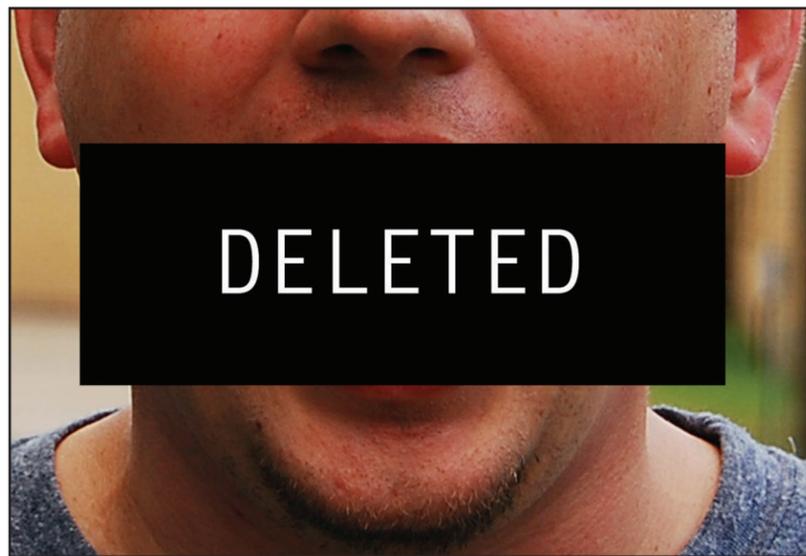




# THE SIGNAL

## Free Speech in the Digital Age

### Can students post any d#!n thing they f#@\*ing want online?!



JASON SEIDEL:THE SIGNAL

**Trent Gibson**

The Signal

A disgruntled student races home after receiving an unfair grade on an exam.

Fists clinched, he walks in the door of his small, one bedroom apartment and sits down at his computer. He proceeds to type a hateful, disturbing Facebook post on the professor's personal page. As his knuckles pop and a bead of sweat drips down his brow, he hits 'enter.'

And with the stroke of a key, everything can change.

Free speech in the digital age is a complex issue, especially when a university is

concerned. The topic involves numerous aspects, including First Amendment rights, the student code of conduct, and social civility in online interaction.

The First Amendment does not protect all types of speech. The First Amendment protects U.S. citizens against government suppression of expression. On the other hand, it does not prohibit private companies, organizations or institutions from suppressing freedom of expression to protect their own interests.

Much of the speech considered inappropriate, controversial or even contentious is consid-

ered protected on state-funded college campuses. However, the First Amendment does not protect against obscenity, fighting words, defamation, perjury and true threats.

All universities, including the University of Houston-Clear Lake, operates within a student code of conduct that is the framework for students' rights. The UHCL Students Rights and Responsibilities states, "The rights of free speech, expression and association, as defined by the Constitution of the United States and developed by

**SEE FREE SPEECH, PAGE 6**

## Legislators contemplate how to spend budget surplus

**Richard Higgins**

The Signal

The comptroller for the state of Texas reported an estimated \$8.8 billion budget surplus for the 2014-2015 budgetary years because tax revenues exceeded budget expectations.

This could be good news for higher education, including University of Houston-Clear Lake, depending where the state legislators direct the budget surplus. Additional funding could provide an increase in faculty and class offerings.

The revenue portion of the budget for the state is estimated from tax and non-tax projected revenue. Sales tax revenue estimates are calculated considering the projected spending habits of new and current residents and tourism. Taxes from oil and gas production, and the so-called sin taxes of alcohol and tobacco sales, are also considered.

Additionally, the non-tax revenue portion includes licenses, fees, fines, penalties, lottery proceeds and income from interest and investments.

The mood in the legislature and state departments funded by the budget is much like a shark feeding frenzy with each department lobbying legislators to support a percentage of the surplus to be directed back into its budget.

During the last legislative session, public education was reduced by a \$5.4 billion. Hopes for the restoration of that cut may be tempered because of a current lawsuit concerning the method used to fund public education in Texas.

**SEE SURPLUS, PAGE 6**



ELISA MORALES:THE SIGNAL

Students, alumni, faculty and staff from all four schools in the University of Houston System came together for the first UH System Day.

## UH System Day in Austin

### Students, Alumni and Faculty meet with State Legislators for UH System Day

**Elisa Morales**

The Signal

For the first time representatives from all four schools in the University of Houston System participated as advocates during UH System Day held in Austin, Feb. 13.

The four attending schools consisted of the University of Houston-Clear Lake, University of Houston, University of Houston-Victoria and University of Houston-Downtown.

Nearly 200 students, alumni,

faculty and staff traveled to Austin and visited the Capitol for an opportunity to meet with state legislators and discuss four major points of interest to the UH System in the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislative Session.

These points for discussion included: Equitable Funding, Building Texas' Future Today, Truth and Transparency in Tuition, and Keeping Texas a Tier One State.

UHCL students' concerns for the legislators focused on

downward expansion and tuition revenue bonds in preparation for the incoming freshman and sophomore students scheduled to arrive the fall 2014.

The attendees from UHCL and UH met at 7 a.m. at the UH Alumni Center to catch the three buses that would take them on their three-hour trip to Austin, where they were joined by UHD and UHV representatives. The buses were filled with representatives discussing their expectations for the day.

"I'm excited to actually have one-on-one interaction with the representatives and get a chance to represent my school because you don't get that opportunity all the time," said Sarah Seyd, biology undergraduate at UHD.

