

THE SIGNAL

Volume XXXVI, Number IV

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March 24, 2008

Leonardo
da Vinci
Exhibit

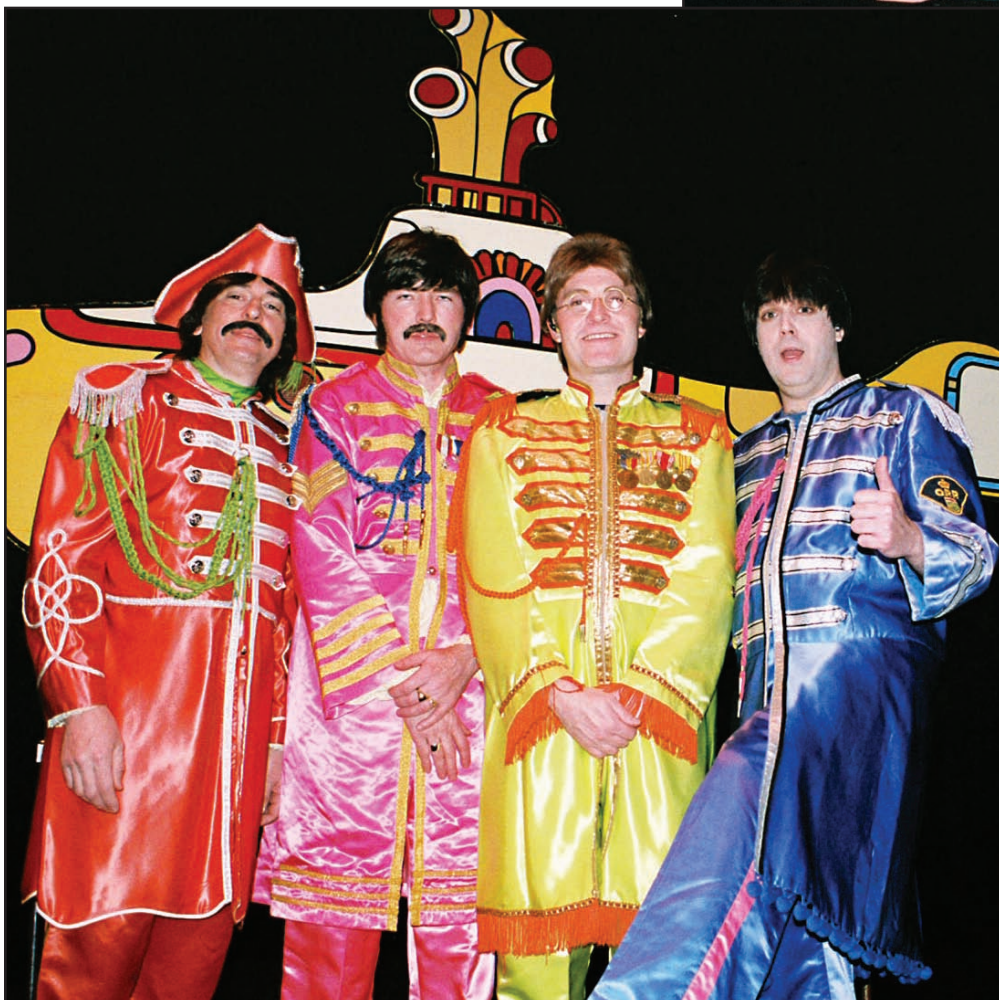
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BackBeat...A Tribute brings Beatlemania to Bayou Theater



Tracy Moody: The Signal



Tracy Moody: The Signal

Tracy Moody
The Signal Staff

The crowd was ready and waiting for Ohio's own BackBeat...A Beatles Tribute that rocked the house March 8 in the Bayou Theater. Band members A.J. Tscherne (George Harrison), Patrick Gannon (Ringo Starr), Scott Duress (John Lennon) and E.S. Hider (Paul McCartney) even performed a few requests from the audience, including *Hey Jude*, *Nowhere Man* and *Imagine*.

"It was really realistic and they impersonated the Beatles well," said Aime Theall, Deer Park High school student and lifelong Beatles fan.

"I didn't realize the immense difficulties involved in putting on a tribute crossing many decades," said Edward Jablonski, a rocket scientist at NASA - Johnson Space Center. "The instruments, the costume changes, it showed me how hard it is. They were fabulous and interactive."

Beatles fans sang along to songs from "The Early Years" through "Abbey Road" and beyond "Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band." The crowd erupted into a standing ovation for the encore and gathered long afterward in Atrium II for autographs from the band. To find out more about BackBeat ... A Tribute or leave your own review of the performance, visit <http://www.back-beattribute.com>.

New state degree policies

Julie Bray
The Signal Staff

Beginning with the fall 2008 semester, incoming freshmen and transfer students will be abiding by new policies set out by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The new policies will effect the number of classes students can both take and have transferred to upper-level universities. The policies could mean higher costs and fewer classes for students. The new policies will include the 120-Hour Rule, the 30-Hour Rule, the Six-Course Drop Rule, and the Three-peat Rule.

The new 120-Hour Rule made by the THECB says that an undergraduate degree should be completed in 120 hours. Exceptions to this rule include both education and social work degrees, which require fieldwork and certification. Universities can also petition for more than 120 hours if they feel certain degrees would benefit from additional classes.

The 120-Hour Rule also

POLICIES continues on page 10

Tutoring toward student success

Brandon White
The Signal Staff

Students having problems in certain courses and a difficult time finding help outside of the classroom are not alone. The faculty and staff at the University of Houston-Clear Lake have a solution: the new Student Success Tutoring Center.

Anthony Jenkins, dean of students, describes the Student Success Tutoring Center as a place where students can go to get the help that they need from other students who are not only good students in that area of difficulty, but are also great communicators and show a remarkable sense of patience and willingness to help their fellow students succeed. The center is also a place where students who are doing well in a particular course

SUCCESS continues on page 10

UHCL administration reveals fiscal plans for 2009

Cryss Godoy
The Signal Staff

The University of Houston-Clear Lake administration recently announced final figures for tuition increases, FY2009 budget plans and proposed measures to combat retention issues.

Michelle Dotter, vice president of financial management, presented the Student Government Association with details of the upcoming semester's tuition increases at their weekly meeting Feb. 12.

"Undergraduate students who will be taking 12 hours or more will notice a 6.1 percent increase in overall tuition and fees," Dotter explained. "Graduate students who will be taking nine hours or more will notice a 9 percent increase."

Undergraduates who paid \$86 per credit hour in FY2008 will pay \$98 per credit hour in FY2009. Graduate students will see the cost increase from \$118 to \$144. Non-resident undergraduate and graduate students will see an increase of 3.4 percent and 5.6 percent respectfully.

"Tuition increases will help fund additional full-time faculty, compensate for the shortfall in enrollment this fiscal year and will reserve funds for financial aid," Dotter said.

Following the theme of UHCL's fiscal health, President William Staples and Carl Stockton, senior vice president for academic affairs and provost, each led staff meetings with standing-room-only crowds Feb. 27.

Stockton outlined spending

initiatives and explained how restrictive the FY2009 budget will be, even with tuition increases in place. He also made it clear that solving UHCL's issues of enrollment and retention are key factors for easing budget constraints in the future.

Stockton also explained how a particular year's fiscal planning is based on the number of students enrolled the previous fiscal year - "a number that has been on a downward trend," he pointed out.

Comparing enrollment figures of fall 2006 to fall 2007, the difference is 184 less students. With figures from spring 2006 and spring 2007 juxtaposed, the difference is 168 students.

Stockton detailed how the projected revenue for UHCL in FY2009 is \$2.2 million, once the tuition increases are initiated.

Because of commitments that include financial aid and a budget shortfall due to last year's unmet enrollment goals, however, that figure is dwindled down to a more limiting \$1.1 million.

