do any work, do not outreach to employers and network, you are not going to gain anything.

“Then, there is the option-value, which is very hard to measure. If you did things in college that can demonstrate that you can think, communicate effectively, have leadership skills, then all of the things you learn in a college – critical thinking, a well-rounded skill set – can be applicable to whatever job you apply for. All of those options become open to you. Above all, there is learning for learning’s sake.”

Caitlin Weekley, employer relations coordinator for UHCL career services, pointed out how university campus services can enhance the worth of a college degree.

“You have so many opportunities on campus that you are paying for,” Weekley said. “Taking advantage of everything offered here while you are a student is really important. That adds value to your college degree, aside from the value you get from just going to the classes.

“There is the student life of-fice, student organizations that give valuable leadership experience, things those employers are looking for, things right here that you have opportunity to be part of... We have career counselors, workshops, and mock interviews, all to help in your job search. Also, networking and experiential education through internships are important.”

The Statistical Abstract of the United States estimated that 19.1 million students were enrolled in the nation’s colleges and universities in fall 2010 compared to 13.8 million 20 years ago. The debate about costs and value of a college degree has increased with the demands of the 21st century as educators, employers, statistical data and researchers ask to focus on the long-term enrichment that going to college provides.

“To quote Benjamin Franklin, ‘make hay while the sun shines.’ Do everything you can, everyday. Everybody has to go through the learning, experiential process. Learn how to learn,” Michael said.

For more details on career services offered by UHCL, visit <http://www.uhcl.edu/careerservices>.

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an inappropriate or dangerous comment made by a student, and whether or not you are interfering with that person’s private communication or private life, to a certain extent you have a duty of care.”

The SHSU incident has also raised concerns of social media censorship becoming a reality on other university campuses.

“I would agree that somebody in a security-like position has to have some kind of access to campus-related online accounts; in case there is an emergency or unforeseen circumstances where somebody is threatening another student with their life or their health,” Rachita said. “Do I think it’s a good idea that any of us have full access to campus-related online accounts, not at all. That sounds like a bad, dangerous idea to me.”

Here at UHCL, the university does not have any social-media policies nor does the university practice any censorship on its campus network.

“I don’t think the university would ever consider a social-media policy that would be unreasonably restrictive,” Rachita said. “If anything, if there isn’t a policy already stating that if such and such information resides on our server we maintain the right to edit as needed, that would probably be the only policy I would see happening.”

“I DON’T THINK THE UNIVERSITY WOULD EVER CONSIDER A SOCIAL-MEDIA POLICY THAT WOULD BE UNREASONABLY RESTRICTIVE. IF ANYTHING, IF THERE ISN’T A POLICY ALREADY STATING THAT IF SUCH AND SUCH INFORMATION RESIDES ON OUR SERVER WE MAINTAIN THE RIGHT TO EDIT AS NEEDED, THAT WOULD PROBABLY BE THE ONLY POLICY I WOULD SEE HAPPENING.”

– David Rachita
UHCL Interim Dean of Students

UHCL does host spam-filtering software for all incoming email and web-filtering software, both of which are responsible for detecting and isolating suspected malware.

“A significant and growing number of university desktop machines were being compromised by malware, which posed a security threat to all university information resources through our shared network resource,” said Margaret Lampton, director of information security and administration. “Malware was also reducing individuals’ productivity in that once their machines were infected, they were without access until the malware was removed and the desktop re-imaged. This software is a valuable tool in our continued effort to prevent security threats to our shared campus network.”

Since UHCL installed its most recent Web security system, students using campus computers do not have full access to

information on the Internet. This can be problematic, especially for students who rely on university computers to conduct research.

“Here in the newsroom, we’ve been having trouble accessing websites for research and fact checking, as well as a site to download non-copyrighted music for our videos and slide-shows,” said Ashley Smith, The Signal editor. “Sometimes

we even have trouble accessing our own site, the admin side of The Signal Wordpress site. The UCT people are always very helpful, but there’s a process in place that delays us from having immediate access.