Upon arrival at the Capitol, everyone proceeded to the Senate Gallery, where Sen. Rodney Ellis D-TX, a native Houstonian, recognized and introduced all UH System Universities

**SEE UHS, PAGE 6**

ONLINE  
this issue

**VIDEOS.....**

- Bleeping @#\$\$\* Video
- Professor "Arch" Erich
- UH System Day in Austin
- History of Chili Cook-Off

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Scan the QR code to read the latest staff blogs about the budget surplus & freedom of expression issues on college campuses.



## Self-regulated speech

*Taking ownership of the words we choose*

### EDITORIAL

No entity engenders discussion as readily as the hallowed halls of college campuses. The digital age has blurred the line between where the classroom begins and ends and has even challenged previously unassailable convictions.

To say that college students value free speech is to vastly underestimate the culture of higher learning. Discussion is the foundation of ideas, and ideas are the precursor of action.

Universities increasingly offer online options for students to utilize, and their popularity is a testament to the change that has taken place in the way we communicate. It is easy to reach out and grab what information we need and even easier to remain anonymous while doing so.

There is, however, a price that has to be paid for the ability to download infinite amounts of information anonymously. The price of the Internet is that everyone enjoys the same easy access and many of our online selves are terrible people.

A simple scroll through the comment section following any online story or article quickly reveals that Internet interaction is not always governed by the same rules that apply to face-to-face conversation. The vile oaths and rants of seemingly insane individuals share space with those

who only wish to connect with like-minded individuals.

This type of destructive behavior should not be allowed to weave its way into the discussion boards and social media platforms of universities. It is almost unheard of for disagreements to escalate into open disrespect within the confines of the classroom and neither should it be tolerated on university websites.

College campuses are nothing if not sanctuaries of collaboration amongst instructors and students and allowing online criticism to degenerate into ineffective posts falls far outside of an academic commitment to promoting debate.

Students will argue fiercely, and rightly so, that private social media pages and accounts are just that. Universities have no business monitoring what might be written on off-campus websites and several recent court cases have come down in favor of students' right to say whatever they want on private Web pages.

The University of Houston System maintains a policy of non-interference in online posts unless the speech in question violates a specific spectrum including, but not limited to, threats, intimidation, harassment or anything that endangers people's safety.

Student speech on websites created by public universities is subject to be monitored because it falls under applicable state laws and also university policy. Speech that is suspected of falling outside of university policy is dealt with on a case-by-case basis to determine if disciplinary action is needed.

University discussion boards and teacher-to-student email correspondence should be undertaken with a high level of professionalism so that arguments and bickering do not distract from the goal of learning.

Effective communication is all but lost the moment we trade insults.

A university Web page that is inundated by vulgar posts fails to attract users and loses its ability to function: as it was meant to function, as a student accommodation.

The right to freedom of expression is an unapologetic



**CENSOR ME, BRO!  
I DARE YA!!!**

WANTNEEDO

Cartoon by: Kalan Lyra

demand of every college student because it allows for a free flow of ideas that can be just as game-changing as the rise of the digital age.

Freedom of expression should be protected and expanded in ways that will lead to positive

development. It should not be wielded as an all-out free pass that would lessen the college experience for future generations who will no doubt experience a major part of the academic atmosphere within online interaction.

## Distracted driving: what sending a text can really do

Taylor Clinton  
The Signal

On April 29, 2011, my 18-year-old sister, 12-year-old sister and 8-month-old son loaded into my car after leaving my grandmother's funeral.

Reminiscing about better times and laughing at old stories lightened the mood. We were only making a quick stop at my house before meeting up with the rest of our family.

As we slowly rolled up to a stop sign, I paused for three seconds before proceeding into the intersection. Three...two...one. Boom!

Everything went dark. When the light returned, I realized my car was moving. Confused, I tried to break. It was no use. The car continued forward. Dust flew, blinding me from my final destination.

As I heard the screams of my precious passengers, my adrenaline raced. The car finally stopped. When the dust cleared, I found my front bumper inches away from a light pole. The other

driver continued driving, as if he were oblivious to what just happened.

My son and youngest sister were covered in shards of glass from my rear window that no longer existed. My other sister in the passenger seat cried and looked to me for help.

Without hesitation, I removed all three of them from the vehicle. I dialed 9-1-1 as the other driver continued driving away.

A witness stopped to help. He told me he had been on the phone with police trying to get someone to stop the driver who had caused the collision. The witness said the man had been swerving for at least two miles.

The other driver must have grown a conscience or come to a realization that others had an eyewitness account of what had happened. He eventually turned



STAFF COLUMN

around and returned to the accident. He asked if everyone was okay and said, "sorry, I was texting."

As my anger mounted sirens of help wailed. Texting... that is your excuse?

Rep. Tom Craddick - Midland filed House Bill 243, Nov. 20, 2010.

House Bill 243 was intended to make text-based communication, including text messages, instant messages and email from any wireless device illegal while driving in the state of Texas.

The bill was to take effect Sept. 1, 2011.

On June 17, 2011, three months before the bill was to take effect, Gov. Rick Perry vetoed the bill.

Perry released multiple statements contributing the use of wireless communications while driving as an educational

issue more than a law enforcement issue.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's website states that in 2011, 3,331 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver.

Along with the NHTSA, the Governor's Highway Safety Association, the Federal Communications Commission and many other national organizations have statistical data clearly stating the dangers of texting while driving. The information is readily accessible on many search engines.

How much more education do we need?

As of February 2013, 34 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands banned text messaging for all drivers, and all but four have primary enforcement.

If law enforcement wouldn't render a sufficient reason for drivers to cease wireless text-based communications, why have the majority of states and U.S. territories taken action against distracted driving?

Nov. 1, 2012, representative Craddick, filed House Bill 63, the Alex Brown Memorial Act.