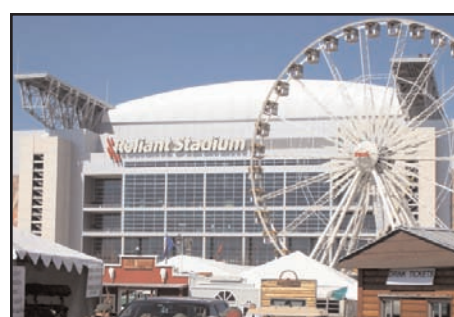
Priorities directly linked to increasing UHCL's student population ranked highest on the provost's list of priorities, but all addressed a need to invest money to increase faculty, staff and online offerings. One topic important to the faculty and staff in attendance was not included in the FY2009 list of priorities. There will be no across-the-board pay increase for full-time faculty and staff. Stockton noted, however, that the FY2009 plans did include promotion pay for faculty promoted from assistant to asso-

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Texas Independence Day

See page 7



Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo

See page 6

A four-year school: Is UHCL ready?

The marching band plays the school song in the quad. The cheerleaders and mascot rally the student body in support of the team’s big game this weekend. A number of student groups have organized a rally outside the dining hall. And thousands of students crowd the dorms, lawns and halls of the University of Houston-Clear Lake.

Indeed, it is a possibility. As an answer to retention problems, UHCL administration is contemplating petitioning the Texas Legislature to change its charter and become a four-year university.

As administration considers this possibility, we can truly ponder how the campus will change. How will the campus environment and landscape be effected? What changes will students and faculty face?

Many more classroom and administration buildings, parking garages and lots, student centers, dining halls and athletics facilities all have a place on a four-year campus. But, where will they go? Will the campus lose some of its precious, natural environment to make way for pricey, new buildings?

Let us not overlook the need for

dorms. On-campus housing will most certainly be a consideration. While the existing University Forest Apartments are currently contracted as student housing for UHCL, true dorms would surely be a necessity. If UHCL becomes a four-year university, it will attract students beyond its current commuter range. But, at what expense? At least a portion of the cost of providing for students living on campus will most certainly be passed along via tuition. Not to mention the parking nightmare. Countless cars will permanently occupy precious parking spaces on campus. You can circle the lot all you want; these students are not leaving any time soon.

In addition to housing, student services would have to grow exponentially to accommodate under-classmen’s needs. From counseling, health and testing services to the writing and student assistance centers, facilities will need to be constructed and expanded and additional staff brought on board in order to allow for the influx of students.

An expansion would definitely increase the visibility of the school. And enlarging the university would give UHCL the opportunity to establish more

of an individuality and showcase the quality of instruction provided.

Instruction would certainly be a factor in expanding the university. Who will teach all of the added courses? New faculty hires are a given, but will current faculty courseloads increase from three to four classes as a way to hold off on new hires until increased enrollment brings in sufficient revenue? That said, a four-year school would allow faculty better quality control of their degree plans and possibly give students an advantage over a two-year commuter school.

Expanding the university also means more students. More students mean an increase in the economy of the Clear Lake area. Everything from gas stations to dry cleaners to restaurants and night life will see more traffic. More students also mean improved opportunities on campus as well, such as book and software savings and more scholarships, internships, programs and events.

And speaking of students, how will the change affect the very distinct, mature air surrounding the current student body of UHCL? Bringing college freshmen and sophomores into the mix will completely change the feel and direction of the cam-

pus. Most UHCL students are employed and many have children. A commuter campus caters to this population with evening and online classes and is the reason many students choose UHCL for their degrees. The danger of a shift in focus to younger, four-year students poses a threat to the upperclassman’s status as the majority of the existing student body.

From the administration’s point of view, recruiting freshmen straight out of high school should improve retention. Faculty may also have an easier task at hand because more students will be starting their educations at the same level. Rather than coming in from junior colleges with and without applicable coursework, students would begin from a more level playing field.

From whatever point of view you approach this issue, be it upcoming college freshman, working mother of two in the last year of her degree, faculty member attempting to design curriculum or administration official seeking answers for an institution’s improvement, there are benefits and downfalls to a change of this nature. And whatever the outcome may be, let it stand as a means rather than a hurdle to our educations.

CrossSignals

What is your opinion on UHCL becoming a four-year university?

Pro: If more students equal more affordability of education for me and mine, then I’m all for it. Plus the influx of dollars could go a long way to making UHCL more visible by way of advertising dollars.

Con: I purposefully chose UHCL to get away from underclassmen and their issues. I fear that if administration is going to be focused on the needs of freshmen and sophomores, the needs of upperclassmen will take a back seat.

-Cryss Godoy

Pro: If UHCL becomes a four-year university it will receive more money.

Con: UHCL will need to erect more buildings to support more students. That will cost a lot of money and they might have to clear out some more wooded area around campus to make space for the new buildings. Also, parking will be really bad.

-Stanley White III

Con: I think that changing to a four-year university, although, could have its benefits, is ultimately a bad idea. I found that my major motivation for enrolling at UHCL, especially after attending a community college, was the intimacy and convenience offered by an upper-level-only university. I have a child, am divorced, and have to work. I find that I can relate to the students here more because of the way the school’s classes and curriculum are offered, it is beneficial and personally productive for me, and for people in similar situations. Even as far as earning a master’s degree, this school, in its current, upper-level state, is the most conducive to the productivity and efficiency of graduating students who do not conform to that which is consistent with a traditional student body.

-Ericka Paetz

Pro: I think four-year universities have the advantage of larger programs. When you have an array of classes, you can pick and choose different classes that apply to your discipline. There is more of a student life with dorms on campus and you get a well-rounded college experience.

-Amy Garcia

Pro: A positive result of UHCL becoming a four-year university would be the phenomenal growth the university would experience. Students would greatly benefit from receiving quality instruction from UHCL professors throughout their college career, instead of transferring from a junior college where the instruction is typically less specialized.

Con: On the other hand, the university would be forced to hire more than twice as many faculty members than are currently employed. There are always more college freshmen and sophomores than juniors or seniors since many people do not continue. (Statistics show that students who attend a junior or community college are more likely to complete four full years of higher education.)

-Wendy Westmoreland

The Signal staff members share their opinions about the possibility of UHCL becoming a four-year university. Join the discussion by logging on to The Signal blog at: www.myspace.com/thesignal_UHCL

Corrections

In the March 3 edition of The Signal, the article on page one titled “Campus Security: UHCL re-examines safety procedures after recent events raise concerns” inaccurately stated that there are four sworn officers on campus at all times.

CORRECTION: The police department tries to maintain a minimum of four sworn officers on campus from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., Monday through Friday. During other hours, the police department plans the deployed force based upon campus activity.

The article also stated that the police last trained for Active Shooter engagements in September.

CORRECTION: They last trained in December 2007 for such an event.

In the March 3 edition of The Signal, the editorial on page two titled “Safety starts with awareness” inaccurately stated the police department recently sent out a P.I.E.R. notification about a neighborhood sex offender.

CORRECTION: The department sent a P.I.E.R. notification reassuring the community that we are aware of the anxiety after the Northern Illinois Shootings and that we were increasing patrols to put people at ease. The sex offender notification was via the posting of fliers.

The editorial also stated that the campus has a twenty-four hour escort service.

CORRECTION: Student Life runs a van service in the afternoons and mid-evenings. After 10:30 p.m. when the Student Life Shuttle shuts down, the police department will gladly provide a safety escort upon request.

CLARIFICATION: Chief Paul Willingham wishes to clarify that the three things he mentioned in both articles that all crimes require are: motive (the desire to commit a crime), means (the ability to commit a crime) and opportunity (an easy victim to commit the crime against).

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The Signal is a public forum and will print letters to the editor subject to the following: letters must be no longer than 500 words. Where necessary, letters will be edited for grammar, spelling and style requirements. Letters must be signed and include the writer’s full name, address and phone number. The editors reserve the right to refuse letters, announcements and contributed articles deemed libelous.	Address letters to: The Signal UH-Clear Lake 2700 Bay Area Blvd., Box 456 Houston, TX 77058
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A little 'pick you up'

Most college students work at least part time. At a commuter school like UHCL, the traditional student body is often replaced with students who maintain full-time workloads and many have families to support as well. Add midterms, errands and chores ... and exhaustion is inevitable.

How do we cope? The ever-popular energy drink seems like an increasingly popular solution. Although the most desirable and healthy way to time-manage and function effectively is to maintain a healthy sleep cycle, those eight hours don't always fit into the daily agenda.

The average day at mid-semester may include: taking children to school, going to work and attending an evening class. Then, it's time to rush home, make dinner, get the kids fed, cleaned up, read to, tucked in and snuggled appropriately. Hopefully you didn't forget to walk the dogs, do the dishes and take out the trash. Now it's time to face the computer, where you will spend the next five hours before dragging yourself to bed and - oh look - it's only 2:30 a.m.! Four short hours later, the alarm will ring in a brand new happy day. Energy drink anyone?