“Whenever a site is blocked, we have to send an email and place a written request to UCT to be allowed access to specific websites, and must provide url address. The email address for the Help Desk is Support-Center@uhcl.edu. UCT will determine if the website poses a threat to the university’s network security. If the website is deemed safe, UHCL computers will be allowed to access it. We, The Signal staff, are wondering if we are the only ones having these issues, or if other students, faculty and staff are experiencing the same issues, so we’ve created a survey.”

For more information about the survey, see the ad on page 7 or visit www.uhclthesignal.com.

Dropouts: continued from page 1

the U.S. Census Bureau, reported 25.9 percent of people aged 25 and older do not have a high school diploma and are living at or below the poverty level in Texas.

The unemployment rate for college educated workers was 4.3 percent in July of 2011, compared to 9.3 percent for workers with a high school diploma only, and 15 percent for workers without a high school diploma.

The Casey Foundation encourages students to stay in school, stating on its website that improving education will create a wave of economic benefits including increasing individual earnings, home and auto sales, job and economic growth, spending and investment and tax revenue.

“Not having a high school diploma or general education diploma certainly has an impact on an individual’s ability to find jobs and find better jobs,” said Edward Honold, director of adult education for Harris County Education Department. “If you look at the life-long earnings of those who get a high school diploma or GED versus the people who do not – overtime studies have shown people with a high school diploma will make \$167,000 more than those who do not. This affects their capacity and, in all probability, some will ask for help or support from the state

than those who do have a high school diploma.”

The U.S. Bureau of Census reports the average annual income for a high school dropout in 2005 was \$17,299, compared to \$26,933 for a high school graduate, a difference of \$9,634.

On average, each high school dropout costs the U.S. economy about \$260,000 in lost earnings, taxes and productivity over his or her working lifetime.

“Adult education is an investment in the future of our state,” Honold said. “Better-educated parents raise better-educated, more successful children who are less likely to end up in poverty.”

While the need for better-educated, skilled workers continues to rise, the available pool of such workers is decreasing in the U.S. and Texas.

“A recent study by the Brookings Institute showed the lower the education, the harder it is to find a job,” said Sue Cruver, marketing communications coordinator for Gulf Coast Workforce. “Locally, it is due to the fact that the education and skill requirements for industries experiencing the largest job growth are at or higher than a high school or GED diploma.”

As a state, Texas benefits from increased graduation rates because the economics of increased buying power, better tax paying ability, and will see

“NOT HAVING A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR GENERAL EDUCATION DIPLOMA CERTAINLY HAS AN IMPACT ON AN INDIVIDUAL’S ABILITY TO FIND JOBS AND FIND BETTER JOBS.”

– Edward Honold
Director of Adult Education, Harris County Education Department

higher levels of worker productivity.

“In this area, Galveston County as a whole, we producing around 600 GEDs a year but we have 700 to 800 dropouts each year,” said Josh Hayes, director of adult education for College at the Mainland. “Each year that we operate we have seen that problem exacerbate across the board. What we are looking at is making a connection between completing GED, the secondary education and the more advance job training that is essential to maintain steady work. That is where the gap is. There are jobs in the area but there is just not that many qualified individuals.”

CORRECTION

In the Nov. 21 issue of The Signal, students in a photograph from Global Expo were incorrectly identified. The students in the photo are BESO members Jessica Mendoza and Yacel Amador.



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Important Message

The Signal

To: Students, UHCL

Monday, December 05, 2011 12:00 PM

Dear UHCL students,

Your email messages will now be defaulted to your UHCL email address. To forward your messages to your personal email account, follow the directions below.