If passed, this act will prohibit the use of wireless communication devices, including hands-free devices which use voice technology, and the traditional hands-on devices to send text-based communications while driving.

I was lucky to receive only minor injuries from my accident. My sisters and son could have been taken away from me in seconds - not because of my actions but because of someone wanting to send a text message.

This Texas legislative session holds great potential to save lives.

Sept. 1, 2013, Texas drivers could be a little less distracted if the Alex Brown Memorial Act takes effect.

If you want to stop the trend of texting and driving send your state legislature a message. If you have to send that message via cell phone, please pull over first. There is no message worth you severely hurting someone else or yourself.

## THE SIGNAL

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# COLUMN: Troubled waters

**Lysie Whitehead**  
The Signal

Watching the recent media coverage of the handicapped Carnival cruise ship Triumph floating around the Gulf of Mexico is enough to make anyone wonder if cruising is a good choice.

Luckily, the passengers aboard the ship, some of whom were calling it “the vacation from hell,” returned safely back to port thanks to tug boats. The question I’m sure Carnival is left asking of its passengers is whether any of them will be return customers.

Imagine enjoying three days of cruising to Mexico, only to wake up on day four to an engine room fire and what would soon turn in to a complete fiasco. Passengers were forced to endure harsh conditions, a complete opposite of the luxurious amenities Carnival boasts about providing.

As the days unfolded on the stagnant boat, the media had a heyday with reports from passengers on board about overflowing sewage, the use of disposable bags for toilets, limited electricity, lack of food and makeshift tent cities on the upper decks of the ship.

It is safe to assume this is not the type of cruise anyone had in mind. Are the latest complications enough to deter future cruisers?

I am a self-proclaimed cruise addict; you can’t get a better deal on a vacation. The itineraries are enticing, the food is incredible, and you will never encounter a more helpful staff working to serve you.

I made wonderful memories during a previous cruise on Triumph, probably not the same type of memories the latest round of guests will have. The ship did live up to its name when I was on board. The state-rooms, dining rooms, pool decks, bars, theatres and general areas were magnificent. It makes me a little sad to know that such a

fantastic ship is sitting in despair in Mobile, Ala., while crews assess the damage.

Carnival has cancelled Triumph’s voyages through April. I assume that even longer cancellations will be headed our way. When I say headed our way, I really do mean my way. I am booked to set sail on Triumph May 20.

I was really looking forward to stepping off dry land as part of my college graduation celebration with friends. However, it looks like I might need to start making new plans. In fact, my fiancé insisted I call our travel agent, but I couldn’t because she was one of the unlucky ones stranded on the crippled boat.

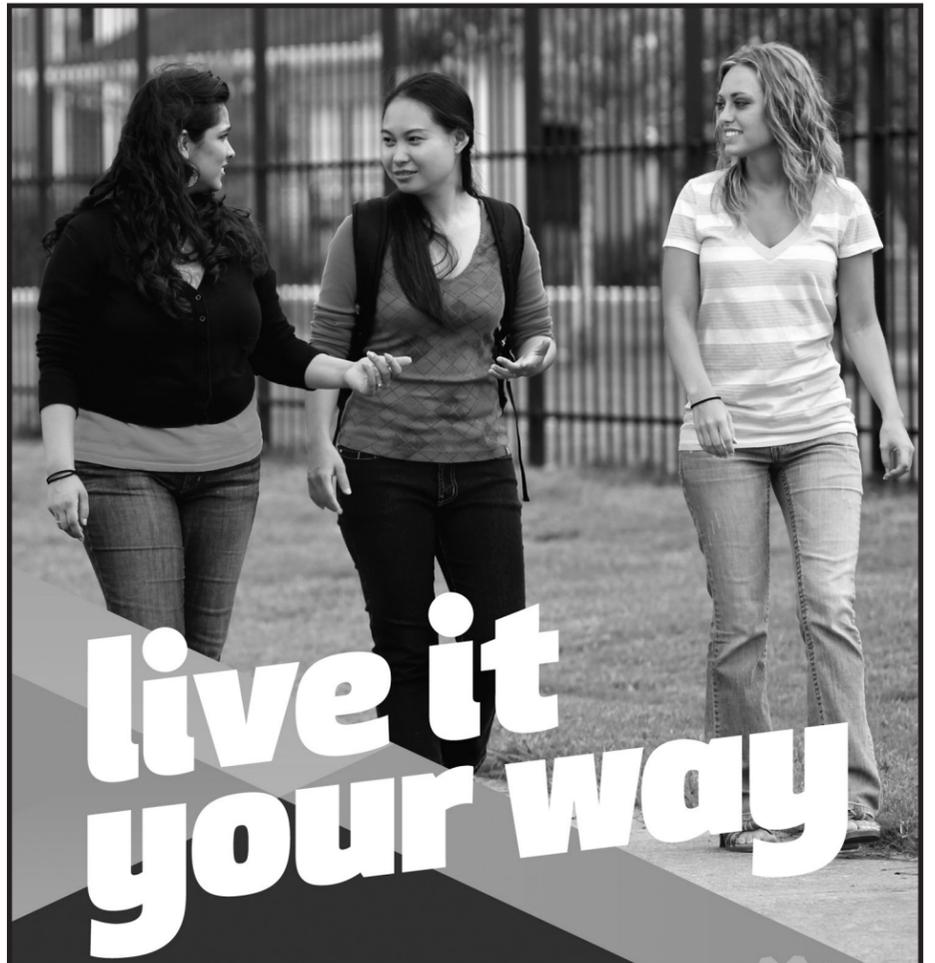
I have since spoken with her, and I fully expected her to advise us to make new plans and to avoid cruising. To my surprise, she only had positive things to say about our impending cruise.