Don't have kids? So, maybe your day begins a little less dramatically than one that includes waffles to-go and a missing back pack, but surely midterms wreak

havoc on students of the non-parental variety too. Perhaps you go to class, study all afternoon, squeeze in your favorite reality show or ESPN news wrap-up, meet your parents for dinner, and then maybe go out with friends. So how will you make it through the first half of your workday tomorrow?

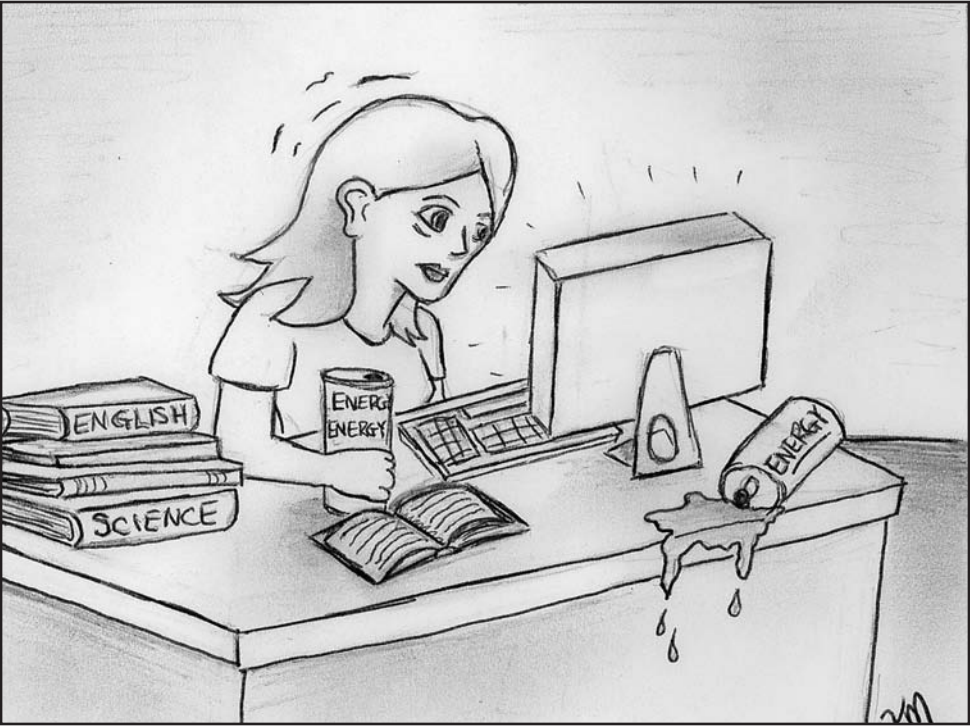
The once-reliable large, triple-shot mocha has risen in cost as much as gasoline. So is it any wonder that we are driven toward a Red Bull, Rock Star, or Monster just once or twice a week? What happens, however, when the occasional guilty indulgence in a quick boost of energy becomes the repetitive resource that helps you to stay up later and get up quicker - what are the risks?

Intelihealth.com concedes that doctors don't even know yet. Tests have been done on the effects of energy drinks on blood pressure and heart rhythms but, overall, no conclusive results have been determined about the fusion of caffeine with the new popular ingredients like Taurine and Guarana.

So, this punctually challenged, sleep-deprived student decided to try other, healthier sources of energy. What I discovered was entirely refreshing. Ivillage.com relates simple alternatives to the caffeine-coated cycle of never really catching up: change your diet, and exercise. The Web



Ericka Paetz
The Signal Staff



Krystal Mongan: The Signal

site suggests that a basic combination of the right blend of carbohydrates, protein and fat, in addition to staying (healthily) hydrated, can prevent that afternoon slip into energy deprivation.

I know what you're thinking ... Dr. Phil, Oprah, and every health-based reality show and morning advice series have been dishing out that same line forever, right? But what if it really worked? I decided to give it a shot (and one that didn't come in a 5 hour Energy bottle).

I actually slept for more than six hours, had a green tea, ate a healthy breakfast, and then studied. When I felt myself getting tired after a couple of hours, I channeled

some willpower and avoided reaching for my typical 16 ounces of energy-full, day-saving liquids. Instead, I did a few crunches and even some jumping jacks. I ate a granola bar and in less than 15 minutes, I sat back down at my computer to test my renewed senses. To my own naïve and stubborn amazement, it worked!

With not one single ounce of caffeine, I was able to get through this entire article - on deadline - and had enough stamina to study for a midterm. With that simple, time-allowing tactic, I discovered a boost that I can count on - without the "bull."

Take the smart way home



Jenna Lewis
The Signal Staff

Living in such a big city makes it hard to decide what to do on a Saturday night. Downtown Houston offers many clubs and bars along Main Street and in the surrounding areas of Midtown.

Don't want to drive that far? Nightlife in the Clear Lake area is always a great time. Lining the feeders of Interstate 45

solution to this problem is to call a cab, but this poses a problem since there are limited numbers of cabs to service the more than 2 million people in Houston.

The city of Houston has a flat rate of \$6 for taxi rides that originate and end within the downtown Houston area bounded by Interstate 45, Interstate 10 and US 59. Up to four passengers can share a cab ride and the cost of the inexpensive fare.

For those of us who live in or around the Clear Lake area and choose not to go all the way downtown, AAA Taxi of Clear Lake is one of the few choices besides Yellow Cab and United Cab. It is hard to predict how busy a cab company might be, especially on the weekends, but AAA Taxi would need more than the six drivers that they

normally have on weekend shifts to supply people who have been drinking with a safe ride home. A supervisor for AAA Taxi said that on average a cab takes between 20-30 minutes to arrive. On busy weekends, they advise to call ahead, sometimes even days before if you know you will need a cab because these pre-calls are always top priority.

It might be a pain to get a cab, but unless there's a designated driver, it far outweighs the consequences of deciding to drink and drive.

So be safe out there. Everyone should call a cab if they need to and do themselves, and everyone else, a favor by staying off the road once they've had too many.

are fun restaurants that turn into hot bar spots at night. All along Bay Area Boulevard and NASA Road One are other places you can go to get a drink, and those living close to Highway 146 can hit up the smaller bar scene in Kemah.