- Log in to your UHCL email
- Click on Options in the top right-hand corner to activate a drop-down menu
- Click on See All Options... It will redirect you to another page, Outlook Web App
- Click on Organize Email (make sure you are under the tab Inbox Rules)
- Click on New to activate a new pop-up box (New Inbox Rule)
- In the first drop down box (*When the message arrives, and:) select Apply to all messages
- In the second drop down box (Do the following:), select Redirect the message to...
- Another pop-up window appears and at the bottom under (Message recipients...), type in the email address you want to receive your messages
- Click Ok
- Click Save on the next box
- A confirmation box appears (Do you want this rule to apply to all future messages)
- Click Yes
- Your new rule should appear under your Inbox Rules
- Your UHCL messages should be forwarded to your personal email address

Sincerely,

The Signal Staff

The Signal needs YOUR help...



If UHCL's new Web security system is interfering with your ability to access certain websites, please let us know by filling out our short, 9-question survey.

The survey is completely anonymous and will only be used for data collection purposes.

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If you have any questions, contact The Signal editors at 281-283-2570 or thesignal@uhcl.edu.

Q&A with Everett Penn

Professor visits Czech Republic university

Czech Republic invited Everett Penn, associate professor of criminology, to visit the University of West Bohemia with hopes of setting up a cultural exchange last summer. Penn talked about his trip and what he and the University of West Bohemia are trying to achieve in establishing this cultural exchange.

Chynna DeHoyos
The Signal

Q: How did the University of West Bohemia contact you?

It is kind of funny how it happened. I was contacted through a professor here in our Humanities Department who travels over there regularly. Her name is Sandria Hu, professor of art, and she talked to her contacts at West Bohemia University. They asked if we have the desire to team up with them in the areas of political science, criminology and some of the social sciences. Well, an email came my way early this summer and through email our connection was fortified. And there came the visit.

Q: Did you have any prior interest in the Czech Republic?

I think I always had, being a former Army officer, an understanding of Soviet Russia, USSR of the past, and that history of communism versus capitalism. So yes, I always had a desire to travel to those Eastern block countries, so this was great that this opportunity came about.

Q: Why do they want to have UHCL as their American school?

Well, they have a program called the British and American studies program, and they already have a British university, but they don't have an American university. Upon visiting

over there, the students were very excited to have some sort of an [American] connection to them. I was able to give a lecture over there and they were very attentive. Sometimes I think we forget, in the United States, just how desired we are by many of the people from around the world. They did not have an establishment, so we are starting the progress to begin that relationship between our two universities.

Q: Can you tell me about the program and what they want to set up with UHCL?

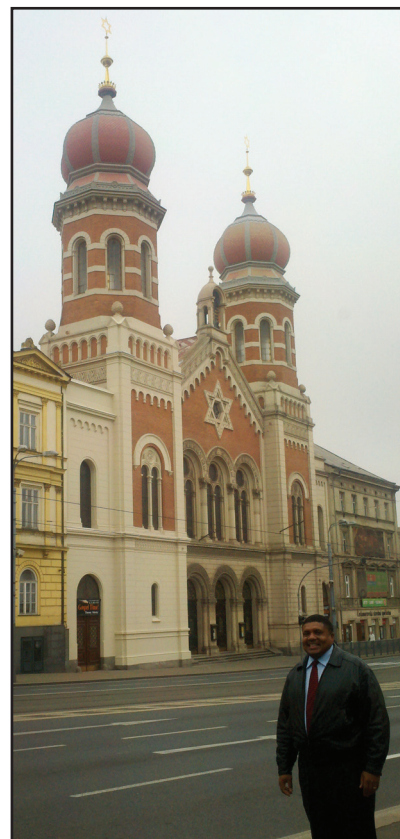
Because they have this British and American studies program, the desire is that we have

students and faculty between our two universities traveling back and forth visiting with each other, maybe even taking courses, research collaboration taking place and opportunities for those students who are over there to see this United States of America in which they are studying. Hopefully, perhaps our geography students, our cross-cultural studies students and our political science students can have an opportunity to travel to Czech Republic to understand what was communism, cross-cultural issues, socio-economic issues and what was a very different world before the 1984 time period when the change took place with the wall

coming down and the fall of the Soviet Union.