She expressed that conditions were unpleasant, but her recent voyage would not change her enthusiasm about cruising. She gave details of the crew working diligently to ensure the comfort of their passengers, despite the fact crew members were literally in the same boat.

She suggested we wait to hear what is going to happen with the ship instead of hastily booking a new vacation.

I trust Carnival Cruise Line and believe this was just an unfortunate event. Not every cruise from here on out is going to be doomed. I will have absolutely no problem boarding Triumph in May if the cruise line says it’s ready. Just because there are plane crashes doesn’t mean people quit flying. What is the difference with cruising?

When you sign up to cruise, you agree these sorts of disasters can happen. In the event that a disaster actually does happen, you simply have to realize that life doesn’t always go as planned. Life goes on, and you can’t live your life standing on the dock.



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# Hurricane Watch Issued for UHCL

**Dorian Valenzuela**

The Signal

The UHCL campus is in the projected path of a storm. A new professional soccer team has swept up new fans in Houston and the team is ready to make an instant impact, beginning with the Clear Lake market.

The diversity of students who attend UHCL makes the campus an ideal option for a team that plays the most popular sport in the world.

The Houston Hurricanes Football Club is now in business and looking to be an affordable sporting option for Houston soccer fans this spring. The club is the resurgence of the same Hurricane franchise that played in the Astrodome from 1978 to 1980 in the old National American Soccer League, the same league where soccer greats Johan Cruyff, Franz Beckenbauer and Pelé played professionally.

“I am extremely happy to be a part of history; I did it as a player and I am now excited to continue to contribute to the organization as the new owner of the team,” said club owner and former Hurricanes player Brendan Keyes, who is the visionary behind the rebranding of the Hurricane organization. “I want us to be different than any other sporting organization in town. I want this to be the people’s team.”

Keyes, who did not get to play with the NASL version of the Hurricanes, was a member of the first revival of the club after they folded in 1980. The Hurricanes returned to top-flight soccer in 1996 under the new management of Joseph “Joey” Serralta, who remained in charge until the club folded for the second time in the middle of the 2001.

“This organization has so much potential - it always has - the timing has not been right though,” Keyes said. “I

believe that the sport is more popular now than it ever has been in America and the time is now. Third time is a charm, and you best believe the storm is coming.”

The Irish-born striker was a contributor on the field for the second version of the Hurricane organization and a bigger asset off the field by also serving as a right-hand man to Serralta. Nearly 12 years later, after the demise of the brand, Serralta has handed the reigns over to Keyes to revive the club once more.

The new Houston Hurricanes will begin playing in May 2013 in the National Premier Soccer League, the fourth tier of professional soccer in the United States. The club will take the place of Keyes’ former team, The Galveston Pirate Soccer Club, who won the NPSL’s South-Central Conference in 2012.

“The Pirate team was a great experience; we did a lot of great things and were able to accomplish many goals. Unfortunately, Galveston was not fully ready to host a semi-professional team and we decided it was time to let go,” Keyes said. “Houston is a huge market and when given the opportunity to revive the Hurricanes and bring it to the NPSL, I just knew the soccer fans would be very happy.”

Keyes unveiled the relocation and rebranding of the organization in December 2012. Soon after, Thiago Costa Reis was revealed as the new head coach, and a five-year deal was signed with Lutheran South Academy as the team’s home stadium.

Arguably the biggest buzz was the unveiling of the official colors. The club will don a green-and-white striped home jersey, resembling the iconic uniform worn by European giants Celtic F.C., who happens to be Keyes’ boyhood club. Back in the NASL days, the Hurricanes wore an equally eye-catching orange uniform that would later inspire the uniforms worn by Major League Soccer’s Houston Dynamo.

With opening day around the corner, the team is in preseason preparation and the coaching staff has pointed to UHCL as a potential target for recruiting players. Although, no



PHOTO COURTESY OF HOUSTON HURRICANES  
Club Owner Brendan Keyes is pleased with the home stadium in Clear Lake.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HOUSTON HURRICANES  
Players have already reported to camp for preseason.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HOUSTON HURRICANES  
The Hurricanes are set for the 2013 NPSL Season.

official agreement has been made between the university and the club, Reis expressed a definite interest in getting involved on campus.

“I have coached for many years and have seen many prospects that have simply gone unnoticed,” Reis said. “There is too many young players looking for an opportunity to make their dreams come true and we are willing to find them. I am sure there is a lot of talent [at UHCL].”

In the meantime, the Houston Hurricanes will continue to develop in the Houston area. More dates are expected to open up for tryouts at the Chester L. Davis Sportsplex in League City, since this location has already led to eight signings for the club.

Additional information can be found by contacting Hurricanes owner Brendan Keyes at 832-748-1001 or by visiting [www.houstonhurricanesfc.com](http://www.houstonhurricanesfc.com).

# WHEN A STAR FALLS...

**LANCE ARMSTRONG**



**Best Known For:**  
Winning the Tour de France 7 times while doping

**TIGER WOODS**



**Best Known For:**  
Winning 75 PGA Golf Tournaments  
Scandalous affairs with multiple women

**MICHAEL VICK**



**Best Known For:**  
Number one NFL Draft pick 2011  
Fighting Pitbulls in illegal dogfights

## From Hero to Zero: Fallen Idols as Role Models

**Traci Wall**  
The Signal

It is tough to watch star athletes nose-dive off the edge of glory, especially when so many young people look up to them.

With all of the highly publicized scandals surrounding athletes lately, it makes one wonder – where have all the heroes gone?