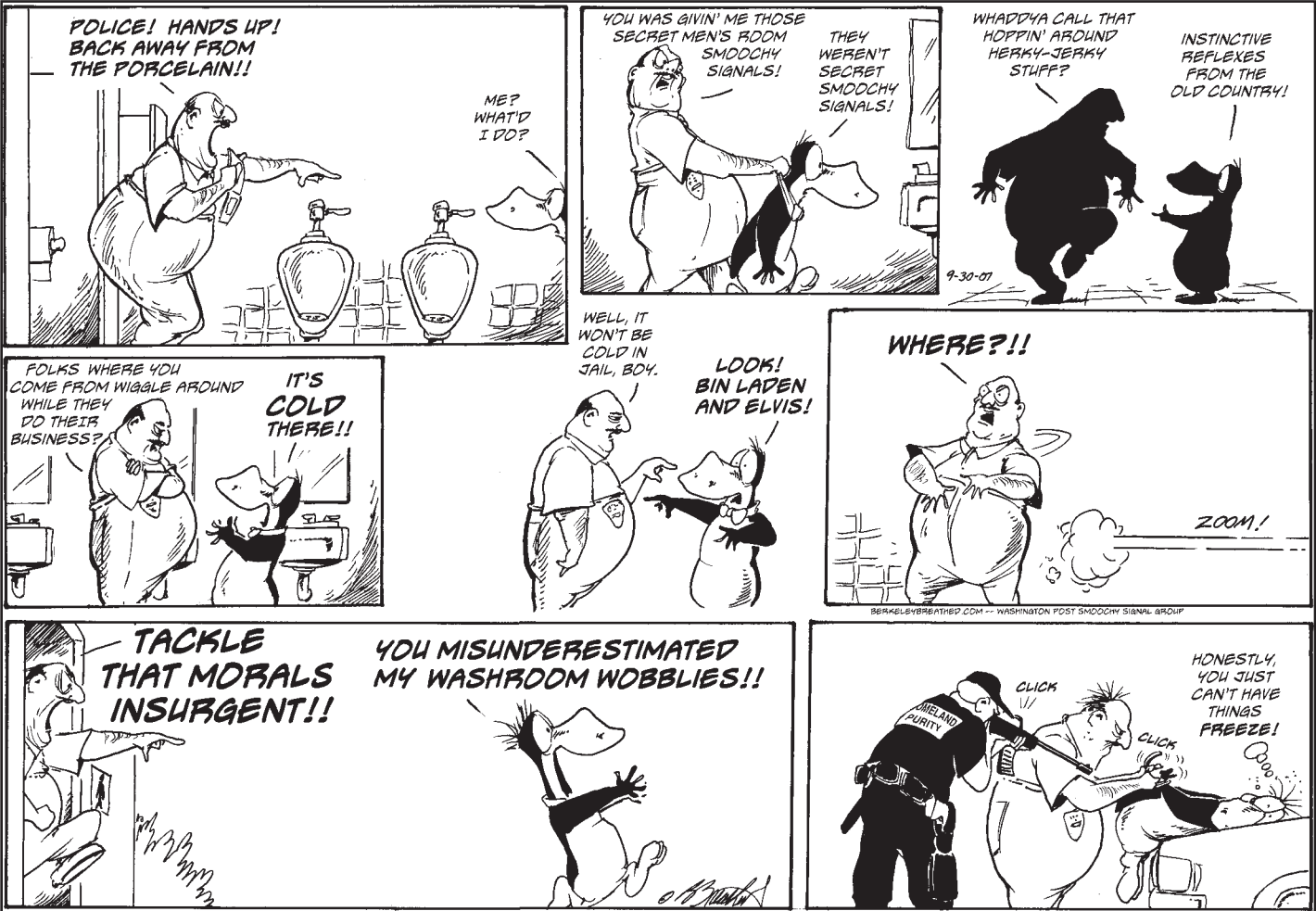
The problem is once people have enjoyed a Saturday night out with too much to drink, they simply get in their cars and drive home impaired.

The Houston Police Department is getting more serious about this problem, and they should; Harris County has one of the highest DWI rates in the country. HPD is hoping that this will all soon change once they have implemented breath alcohol testing vans. The vans will contain a breath analyzer, computer, fax machine and even a small holding cell. This is an ongoing initiative that will be implemented starting in the spring and going on into the summer.

The city will be using grant money to randomly set up these vans during populated events such as the Houston Livestock show and Rodeo and even Texans games. HPD is also using these vans randomly so they can be anywhere at anytime. HPD Chief Harold Hurtt hopes this will speed up the transport of those arrested and free-up officers' time to fight more crime.

Obviously with our high DWI rates, people in Houston enjoy going out on the town and having a good time. But how good of a time is it to end the night in jail, or worse, a body bag? The objective after a fun night out is for everyone to make it home safely without putting others on the road in harm's way at the same time. The easy

Opus by Berkeley Breathed



Culture develops at FotoFest 2008

Mandy Hess
The Signal Staff

A picture is worth a thousand words. But instead of trying to do the math when thousands of pictures are compiled with the intent of telling a story, it is easier to call it FotoFest.

FotoFest is an international, non-profit photographic arts and education organization based in Houston. FotoFest's purpose is to "promote the exchange of art and ideas through international programs and the presentation of photographic art." It was founded in 1983 and has been held every two years since 1986.

Two members of University of Houston-Clear Lake, Leslie Plaza Johnson, adjunct instructor in photography and visual anthropology, and Van Edwards, adjunct instructor in photog-

raphy, have work featured in this year's installment of FotoFest. The exhibit called "A New World Becoming: Life Along the Rio Grande" is featured at The Arts Alliance Center of Clear Lake, 2000 NASA Parkway, from March 6 to April 10.

Their photo-journal essay uses pictures to communicate how they observe the changing landscape along the Texas-Mexico border.

"This exhibition represents a visual examination of a confluence of peoples — of cultures, economies, demographics, mythologies," Johnson said, "a creative tension out of which new worlds evolve and merge."

Much of the inspiration to pursue "A New World Becoming" was due to Johnson's long-time interest in cultural identity coupled with Edwards' own personal history of growing up along the border in the 1950s.

Two-thirds of the Mexican border is

shared with Texas. Edwards calls it the most porous border in the world with more than 200 million people crossing per year. Johnson and Edwards feel that the constant movement and the cultural convergence of language, food, music and beliefs between these two nations could fuel their photographic mission for years to come.

"Keep your camera with you at all times," Johnson advises aspiring photographers. "Look for beauty in the now. Be self-aware. And definitely have a good sense of humor."

Photography serves a special purpose in the world of art. It can capture what would have otherwise been a fleeting glimpse and turn it into a tangible moment.

"What is essential is invisible to the eye," Edwards said. "It is to make visible the invisible the thing that underlies this incredible world and life. And that's what our function is. People

who are looking for the meaning of life aren't looking — it's right there they don't have to ask questions, they just have to look."

FotoFest takes place in all Houston art museums and 107 other locations. They are celebrating photo-based art with 145 exhibits as part of FotoFest 2008 — China, the Twelfth International Biennial of Photography and Photo-related Art, March 7-April 20. More information can be found at www.fotofest.org.

The main themes of FotoFest this year are China and transformation. However, individual locations can showcase works of their choice.

For a listing of participating locations, go to www.fotofest.org/ff2008/index.htm and look under the Exhibitions & Installations link.

**Houston
FotoFest
2008**



"Brownsville Dino" by
Van Edwards



"Quincenera" by
Leslie Plaza Johnson

Discovering the mind of Leonardo da Vinci

Leonardo da Vinci: Man, Inventor, Genius

Krystal Mongan
The Signal Staff

The latest exhibit, *Leonardo da Vinci: Man, Inventor, Genius*, is being shown at the Houston Museum of Natural Science from March 7 to Sept. 1 in an attempt to uncover the life and mind of Leonardo da Vinci.

Although photographs of some of da Vinci's more famous paintings are present, the exhibit is dedicated to da Vinci's inventions and ideas, not his artwork.

As guests walk into the exhibit, they first watch a five minute introductory film called "Da Vinci the Inventor."

"The video gives an overview of Leonardo's life and his significance to science so that guests will know what to expect," said Erin Blatzer, assistant director of public relations.



The exhibit will display about 50 wooden replicas, handcrafted in Italy, of da Vinci's designs. Each model will be accompanied by an original sketch along with a brief description about his work.

Many of the models are interactive,

allowing guests to understand the concept behind his ideas.

"When you are able to touch some of these things people can get a 'eureka' moment to see what Leonardo was thinking," Blatzer said. "Hopefully people will be inspired to pursue the sciences to make our lives better."

Some of the models the exhibit will include are a catapult, a system for walking on water, an underwater breathing device, a gear shift, a robot and a parachute.

The first replica visitors will see in the exhibit is one of the most famous designs by da Vinci, the Air Screw. Ancestor of the helicopter, the Air Screw was made of linen, reeds and iron thread. It worked by having four men rotate the shaft in order to lift each other off the ground.

"If this helical machine is well done, namely of canvas whose pores are

sealed up with strong paste and when it gets turned around quickly, then this screw will escalate and rise," da Vinci once said. Da Vinci lived from 1452 to 1519 and "the ideas Leonardo came up with 400 years earlier, worked," said

David Temple, associate curator of paleontology.

"[Leonardo] had very little [formal] education because his parents were not married," Temple said.

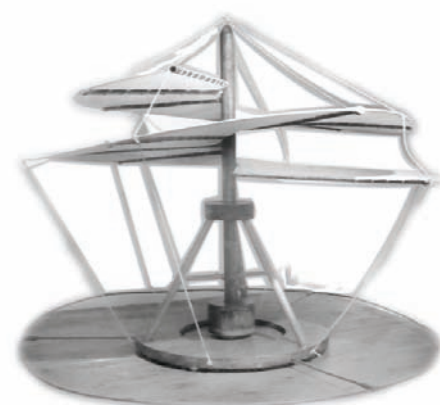
Although da Vinci could not further his formal education, he started to learn on his own.

"What was unique about Leonardo was his ability to observe," Temple said. "Everything he saw interested him."