Q: What could this mean for the university if the program gets set up?

Once we get [the program] in place, we will have an opportunity for our students to be able to be in the Eastern Europe area, to have a base for our students, not just to be in the Czech Republic but to be throughout [Europe]. If you ever travel to Europe, once you get there it's very easy by train to go from country to country, so if we can get this going we can have a lot of opportunities for our students to truly be global citizens.



EVERETTE PENN: COURTESY Everett Penn, associate professor or criminology, in front of the Great Synagogue in Plzen, Czech Republic, the second-largest synagogue in Europe.

Serbia joins International Art Consortium

Ryan L. Hart
The Signal

Professor of Art Sandria Hu traveled to the Republic of Serbia Oct. 11-17 to help officially join the University of Arts in Belgrade with the International Art Consortium at University of Houston-Clear Lake.

Hu and Faculty of Fine Arts at University of Arts in Belgrade's Dean Milutin Dragojlovic signed the International Affiliation Agreement Oct. 13, making Serbia the fifth school to join the consortium.

The UHCL International Art Consortium is a collaboration in which the UHCL Art faculty exchanges art exhibitions, workshops and presentations with other universities' faculty.

The other universities within UHCL's International Art Consortium are: University of Hawaii at Hilo; Universidad de Veracruzana Facultad de Artes Plasticas, in Xalapa, Mexico; University of West Bohemia, Institute of Art and Design in Plzen, Czech Republic; and the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, Slovakia.

Hu has traveled abroad on a yearly

basis since 1986 and is relieved to have finally solidified the agreement with the University of Arts in Belgrade.

Along with signing the agreement, UHCL Professor of Sculpture Jason Makepeace, Adjunct Instructor in Printmaking Susan Dubois and Hu also performed workshops in painting, printmaking and sculpture for faculty and students at the University of Arts in Belgrade.

Kristina Jantz, UHCL graduate student in painting, went along to gain experience while attending different studios and workshops.

Bringing students along whenever possible is something Hu enjoys doing and encourages any who can travel to do so before "life gets in the way."

"This part was to initiate everybody to the university and the collaboration," Hu said. "There is no reason for me to go back now, but for any student interested in international exchange, a good time to do it is while you're young. I wouldn't wait."

Makepeace plans to make his way back to the University of Arts in Belgrade to conduct a three-week-long, extensive sculpture workshop in October 2012 for

students and faculty.

Makepeace's trip ultimately relies on the grants awarded by becoming a Fulbright Specialist, a prestigious achievement he is close to completing.

As stated on the website fulbright.state.gov, the Fulbright Program is the flagship international education exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government.

Though it is not uncommon for students and faculty to join in travels, Makepeace is planning to make this trip by himself.

"I would be really excited," Makepeace said about the possibility. "The people [in Serbia] treated me really nice and made me feel at home. Being in any foreign country and learning to coexist under their culture with an open mind is the mentality I try to keep."

Also probable for 2012 is the arrival of faculty from the University of Arts in Belgrade to do collaboration workshops here at UHCL.

This must be planned in advance because of the different laws required to travel from the Republic of Serbia.

"I just show my passport, and I go," Hu said. "That's not how it works over there."

Looking past 2012, UHCL and University of Arts in Belgrade are teaming together to jointly participate in the 2014 FotoFest, the largest and longest-running international photography festival in the United States.

UHCL's International Art Consortium is a partnership venue with FotoFest, which is based in Houston. Because of the amount of work put into each event, FotoFest presents only one event every two years.

UHCL is joining with partners in Czech Republic and Slovakia to participate in the 2012 Contemporary Russian-themed FotoFest event. The festival is active from March 16 to April 29 in multiple venues throughout Houston.



JASON MAKEPEACE: COURTESY

Professor of Art Sandria Hu, right, and Faculty of Fine Arts at University of Arts in Belgrade's Dean Milutin Dragojlovic, left, sign the International Affiliation Agreement. Also pictured is Bojana Buric, art historian and translator (middle).

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