Young people look up to athletes for reasons ranging from their athletic abilities to their wealth and success. They are influenced by their heroes' performances and behavior – both good and bad.

"Athletes are highly visible, seem wealthy, and their success often comes while they are still young, which is more relatable to younger people," said Beth Hentges, associate professor of psychology.

A handful of star athletes have been imprisoned; others have admitted to using drugs. While doing the right thing and being a good person may not be a part of the job description, athletes are still role models to their young fans and their behavior influences them one way or another. The array of recent athletes' misconduct brings their ability to serve as role models into question.

"Kids are very impressionable," said daycare teacher Taylor Loria. "I do not think very many athletes make good role models for them because they are always

making headlines about doing drugs and being violent. I hope that none of them grow up thinking that sort of thing is acceptable."

Thirteen out of 21, 11-12 year-olds in Loria's class said they look up to an athlete.

To young fans, the positive accomplishments of their heroes may outweigh the bad publicity. When star athletes cheat by doping or gambling, it can instill the idea in children that it is okay to cheat in order to advance. In reality, taking shortcuts in life does not get you anywhere – just ask Lance Armstrong or Michael Vick.

Star cyclist Armstrong battled doping allegations for 13 years, finally admitting to his mistakes last month. He has been stripped of seven Tour de France titles and is banned from future competitions. Even when the truth is revealed, kids do not always know what to think about it.

"I like Lance Armstrong," said Derek, 11. "He won a lot of races even though he had cancer. I think they made a mistake saying he cheated. They shouldn't take anything away from him."

Philadelphia Eagles Quarterback Michael Vick served jail time for operating an illegal dog-fighting venture in 2007. Even though Vick was sentenced to 23 months in prison, he is playing football again and has a supportive fan base.

Although it is sometimes hard to spot

true athletic heroes through the infamy, there are still professional athletes setting good examples.

Houston Texan's defensive end J.J. Watt recently reached out to a young fan, heartbroken about not being old enough to marry her hero. Fellow teammate and wide receiver Andre Johnson gives back to at-risk youth in Houston every year by making sure they have Christmas presents. Numerous professional athletes have founded charitable foundations and non-profit organizations to give back to their communities.

"Just like with anything, we cannot let the misdeeds of a few athletes discredit every athlete out there," said Sayed Hasan, healthcare administration major at UHCL.

Good role models should possess qualities that encourage young people to be their best, strive for success and positively contribute to the community.

There are a lot of everyday heroes being overlooked in this age of celebrity worship.

As an OB/GYN, Dr. Jessica Ohlemacher has been recognized as a Texas Super Doctor Rising Star in 2012 for providing top-notch care to women of all ages in her community and beyond.

"Important qualities in a role model are integrity and humility," Ohlemacher said. "They do the right thing even if it is harder."

Jackson Hyams believes that a role

model is someone who is very successful, healthy and athletic. They should have strong morals and be good leaders.

"You can't like a person who does not treat others very nicely," said Jackson Hyams, 13.

Role models can be found in other members of the community beyond star athletes.

"My first role model was my drill team director," Ohlemacher said. "I thought she was an amazing dancer, leader, mother and friend. Now, in my profession as an OB/GYN, I believe that I have an audience of young women who view me as a leader or helper. I have the ability to demonstrate hard work, perseverance and integrity to my patients. I try to keep this in mind as I do my job, but mostly I try to be my best everyday for patients."

Often, young people look up to the people closest to them, such as their parents.

"My biggest role model is my dad because he has a good job, he helps others and he loves sports like me," Jackson Hyams said.

"I always try to set a good example for my children," said Mark Hyams, Jackson's father. "I want them to grow up to be successful, happy and have good values, so being a good role model has always been important to me."

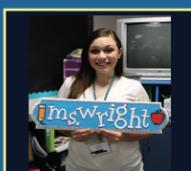
**GREG CARLSON**



Pasadena Police Officer  
President Bayside Area Little League  
Head Coach Bay Area Sharks Football Team

**BEST KNOWN FOR:**  
Serving and protecting the community for 17 years and mentoring young athletes.

**KATIE WRIGHT**



School Teacher  
1st Grade  
Darwin Gilmore Elementary

**BEST KNOWN FOR:**  
Educating and mentoring the children in her community.

**AARON BOND**



Houston Firefighter  
Station # 20  
Won Unit Medal of Valor

**BEST KNOWN FOR:**  
Fearlessly fighting fires and saving lives in his community for 16 years.

**FREE SPEECH:** continued from page 1

statutory laws and judicial decisions, are guaranteed to every member of the university community.”

“Students are subject to applicable law and university policy regardless of whether they are interacting in person or on Facebook,” states Eric Bentley, associate general counsel for the University of Houston System.

With communication becoming increasingly carried out on the Internet, it is more common to see students or employees posting unfavorable, and sometimes vulgar, comments on an organization or company, social media page.

A public forum is a United States constitutional law term that describes a government-owned property that is open to public expression and assembly. Distinguishing between what does and does not fall in to the category of what can be considered a public forum can be a gray area.

There are three forms of a public forum: traditional, limited and nonpublic. An example of a traditional public forum is a park or a street corner, places that have historically been used for purposes of expression and assembly. An example of a limited public forum would be town halls or a city fairground. These are limited public forums because the government opened them up for assembly and expression. Nonpublic forums would include airports or bus stations because they are designated for purposes other than expression.

UHCL is a public university. As such, the school operates under a different set of guidelines than private institutions. Public institutions are owned and run by the state and must adhere to government rules and regulations. Private universities are owned and run by a group, such as a religious organization, and therefore, the rules of government suppression do not apply.