Some topics da Vinci learned in his life were paleontology, anatomy, art, mechanics, hydraulics and flight. He is regarded as a model Renaissance man because of his broad talents and inventions.

"[Leonardo] was left-handed and

back then it was considered to be evil," Temple said.



He also wrote backwards. To read da Vinci's text, one would place a mirror next to his notes to see the reversed image.

"Leonardo was very conscious about security because people started stealing his [inventions]," Temple said. "That could be why he started writing backwards."

Ticket prices for the exhibit are \$15 for adults and \$12 for children, seniors and college students. College students must show valid identification.

For more information:

call 713-639-4629

or visit

<http://www.hmns.org>

Photography by Krystal Mongan: The Signal

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Date: Tuesday, March 25, 2008
Time: 6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Location: SSCB Lecture Hall 1.100.03

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Leaders on campus! You can be one too!

Dr. William A. Staples sponsored the Spring SGA President's Luncheon and the Executive Council and the council members wanted to express their gratitude and say "thank you, Dr. Staples, and we appreciate your continual support of SGA!"

In his address to the students, Dr. Staples said: "Leaders will always be in short supply! It is a big job to become a leader regardless of the level of leadership. Being a leader is a great honor and a skill that will not go away. You can either be a participator or a spectator." Dr. Staples encouraged the council to remain players and participate and not be spectators. "Go out into the world and demonstrate great leadership skills: think about what you want to accomplish!"

CONTACT THE SGA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:

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Michael Phillips, VP-Committee Coordinator
Nida Ajaz, VP-Student Outreach & Communications
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Sat., April 5, 2008

**University of Houston- Clear Lake,
Student Services Building Lawn
12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

Chili Cook-off to the 20th degree!

Bring your family and friends!!!

FREE Amusements:

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- Moonwalk
- Mega Slides
- Obstacle Course
- Swing Carnival Ride
- Fire truck ...and much more!

Chili Tasting Kits:

**\$3 with UHCL ID
\$4 without UHCL ID**

More info: 281.283.2560

*Any individual requiring a special accommodation for a specific disability should contact the Student Life Office at least one week prior to the event.





COOKING UP SOME COMPETITION

Houston launches the 2008 barbecue cook-off

Britney Samperi
The Signal Staff

The largest Houston picnic drew massive crowds of people to enjoy the World’s Championship Bar-B-Que Contest for three days of competition, food, entertainment and fundraising.

Also known as The Rodeo Cook-off, the event lasted from Feb. 28 to March 1 and took place in the south parking lot at Reliant Stadium. Thursday night is only reserved for sponsor members to eat shrimp and steak specially prepared by each tent. Friday and Saturday nights are open for the public; the cost is \$10 to enter the gate. However, an individual cannot enter a tent without a wristband or stamp from the company providing the booth.

“The barbecue is great and the entertainment is awesome,” said Jordy Tollett, rodeo cook-off attendee.

Started in 1974, the cook-off attracts an immense number of contestants and attendees for the duration of the three-day event every year. In 2007 the cook-off drew 190,913 people, which beat the previous record of 183,339 set in 2004. This year, a record breaking total of 207,149 attendees joined the cook-off.

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo collects money from booth rentals for the cook-off. A portion of the proceeds goes toward scholarship funds; however, some individual teams donate additional proceeds to their own favorite charity. The rest of the money collected goes toward expenses such as fencing, removing trash, portable toilets, golf carts and salaries for approximately 13,000 workers.

“All the money we raise for Top Hand Cookers goes to all Fort Bend schools,” said Dana Osborne, president of Gulf Coast Stabilized Materials. Top Hand Cookers consists of seven team members and has participated in the cook-off for about 20 years.

More than 250 teams compete for awards including: best barbecue, most unique pit, cleanest area and most colorful team. Trophies are awarded to teams preparing the best barbecue in brisket, chicken, pork and spare ribs, as well as an overall winner. The judging takes place on Saturday, where Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo committee members select finalists for all awards. On Sunday, all finalists gather around the Garden Stage for the announcement of winners.

“In 2005 Triple B Cookers won first place [for the grand champion overall award] and in 2007 we won seventh place,” said Glenn Hawkins, president of Disk Enterprises. Hawkins has helped in the Hooters and Shiner Bock tents for three years and said he assists with anything needed, from tending the bar to picking up trash or serving food.

In order to win awards, teams have to put a lot of work and time into preparing the barbecue on and off Reliant grounds.

Photos by Britney Samperi
Design by Wendy Westmoreland

“It takes three days to precook the brisket and ribs,” said Michael Leggio, president of Leggio Electric. “We start cooking 100 pounds of sausage and 600 quarters of chicken at 4 a.m. in order to serve by 7:30 p.m.”

Other than food, entertainment is also provided in the tents. Some teams search for weeks to find the perfect band or DJ to play for visitors. Top Hand Cookers hired Rocky Wihelm, senior partner of Rocky’s Disco, to play ‘60s and ‘70s music.

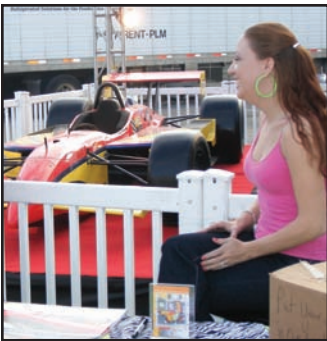
“We have a disco theme for our tent and use the same DJ for all three nights,” Osborne said.

Bottomless Pit Cookers hired Gary P. Nunn, who was inducted into the Texas Hall of Fame in 2004, to sing on Friday night, and PF and the Flyers to perform Saturday night. Leggio said the bands have to play and perform well enough to keep guests happy all night long.

“The cook-off is a three day party of fun,”

Leggio said. “I wouldn’t be doing it for so long if it wasn’t.”

For more information about next year’s cook-off, log on to <http://www.hlsr.com/index.aspx>.



Clockwise from left: Shoinagh Morris promotes the Grand Prix of Houston; Greg Sutphen prepares ribs for the cook-off; Bo Barrett and Michael Rose take a break outside the Bottomless Pit tent; Kathy Elam and Joyce Jarnagan check for wristbands outside the Bottomless Pit.

Livestock Show & Rodeo

RodeoHouston lassos big name entertainment and spurs on education scholarships

Tosha Griffin
The Signal Staff



The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is an attraction that many Houstonians look forward to every year. While most people initially think about the concerts and performances, it actually has a lot more to offer.

RodeoHouston features a rodeo segment that consists of: tie-down roping, bareback riding, team roping, saddle bronc riding, steer wrestling, barrel racing, bull riding and the calf scramble. There is also livestock marketed from various farms across the country, judged contests, retail booths and educational centers.

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo attracts attendees and participants nationwide, and each year it brings \$345 million to the Houston area.

Patsy Towels from 5-T Farms has been marketing her cattle in the livestock show for the past 15 years. She chooses to participate in Rodeo-Houston because it “features a lot of international guests.”

Towels points out that visiting international guests who attend the rodeo to purchase marketed cattle provide a big boost to the Houston economy and are frequent buyers of her farm’s steers.

Each year there are at least 19,000 volunteers who contribute to putting on the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, the world’s largest livestock exhibition. This year is the 75th anniversary of the rodeo, which was first held at the Democratic Convention Hall.

RodeoHouston provides scholarships and awards. This year, the four-year scholarships have increased from \$12,000 to \$15,000. Annually, 209 four-year metropolitan scholarships are awarded to graduating students from Houston-area public school districts, 70 four-year scholarships are awarded to graduating seniors who are members of Texas FFA and 70 to Texas 4-H Club members.

Lauren Villareall is a member of FFA and has been showing at the rodeo for



Above: Lauren Villareall takes her cow, Ruby, for a drink. Villareall won divisional champion on March 6. Left: Tyler Choate from Whitney FFA struggles to keep his calf from running off in the March 7 calf scramble.

two years. She won first place in the division championship with her cow, Ruby, March 6. Villareall said getting prepared is exhausting; daily she feeds Ruby, exercises her, bathes her and, most importantly, teaches her control. She hopes to one day be awarded a college scholarship through the FFA and RodeoHouston.

RodeoHouston strives to educate as well as entertain. During the Super Series, speakers educate spectators on the process riders go through to prepare for the event and how they prepare the animals. In Reliant Center there is The Hill dairy exhibit, where a speaker teaches children and adults how a cow is milked and interesting facts about dairy cows.