Under the UHCL Student Code of Conduct, there is currently no rule or regulation regarding the use of profane, obscene or vulgar language. It does address similar issues, such as verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, harassment, coercion and/or other conduct that threatens or endangers the health or safety of any person.

UHCL’s reaction to posts on an online site, such as Facebook, would depend on whether the Facebook page belonged to the student or to the university. For example, if a student were to post about a specific professor on his or her personal Facebook page, the university would not necessarily have grounds for legal action.

Social networking companies such as Facebook and Twitter are private entities and do not adhere to government policies on free speech. If the student is expressing his displeasure with a professor’s class, he is within his rights, exercising his freedom of speech. However, if in exercising his displeasure he violates Facebook’s terms of service, then Facebook would have the authority to take action, such as removing the posting or shutting down the profile.

Additionally, if the posting was found to cross the line into threatening speech that was disruptive to the school or invaded

the rights of others, the university could pursue legal action.

“The easier part of the question is when a student is doing something purely on personal time, maybe a WordPress blog or a Tumblr that is not created on a school computer or during class time,” states Frank LoMonte, executive director of the Student Press Law Center. “Even if the student is doing something pretty distasteful, that’s constitutionally protected speech. Unless it rises to the level of actually trying to cause a disturbance on the campus or otherwise breaking the law, then it’s beyond the college’s jurisdiction to punish, even if it seems unprofessional and uncivil.”

“Although there are legal issues that must be considered, the university reserves the right to analyze social media postings, Blackboard activity and school emails to ensure the activity is in compliance with applicable law and university policy,” Bentley states. “The university handles such matters on a case-by-case basis and will take appropriate action as necessary. Students, for the most part, enjoy First Amendment protection for their most social media activity, but there are limits and restrictions.”

If a student decided to post a vulgar, obscene or potentially libelous remark that creates a disturbance on a UHCL organization social media page, that student could be subject to university rules on the matter.

“We don’t know the answer as to whether something like the comment board on the college’s Facebook page is or is not a public forum,” states LoMonte. “I think there is a distinction between speech that you can pull down and speech that you can punish. So if a student just came onto the university’s Web page comment board and posted a comment that was just a string of F-words, that would be speech that I think you would be under no legal duty to leave up on the website, but I’m not sure it is ‘substantially disruptive’ so that it could result in suspension or expulsion from the college.”

At the classroom level, a student could be “subject to disciplinary sanctions” per the UHCL student code of conduct for “disruption or obstruction of teaching, research, administration, disciplinary proceedings, or other university activities...” The same rules would apply if the student sent a hateful email to a professor using UHCL webmail, as in the Code of Conduct concerning “physical abuse, verbal abuse, threats, intimidations, harassment, coercion and/or other conduct which threatens or endangers the health or safety of any person.”

While media and technology are changing every day, so are the laws.

“Courts are constantly analyzing First Amendment claims in real time based on new technology, and the courts’ decisions become known as common law,” Bentley said. “Federal and state laws are also revised or added on a regular basis to keep up with technology.”

**SURPLUS:** continued from page 1

UHCL is a publicly assisted university and was affected by those cuts. Class offerings were reduced, the hiring of new professors was postponed and the number of adjunct instructors employed were lowered.

Rick Perry, governor of Texas, defined educational initiatives in an address to the Greater Houston Partnership last month.

An initiative supported by Perry, which may direct funds away from higher education, is to increase charter schools in the public school system.

“I outlined a series of initiatives meant to expand options for children in our public schools, expanding public charter schools and creating a scholarship program to give parents more of a choice about their child’s education,” Perry said.

Additionally, Perry wants to lend support for students to earn technical certifications.

“Last fall, I announced an initiative that will bring industries and our technical and community colleges together to create a statewide model that will enable students to swiftly earn their technical certifications, at an affordable cost,” Perry said.

The lone support for higher education Perry has offered is the initiative to increase funding for technical certifications.

It is still early in the legislative session. UHCL administrators are reluctant to speculate as to what will happen during the legislative session.

“I would be glad to share thoughts on this topic in the future,” said Michelle Dotter, UHCL vice president for administration and finance. “It is a little early in the legislative session to get a feel for impact on UHCL. I’ll be in touch.”

**UHS:** continued from page 1

before everyone present in the chamber.

Thereafter, all boarded the buses to make their way to lunch at the Scholz Garten. UH System Chancellor Renu Khator stood before all the UH System representatives during the luncheon and spoke about her enthusiasm and support before everyone once again departed for the Capitol.

“We have come a long way because of what all have done together,” Khator said. “We have been gaining momentum, we have been gaining progress. We will get the recognition that we deserve, nationally and internationally.”

To begin the legislative visits, all of the participating students separated into 20 teams. Each team was to visit with six different assigned legislators out of the 120 in Texas. Gift bags with UH Cougar beanie babies and a brochure of the UH System Legislative Agenda were given to each team to present to each assigned legislator.

“I believe it is very important for our state legislators to actually meet and talk with the students from UHCL, UH, UHD and UHV,” said William Staples, president of UHCL. “Each student has a unique story about the impact of higher education on themselves and their family.”

During the course of an hour and a half, teams

There are two options available if funds are allocated. First, the state legislature would allocate some funds that would maintain the status quo with token additions for cost-of-living increases and projected student growth.

Secondly, there is a possibility that UHCL could receive some additional funding for the 2014-2015 budgets. Should the university receive additional funding, there is a plan in place for priority spending of the funds.

Nevertheless, David Rachita, interim dean of students, doesn’t

the funds go towards helping us prepare for freshmen and sophomores.”

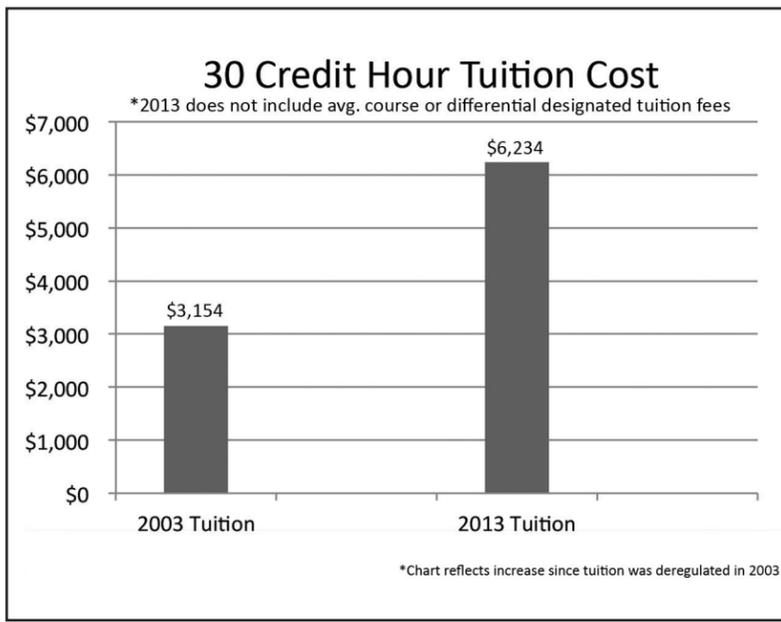
Additionally, students have concerns and opinions as to how any additional funds should be allocated.

Hidden costs involved with downward expansion are a priority of Sarah Hopson, president of the Student Government Association.

“For any kind of funding increase, I would like to see that going toward downward expansion,” Hopson said.

“There may be a lot of things required for expanding student services and programming for the transitioning students, but those costs may not be known and funding will be required.”

“I would like to see the surplus money go towards supplies for the classroom,”



JASON SEIDEL: THE SIGNAL

see personnel reductions if the first option is taken by the legislature.

“Unless the bottom fell out for higher education funding, I do not foresee any cuts in personnel even if minor cuts were made across the board,” Rachita said, “Our operating budgets would most likely be affected first before personnel, thus limiting services, programs, events, supplies, etc.”

Darlene Biggers, associate vice president for student services, wants to assess grants and fee revenues, if additional funds are not received.

“It all depends upon other sources of funding such as grants and fee revenues generated by increased enrollment,” Biggers said. We need to increase funds and staffing to prepare for our Four Year Initiative. UHCL has a planning and budgeting process that identifies our priorities. Certainly, I would like to see some of

Paige Brooks, an undergraduate education major, suggested. “It may be more classroom computers, calculators and equipment for math classrooms or a supply room for students’ use for projects and presentations.”

Education funding, along with other bills, will be considered during this biennial term.

The 83rd legislature is currently in session and will remain in regular session until mid-May.

Opinions concerning the budget can be expressed at <http://governor.state.tx.us/contact/>.

**BE HEARD:** Scan the code to contact your legislator.



scattered through the Capitol searching for legislators, chiefs of staff or other office personnel they were assigned to meet.

While some of the teams were able to talk to a legislator, many were only able to meet with office staff. However, not being able to have the face-to-face interaction with a legislator did not discourage Carla Bradley, vice-president of the Student Government Association at UHCL, from retaining the excitement she felt when the trip first began.

“Even though it was only one person that we were able to speak to on behalf of UHCL, it’s like a ripple effect, you start it and it spreads,” Bradley said. “It leaves an imprint on their minds saying these people do care about their school and the system.”

Everyone met in front of the Capitol while they waited for buses to arrive for the drive home. Bradley’s face indicated exhaustion, but expressed satisfaction, as she sat in the lawn talking to other students about what was achieved that day.

“I feel very accomplished because instead of coming as just one individual school, we came together as a system, giving us a bigger voice.” Bradley said. “I do believe we accomplished what we came here for.”

# Professor wins Social Worker of the Year Award

**Dave Valdez**

The Signal

Providing advocacy for clients, demonstrating outstanding leadership, and contributing to a positive image for the social work profession are just a few requirements needed to win the Social Worker of the Year Award.

Every year the National Association of Social Workers honors its members with various social worker awards. This year, UHCL Professor Stephen "Arch" Erich has been selected as the Social Worker of the Year for 2013 and will represent the Houston-Galveston area at the state level.

Erich, professor of social work and bachelor of social work program director, began working at UHCL in 1988. He has devoted a large part of his academic career to the field of social work.

Erich started his interest in social work field early in his college career.

While attending Western Kentucky University, Erich chose social work as a minor to his psychology major after meeting "some fantastic professors." Erich said of his experience that it was "a love affair at that time."

This year, Erich's peers

recognized him for his social work efforts. Kim Case, associate professor of psychology and women's studies, composed a nomination letter where she described her thoughts on Erich and his influence in her career.

**"I AM EXCITED, HONORED AND HUMBLLED, AND A LITTLE BIT EMBARRASSED."**

— Stephen "Arch" Erich  
Social Worker of the Year Award recipient

"I met Erich in 2005, and was instantly inspired by his dedication to the core values of social work in his work with students, colleagues and community members," Case wrote in her letter to the committee. "He does so much work with the faculty and students, [and] he saved my sanity."