Nearby is the birthing center where onlookers can see expectant animals in addition to new mothers and their babies. In the birthing center you can find cattle, sows and sheep. Many of the babies there have been born within the week.

Close by are incubating eggs where onlookers can witness chicks struggling to exit their shell. Posted around are interesting facts, such as, “it can take an entire day for a chick to peck his way out of the shell.”

The rodeo also has events such as the trail ride, the Rodeo Uncorked!, which is a wine tasting competition, the Rodeo Roundup in front of city hall, and the world’s championship barbecue contest, just to name a few.

There are also days designated to pride, such as Black Heritage Day, which this year featured John Legend; Go Tejano Day, which featured Duelo; and Los Horoscopos de Durango on March 16. While the concerts are the biggest attraction to RodeoHouston, there is so much more to offer through the efforts to educate and inform.

Surrounding the rodeo on one side is a vast carnival filled with anything a child could wish for from 150 rides to vendors serving anything you would crave to curve an appetite. There is everything one could desire, including candied apples, funnel cakes, turkey legs, shrimp stir-fry and McDonalds.

RodeoHouston generates a great deal of economy for Houston and after 75 years still strives to make a local impact in the lives of Houstonians.



Maegan Reichert races past barrels in the Super Series II, Round 2, competition on March 10.

Photos by Tosha Griffin
Design by Wendy Westmoreland

COME AND TAKE IT

Texas Independence Day

Wendy Westmoreland
The Signal Staff

On March 1, 1836, near the banks of the Brazos River, 59 patriots convened in a small wooden building at Washington-on-the-Brazos. The building was a modest structure, so when a blue norther chilled the air that day, the men were forced to cover the door and window openings with sackcloth to block the frigid wind. The following day the delegates, led by Sam Houston, signed what would become the Constitution of 1836 declaring Texas' independence from Mexico.

Today, an authentic replica of Independence Hall stands in the very location where those 59 men laid the foundation for the Republic of Texas. In the distance, the original water cistern still stands on those hallowed grounds.

This year marks the 172nd anniversary of Texas' independence. Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site hosted a two-day commemoration of that monumental day in Texas history that included historical accounts from William B. Travis, Sam Houston and Susanna Dickinson, the only surviving woman from the Battle of the Alamo, all portrayed by local historians. Events included live musical performances, demonstrations by a professional blacksmith, the cutting of "Texas' Largest Birthday Cake" and speeches from Texas State Representative Lois Kolkhorst, U.S. Congressman Michael McCaul and Texas Parks & Wildlife Executive Director Carter Smith.

In her speech, Kolkhorst addressed current issues regarding

the preservation of natural resources, protection of wildlife and status of the Texas highway system.

"Texas has yet to learn submission to any oppression, come from what source it may," Kolkhorst said, quoting Sam Houston. "If we are to better Texas, it is up to each of us. We must stay true to the values from which Texas was formed."

McCaul, a fourth-generation Texan, compared the bravery and valor of Texans in the 1800s to Texans who are currently serving this country, specifically in the armed forces and civil service.

"In the spring of 1836, 59 delegates met on these grounds to construct a language of freedom, stating that Mexico was unfit to govern," McCaul said. "Those who fought for independence were willing to pay the ultimate price for freedom just as thousands of Americans have since paid."

Featured in the program was a commentary by Bob Heinonen, founder of Texas Heroes, as William B. Travis. Texas Heroes is a traveling group of professional historians who portray heroes and heroines in the first-person. Heinonen has been portraying Travis since 1986.

"When I portray a historic character," Heinonen said, "I want to look the people in the audience in the eyes. I want them to feel like I am talking to their soul."

Adding to the nostalgia of the event, an authentic army camp was staged, complete with canvas tents and the first Republic of Texas flag waving proudly against an overcast sky. From a distance, two fife players accompanied by a lone drummer summoned participants portraying Texan soldiers who lined up with muskets in hand, ready to fire a commemorative salute. It was a chilling moment on a warm March afternoon when the signal sounded and shots were fired in honor of those who lost their lives in battle, ensuring independence from Mexico.

Walking the grounds of Washington-on-the-Brazos, Texans by birth or by choice could appreciate the historical events that took place there more than 170 years ago, shaping the history of Texas. The conviction of the men who fought the battles that ultimately won Texas its independence was echoed by the invitation to Mexican troops on the banner dedicated Texan soldiers hung from the side of their cannon at Gonzales: "Come and take it."



Top: A replica of the Texas Declaration of Independence signed by all 59 delegates was displayed in Independence Hall. Bottom: A replica of Independence Hall was erected on the three original corner posts discovered in an archaeological dig at Washington-on-the-Brazos.



Above: Participants portraying soldiers of the Texas Army fire a commemorative salute in honor of those who lost their lives during the battles for independence.



Clockwise from top: Bill Hoffman, Rick Eddy and Dennis Heckanthorne summon Texas soldiers for a salute in honor of Texas Independence Day; an authentic army camp was staged, complete with artifacts from the late 1800s; fife player Dennis Heckanthorne plays a tune for visitors; re-enactors Bob Heinonen as William B. Travis and J.R. Edmondson as Sam Houston share stories outside the Star of the Republic Museum at Washington-on-the-Brazos.

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Secret Advantage of Successful
Leaders, 6-7:30 p.m., SSCB 1.100
Registration required.
Call 281-283-2560.

March 26
Workshop: Successful Interviewing,
5-6 p.m., SSCB 3.101
Registration encouraged.
Call 281-283-2590.

March 27
Alternative Certification
Program Informational Meeting,
5:30-7 p.m., Bayou 2512

March 28
NSLS Leadership Training
Days Videoconference,
9 a.m.-noon, SSCB 1.202.07 OR
1-4 p.m., SSCB 1.202.07
Registration required.
Call 281-283-2560.

Natural Science Seminar,
12:15 p.m., Bayou 2512
For information e-mail
masood@uhcl.edu.

March 29
NSLS Leadership Training
Days Videoconference,
9 a.m.-noon, SSCB 1.202.07
Registration required.
Call 281-283-2560.

March 31
Speaker Series: Mapping Crater
Depths on Mars in Search
for Shallow Ground Ice,
7 p.m., SSCB 1.100.03

Spring Forward: Good for more than just clocks

Amy Parnell
The Fitness Zone

Spring has sprung! Texas weather may change every 15 minutes, however, more than a few of those minutes contain a wonderful Spring with light winds, soft sunlight, and lovely scenery. The change in weather allows an opportunity to increase, or for some of us begin, a regular cardiovascular exercise routine.

Cardiovascular or aerobic exercise involves and improves the body's consumption of oxygen. The term and exercise are relatively new, developed by Dr. Kenneth H. Cooper and Colonel Pauline Potts. Cooper's 1968 book, *Aerobics*, introduced the idea of aerobic and cardiovascular exercise to the public while providing several exercises including running, walking, and swimming.

There are a number of benefits to scheduling cardiovascular workouts as part of your daily routine:

1. Strengthens the heart and lungs, improving respiration and heart efficiency.
 2. Overall muscular toning and improved circulation, which in turn lead to lowered blood pressure and an overall feeling of well-being.
 3. Increased metabolism and the use of fats during exercise.
- So what do you need to begin a regular

cardiovascular workout regimen? It is actually pretty simple; you need a good pair of running/walking shoes, some shorts and a shirt. Just tie your shoelaces and find a beautiful park in which to walk or run.

What about the weather? We all know Houston weather can be temperamental at best. Well, the Fitness Zone has a several treadmills, ellipticals and stair-step machines to help you when the climate doesn't. We even have television (although sadly, you will have to watch Oprah without sound).

What is the best routine for a cardiovascular workout? There are three stages: warm-up and stretching, exercise and cool-down. All three stages are essential to the success of a cardiovascular workout.

Warm-up and stretching are the most frequently overlooked parts of the routine. It is important to walk for 5 to 10 minutes at a low intensity to warm up the muscles. Muscles should be warm before stretching. Stretching improves cardiovascular performance and lowers the rate of injury.

To receive the highest benefits from your workout you should workout three to five days a week for 20 to 60 minutes. Start slow; the quickest way to injury or just plain old soreness is to over exert yourself on the first day.

The cool down period should also take 5 to 10 minutes at 50 percent of the rate of your



PARNELL

full exercise. After cooling down another stretch, while not mandatory, is definitely beneficial, especially if you mix weight resistance training with your cardiovascular routine.

Questions? Come by the Fitness Zone and ask me or one of our Student Workers about our cardiovascular machines and the best routine for your needs. Or just look out the window, see the sunshine and start to Spring Forward. You will be glad you did.

Peace,
Amy

The *Code Blue Police Emergency Phones* on campus are now operational. The UHCL Police Department will endeavor to keep them so through weekly call tests. If you find one of the devices out of order, please report it to the Police Department.

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281-283-2222 www.uhcl.edu/police

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POLICIES: *continued from page 1*

states that degree plans must be equally split into lower and upper level classes. This means that no more than 60 hours of lower level courses can be transferred to a university where upper level courses will be taken.

Alongside the 120-Hour Rule is the 30-Hour Rule, which states if a student going to a state-funded university exceeds 30 hours beyond his or her required degree plan, state funding through the university will no longer be available. For example, if a student's undergraduate degree is a total of 120 hours, he or she cannot exceed 150 hours and still receive state funding. Because of the new policies, students will only receive state funding for up to 150 hours. Any additional hours are the student's financial responsibility.

Chloe Diepenbrock, director of the University of Houston-Clear Lake's writing center and president of the faculty senate, believes that the 30-Hour Rule will make it difficult for students to obtain a well-rounded education.

"This rule will hurt students who change majors or who simply wish to explore the curriculum to obtain a well-rounded education," Diepenbrock said. "This particular rule troubles me greatly because it discourages academic curiosity and pushes students to adopt a major immediately and then stay with it, even if the student later decides that the degree does not suit his/her goals. It also reflects a view of education that assumes people study simply to obtain degrees rather than to expand their understanding of the world and themselves. It makes it very difficult to learn for the sake of learning itself. Exploring different disciplines will simply not be an option."

An additional rule going into effect is the Six-Course Drop Rule. This policy mandates that no more than six courses can be dropped over a students' entire college career. After six classes are dropped, a "W" will no longer be accepted, and if students do not make an effort to complete the course, they will receive an "F".

The Six-Course Drop rule will affect the level of commitment undergraduate students give to their classes since most courses get dropped while students are in community college. This can be due to a lack of direction or interest in classes, and since classes are generally inexpensive, there is less of a penalty.

Steven Davidson, mathematics professor at San Jacinto College, sees many students drop classes far too frequently.

"For whatever reason, about half of the students who start in a lower-level math course drop out of the course because they are not going to make the grade they desire."

Davidson said. "For some of them, it is because they never had a chance of passing because they are in over their heads, and for most of the rest, it is because they were not prepared to do the amount of work it would take to master the material."

Davidson believes the new policies will create a need for both students and advisors to take a much more serious look into planning a student's degree.

"I think that both the student and the college will have to put more effort in accurate placement," Davidson said. "I often look at the work a student does for an assignment or a test and I realize that that student would have a hard time learning the material in the course that preceded the one they are in now. Or I review a topic from the last course before I extend it into new material, and find that they are unable to understand the review, much less able to recall the information and add to it."

The final policy, called the Threepeat Rule, also dictates a fee for students who attempt a class more than three times. This means students who fail or drop the same class more than three times will have to pay fees that add up to more than \$100 per credit hour for each subsequent attempt. The THECB did, however, make several exceptions for those dropping classes. Individuals with a death in the family, medical problems, military service or changes in work schedules will be allowed to drop classes without penalty. The students, however, must drop all classes in order to be exempt from penalties.

Only time will tell how much of an impact these new rules will have on students wishing to pursue an undergraduate degree at a Texas state university.

"We cannot be sure how it will work until we actually see real-life situations," Diepenbrock said.

"This rule will hurt students who change majors or who simply wish to explore the curriculum to obtain a well-rounded education."

Chloe Diepenbrock,
director of the UHCL Writing Center and president of the faculty senate



SUCCESS: *continued from page 1*

can go to receive extra assistance to build on that success.

The tutors will be students, recommended by professors in the field, who Jenkins says have shown a great deal of potential in assisting their schoolmates with problems seen in a particular subject.

Jenkins, along with Darlene Biggers, associate vice president for student services, and Yvette Bendeck, associate vice president of enrollment management, recognize that there have been two specific problems that the university and its students seem to have at UHCL. The first problem pertains to the common difficulty with specific courses within one's major. The Student Success Tutoring Center was created with that in mind.

"Since my time here at the university, I noticed that there were several courses that students would come in and talk to me about," Jenkins said. "I saw a pattern of several courses that students were having difficulty with and they were having to take these courses over and over again. These courses fell outside of the support [the Writing and Math Centers] currently had in place. So, I was talking to some students one day and we basically came up with the same idea: Why don't we have something here in place to help our students? Those two students and I sat down and started talking and said we need to create an actual student success center here on this campus."

The second problem is student retention.

"We are very concerned about the retention of our students," Biggers said. "Dr. Bendeck, as the associate vice president for enrollment management, has been sharing data with us that indicates that we are losing quite a few students after a semester or two. We are looking at what we can do to improve that."

While losing students is a problem at any school, Jenkins admits that UHCL is different because many students here have families, full-time jobs and other obligations to fulfill. Having to leave school is sometimes their only option. On the other hand, some students give up on school because coursework becomes too difficult for them. The Student Success Tutoring Center's main objective is to keep that from happening.

"It is going to take faculty, students, staff; it is going to take everybody to make sure that we



enhance the overall retention of students on this campus," Jenkins said. "This particular program is just one of several we are trying to put in place that will hopefully create this type of tapestry that students are not falling through the cracks so that students know that they have support services here, they know where those services are, they know what type of services are going to be provided, times and locations. We [in Student Services], along with our partners in Academic Affairs, are walking hand-in-hand to make sure this university stops losing students for reasons we can help."

With the school considering the jump to become a four-year university, the center has the potential to become a vital instrument for incoming students who may be required to take remedial courses.

Biggers says students who may be concerned with the increase in tuition can be assured that it has nothing to do with the tutoring center, at least not at the moment.

"It is being totally funded out of left-over money or reserves that we have for the rest of the year," Biggers said. "We have accumulated enough to do that for a while but we will probably be coming back in a year and asking for permanent funding for it. This is really a pilot project to see how well it is received, how well it does and if the university and the students are willing to support it in the future."

Classes available for tutoring are MATH 3032, MATH 3037, ACCT 3331, ACCT 3431, ACCT 4532, DSCI 3131, DSCI 3231, FINC 3331, Biology and Research and Statistics. The center hopes to expand its services to include helping students learn how to work with a MAC, assisting with graphic design and setting up study and organizational skills workshops.

The Student Success Tutoring Center is located on the third floor of the Student Services Building in the study carrels area. Hours of operation are Monday-Thursday from 3 to 8 p.m. and Friday from 12 to 5:00 p.m. It is a free service for all UHCL students.

To set up an appointment, students must first contact the Office of the Dean of Students. Students will then go by the office, show a valid ID and pick up a tutor slip. Tutors will not be allowed to assist any student without a slip. Walk-ins are also accepted with a tutor slip.

Students interested in becoming tutors may contact the office of the Dean of Students. For more information, contact Anthony Jenkins at 281-283-2567 or at JenkinsA@uhcl.edu.

FY2009: *continued from page 1*

ciate professor and from associate professor to professor.

"We would like nothing more than to give out pay increases, but this year the budget is stressed," Stockton pointed out. "Even a 1 percent merit increase in pay across the board translates to an increase in spending of \$350,000."

"The Faculty Senate regrets that there are no pay raises allocated for faculty or staff this year," said Chloe Diepenbrock, faculty senate president. "We hope that once we have alleviated the enrollment problems we are experiencing, both faculty and staff will receive much-needed equity raises. With inflation rates predicted to be at least 3 percent this year, we will be even farther behind the cost of living than ever before."

At Staples' meeting, student retention was once again the theme. Staples detailed the ways in which traditional upper-level institutions like UHCL have constraints placed on their enrollment and retention by both a steadily increasing number of graduated students and a decreasing number of students entering the student body via the area's community colleges.

An upcoming branch campus in the city of Pearland could stretch UHCL's ability to enroll students beyond the geographical limits of its current location.