Erich also received letters of recommendation outside the academic community. In one such letter, Peter Wuenschel, executive director of Communities in Schools Bay Area, stated "Arch has been a significant advocate for the disenfranchised in the Houston Area, especially as it related to the LGBT community. He has influenced policy and influenced the practice of other social workers through his writing, research and speaking. He maintains a professional as well as compassionate relationship with all those he encounters."

"I think it is a great honor for him and a great honor for the [so-

cial work] program. He's pretty much given his heart to building this program," Rick Short, Dean of the School of Human Sciences and Humanities, said of Erich. "He is an exemplar of what a social worker and a social worker professor should be."

In addition to colleagues, Erich received letters of recommendations from his students, including Jessica Narvaez, a social work major.

"His extensive wisdom and practice experience inspired me to pursue the social work profession wholeheartedly," Narvaez said as she reflected on her experiences with Erich. "He genuinely reflects the social work values of integrity, dignity and worth, and a passion for social justice in his daily life."

In an award ceremony to be conducted March 1 at the Rockwell Pavilion, M.D. Anderson Library, University of Houston, Erich will be presented with the Social Worker of the Year Award. From there he will be automatically nominated as the representative from the Houston-Galveston area to the Texas State Social Worker of the Year balloting.

Case stressed that "it is a possibility he can make it to the national level, and he deserves that."

This latest award adds to Erich's various awards, including three research grant awards: University Faculty Fellowship Award (2010/2011), Faculty Research



ASHLEY HONC:THE SIGNAL

Stephen "Arch" Erich, professor of social work and bachelor of social work program director, is this year's Social Worker of the Year for the Houston-Galveston area for the National Association of Social Workers.

and Support Fund award (2004) for his research on "Adolescent Adoption by Gay and Lesbian Parents," and Faculty Research and Support Fund award (2005), for his research on "Social Worker's Knowledge and Attitudes Toward the Transgender Community."

"I spend a lot of time trying to think about how to appropriately prioritize my obligations professionally," Erich said. "Spending time with students is very high up on my priority list. I really value working with students. I really want to be inspiring to them."

Today, here and now, that is the most important thing I can do. To inspire and mentor students."

"It takes a special set of skills to start a program like [the BSW Program]," Short said. "Since that time he is the face of stability. You can always count on Dr. Erich to keep moving forward."

Erich, "Arch" as he prefers to be called, provided his thoughts on the nomination and award by saying, "I am excited, honored and humbled, and a little bit embarrassed." Erich said that he is "appreciative" to be honored for his contribution in social work.

• • STUDENT LIFE • •

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## Chili cook-off a tasty part of UHCL history

**Anahid Tapia**  
The Signal

The University of Houston Clear-Lake was established 39 years ago in 1974, and for 23 of those years the UHCL Chili Cook-Off has become a staple in the history of the university.

April 16 will mark the 24<sup>th</sup> time the Student Life Office will host this event.

The Student Life Office is currently taking applications from those who wish to take part in this year's Chili Cook-Off. Participants will get to taste flavorful chili recipes and help keep a tradition alive.

"We started the event to promote a greater sense of community on campus," said Eileen Hulme, who along with Ruth (Perkins) Boyd, Tami Jenkins, and Susan Freeman started the Chili Cook-Off in 1989. "Because of the non-traditional nature of our student body, we decided we needed an event that would bring our students, faculty, and staff together in an unconventional way."

Although there have been years when the cook-off was postponed due to bad weather, the tradition has never waned.

"It's the only event that can gather the entire community," said Mari Martinez, special events chair for The National Society of Leadership and Success student organization.

The Chili Cook-Off offers entertainment for the whole Clear Lake community. Gener-

ally, cook-off participants offer different activities at their booths. Last year, Student Life provided attendees with the opportunity to do some rock climbing.

"It's a great time; I can understand why it's a staple in our school traditions," said Sarah Hopson, president of the Student Government Association.

As the years have gone by, the Chili Cook-Off has created competition among teams. Carla Bradley, who serves as SGA representative for the Communication and Digital Media Association, may not be able to recall if CDMA has ever won the Chili Cook-off, "but I know that the Marketing Association was our arch rivals for quite some time!"

Teams do not just compete for bragging rights; official UHCL judges award trophies to first, second and third place chili. A Spirit Award is also given out by the official UHCL tasting judges. By purchasing a tasting kit, attendees get the opportunity to try various chilies and vote on "Best Chili," "Best Booth" and "Cook's Choice."

Not many events on campus offer students the opportunity to drink on the premises, but the Chili Cook-Off does offer beer. The fact that patrons can purchase alcohol at the Chili Cook-Off is a perk that Hopson said "is one of those things that kind of makes it feel a little bit more like it's a four-year college already."

Every year teams change

themes.

"We've had many good themes from angels and demons to eat here and get gas," Bradley said.

Many teams use props and decorations to make their booth stand out.

"Really it's all about the teams," said Patrick Cardenas, coordinator of Student Life-Student Organizations "The teams are the important part of the cook-off and what it really takes for the event [to take place]."

Teams are not limited to student organizations.

"It is open to anyone who wants to attend or participate," Cardenas said.

Last year there were more than 60 participants in the event. Many teams take the Chili Cook-Off seriously and start planning from the first day of school trying to narrow down booth themes and recipes.

NSLS holds their own in-house cook-off to determine what recipe they will use at the event.

For those who want to take part in this historic tradition, the deadline to submit team applications is March 1 at noon.

Hulme says it means a great deal to her that the event is still going.

"It speaks the commitment of the student activities staff over the years to keep the tradition going," Hulmes said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE STUDENT LIFE OFFICE  
Contestants celebrate their chili win: the coveted SGA award in 2011.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE STUDENT LIFE OFFICE  
Teammates celebrate success at the cook-off in 2011.



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