"The city of Pearland will build the building

to fast-forward the project," Staples said. "Pearland will lease 20,000 square feet while maintaining use of the other 10,000. In 20 years, when the building is paid off, Pearland will gift not only the building, but also the land on which it sits, not to the University of Houston System, but to the University of Houston-Clear Lake."

At the Feb. 27 meeting Staples also discussed the administration's ongoing assessment of the option to seek authority from Texas Legislature to offer freshmen and sophomore classes at UHCL.

"If all goes well, information regarding the positive and negative aspects of going four-year would first be presented to faculty, staff and students," Staples said. "If all parties agree to proceed, a presentation of our intentions would first be made to Chancellor Kahtor and then the Board of Regents. Once all that has been done, a presentation to legislation can finally be considered."

Staples reiterated that a decision to seek this authority to change UHCL's charter and even the ultimate granting of that authority does not necessarily mean a change to four-year instruction is inevitable.

"It's a very complicated question, whether or not to go four-year," Diepenbrock said. "It would change us radically. I would want us to maintain all the things we already do so well. Even if we did begin serving freshmen and sophomores, I wouldn't want that to change."

SPEAK YOUR MIND!

Students voice opinions on range of topics

Aubrey Harbin
The Signal Staff

The Office of Student Life hosted a special event to get into the minds of University of Houston-Clear Lake students to find out what types of services and programs the college can offer to better serve its students.

Speak Your Mind was open to all students March 4-7 in Atrium II of the Bayou Building. Partitions were draped with large sheets of paper with various questions posed on each one. Many students took the time to read the messages left by other students, as well as adding their own comments.

Questions included: If you could have one wish for UCHL, what would it be? What would get you to come back to campus on the weekend (besides a weekend class)? What type of activities would you like to see at the Chili Cook-Off on April 5? What are your hobbies, or if you could have a hobby, what would it be? What are your favorite types of movies? What is happiness? How do you incorporate wellness into your life as a college student? What are good, small local bands to bring to campus? The Student Life Office is planning on having a Spirit Week next fall. What types of events or themes should we have during that week? What new building do you wish we had on campus? Who has inspired you here at UHCL and why? Who do you think will win the presidential election and why?

For a sample of the results, check out the sidebar on this page. The complete results are available on the Web site at www.uhcl.edu/thesignal.

Michelle Kaltenbach, coordinator of student life, explained that the purpose of the event was to get feedback as to what types of programs and events students are interested in, areas in which the Office of Student Life could improve, and what students want.

“The best way is to survey students,” Kaltenbach said, “but they are all overwhelmed, and it’s hard to

track down people and have them fill out a survey.”

The inspiration for the display came from her college days as an undergraduate student. She and her college roommate hung a large sheet of paper outside their dorm room and posted a new question every day. Fellow students enjoyed it and participated, so she felt this would be a good avenue to use the technique again.

“I think the boards are a good idea,” said Nandi Mark-Bowen, an undergraduate finance major and international student from Trinidad. “The university should provide more research opportunities for students.”

Kaltenbach is in charge of student organizations and special events offered through the Office of Student Life. She hopes to gain new ideas for future events.

The results of the survey will be distributed and shared with other departments within the university. Kaltenbach said that she thought this input would affect decisions that will be made if the university transitions to a four-year college.

“This feedback will affect what we do,” Kaltenbach said. “It will affect who we hire, the type of programs that we offer, the buildings that are built. It will also affect how we advertise.”

If students have other comments or questions any time during the year, Kaltenbach encourages them to come to the Office of Student Life, located in SSCB 1.204 of the Student Services and Classroom Building to talk to staff, write a comment or leave a voice mail message. The phone number to the Office of Student Life is 281-283-2560 and the e-mail address is studentlife@uhcl.edu.

To view all of the responses to the SPEAK YOUR MIND questions, visit The Signal’s Web site at www.uhcl.edu/thesignal.

And the survey says...

The following are some of the responses to a few of the SPEAK YOUR MIND questions. To view the complete list of responses and questions, log onto The Signal’s Web site at www.uhcl.edu/thesignal.

If you could have one wish for UHCL, what would it be?

- Lower tuition
- More Internet classes
- Basketball court
- Affordable, healthy food options
- Renovate Bayou Building classrooms
- Tennis team
- More recognition in the Houston area/ country
- To create a better name for UHCL (research wise)

What would get you to come back to campus on the weekend? (Besides a weekend class)

- Concerts
- Bigger/ nicer fitness center
- Game room
- Free daycare for students that need it
- Team sports (rugby, seminars, films)
- Tutoring
- Workshops, retreats, activities w/ organization and SLI
- Open bookstore

What type of activities would you like to see at the Chili Cook-off on April 5th (SSCB lawn)?

- Rock climbing
- Dunk your advisor
- Sack races against the professors
- Volleyball
- Hayrides
- Water balloon fights
- Take home cups
- Mechanical bull

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PICKING UP THE SHATTERED PIECES OF HIS AMERICAN DREAM

Athlete Selvin Velasquez rediscovers his love of sports through the NWBA

Jorge De La Garza
The Signal Staff

As a teen, Selvin Velasquez loved playing soccer, sand volleyball and driving motorcycles.

At the age of 17, Velasquez came to the United States looking forward to the “American Dream.”

At age 23, his life took an unexpected turn.

On May 16, 1995, life, as Velasquez knew it, changed forever.

Velasquez was working at a John Deere tractor company as a mechanic. While heading to lunch, he passed near a forklift loaded with a piece of heavy machinery. Suddenly, the equipment collapsed onto Velasquez’s body severing his spinal cord and shattering his American Dream.

“The lawnmower on the forklift fell off on top of my body and bent me all the way down breaking my spinal cord,” Velasquez recalled. “I was full of hoses in order to breathe and eat food. I spent over two and a half months at UTMB in Galveston before I could move on my own.”

Velasquez found out later that his injury level was a T-12, which means he is disabled from the waist down and has no movement or feeling in his legs.

The most challenging trial Velasquez experienced was psychologically.

“It was hard accepting that I may not walk again,” Velasquez said.

After two years of physical therapy, Velasquez recovered from the accident.

One day after being in the hospital, he woke up in the morning and started thinking differently.

“God is good; he gave you another opportunity to be alive,” Velasquez counsels. “It is not the end of the world. You have a bright future ahead. Don’t ever lose hope, keep your head up and keep moving forward.”

“Before, I used to blame it on God. I was a good person; I didn’t drink, smoke or do drugs. I was

only 23. I thought it was the end of the world for me and I wouldn’t be able to complete my dreams.”

As he points to one of his teammates, his face lights up in a smile.

“Then I met these guys playing ball and I was so happy to meet all these guys,” Velasquez said. “I was able to communicate well with them and they had been in wheelchairs for years and years and they started explaining to me that it wasn’t the end of the world even though I was in wheelchair.

“There is life after a disability,” explained team representative Jeffery Williams, “You don’t have to stay inside and look at the world through a window.”

In 2001, Velasquez began to play sports again. It was the first time he had ever picked up a basketball.

After joining the National Wheelchair Basketball Association, he began competing with other teams across the nation.

“Playing basketball in the NWBA gives individuals with disabilities a better outlook on life,” Williams said. “It makes the players feel normal, even though they are, because we live normal lives, just in a different way. The players feel outgoing, gain confidence and feel great.”

Velasquez and his teammates have traveled all over the world playing basketball.

“They took me under their wings and trained me and look at me now.... I’m doing good!” Velasquez said.

“On a scale from one to 10, I would rate Velasquez’ confidence and skill level a 9.5,”

Williams said. “He’s a team player and gives his all in all.”

In 2005, Velasquez won the MVP award after the team won the New York Championship.

Along with other sports, basketball has reopened the door to athletics for individuals with disabilities.

Recently, Velasquez took up jet skiing. He enjoys spending the weekend on his Jet Ski out on Lake Jackson.

“Oh my God...it feels good, all the wind and water splashing over my face,” Velasquez said. “It makes me forget about even being in a wheelchair.”



Selvin Velasquez sets up for the shot.

Hassan Eikabi, a point guard for the University of Arizona, gets ready to pass.

Oziel Flores has been playing basketball since 1984.

Photos by Jorge De La Garza



Selvin Velasquez, right, shoots over 20-year veteran Ramiro Bermudez.