As is typical after winter break, a large number of Student Challenge Fund proposals have been appearing in my office, almost all involving travel—to a conference, or study abroad, or a medical aid mission. They're a lot of fun to read because I can imagine myself embarking on such an adventure: How great it would be to go to Peru with FIMRC or spend the summer in Barcelona. Even though it's not really me going, I can still eagerly look forward to the students coming back and presenting about it at our annual Honors Program Expo, which is always a very popular event.

But then I turn to the second page of the proposals, at which point I usually get a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. This is the section where students calculate how much carbon they will be adding to the atmosphere as a result of their airplane rides, and what they could do to alleviate the problem. Most of them do the calculation (which isn't difficult since the proposal template includes a website that crunches the numbers), but virtually none shows any understanding of how to offset a metric ton of carbon (approximate result of a round-trip flight from Atlanta to London). They tell me they could accomplish this by driving less around Atlanta while they're gone, or using fewer lights in their home.

Actually, not driving to San Francisco from Atlanta can save that ton of carbon, if that was something you were planning to give up. Or if you leave all the lights off in your house for seven years, that will do it, too. Or you could plant a few trees. Sounds better, eh? Do it right, though, because they need to live for at least 50 years to absorb all that CO₂. Hint: Trees Atlanta is out in the city planting every Saturday, October through March. They could use your help. And you could use the good karma. See you there, I hope.

Opportunity Knocks

by Hal Zhao

Georgia Tech is now offering a new Energy Minor. This new minor offers students a multidisciplinary program to study and grasp a clearer understanding of energy systems. Like many other minors at Tech, the Energy Systems minor includes fifteen hours of coursework, six hours completed in depth courses regarding energy systems and six others in breadth courses. In addition, many courses offered in the minor require basic engineering prerequisites, such as Calculus I, II, & III, Physics I & II, Chemistry, and Economics.

Unlike other minors, the energy minor is interdisciplinary including courses from several major departments: ME, ECON, PUB, and CHEM. Additionally, there is no major department for the Energy Systems minor, and applicants must consult with an advisor within their major who understands the Energy Systems minor to apply. There are seven departments which have approved the Energy Systems minor: ME, AE, CHEM/CHBE, EAS, PUBP, ECON, ECE.

If your major is not listed, don't be discouraged. The program is gaining momentum within the Institute, and if you want to enroll in this minor, you can have your major advisor speak with Dr. Halka.

http://www.honorsprogram.gatech.edu
Liam’s Legacy
by Dr. Hugh Crawford

In an attempt to acknowledge Liam Rattray’s contribution to Georgia Tech and the broader Atlanta community, the Honors Program sponsored a symposium last November on "Food, Sustainability, and Human Rights"- all topics central to Liam’s efforts and interventions. Scheduling a campus event late on a Friday afternoon might not seem wise or auspicious, but, as testament to Liam’s impact and to the significance of the panels concerns, the speakers addressed a packed house. The audience was a remarkable mix of HP students, faculty, local food activists, students interested in food studies, and friends of Liam and his family, including, in the front row, his parents and sister.

All heard and participated in a lively discussion, starting off with a keynote by Alice Rolls, Executive Director of Georgia Organics, and continuing with a panel discussion including Peggy Barlett, Professor of Anthropology, at Emory University; Nell Fry, Sustainability Coordinator, Georgia Tech Dining Services; Rashid Nuri, Founder, Truly Living Well Urban Farms; and William Winders, Professor of Sociology, Georgia Tech. In addition to discussing their own work on sustainability, food and human rights, several of the speakers detailed their encounters with Liam, recording the same experience: that of a young man committed to understanding, to learning by doing, and fueled by a desire to make a difference. The question and answer session went long past its allotted time, with all in the audience catching a bit of the passion Liam brought to these important questions. It is clear this is something we should do again, so stay tuned.

Informal Conversation with Thomas Lux
by Nicole Leonard

On November 8th, the Director of the Poetry at Tech program, Thomas Lux, conversed with the students, faculty and staff of the GT Honors Program. As we sat in Brittain Rec that evening, we were mesmerized by a long-haired poet who offered nuggets of wisdom interspersed with his catchphrase of “I dug that.” Tom offered his honest opinion on a range of topics (including his opinion that poetry has much more depth and feeling than song lyrics) and read a number of short poems (including one chronicling the growth of his daughter). As the evening concluded, everyone was left with a surge of artistic energy and, in my case, a sense of curiosity.

Since that evening in November with “informal” conversationalist Thomas Lux, the phrase Poetry at Tech has been fluttering in and out of my mind. Since its humble beginnings in 2002, the purpose of Poetry at Tech is to “ensure that in a highly specialized and technological environment, students’ aptitudes in the humanities are nurtured and supported as a foundation for life-long learning.” In its 10-year existence, the Poetry at Tech program has lived up to its purpose. The program offers poetry workshops one Saturday a month as a community resource to edit, refine and strengthen one’s body of work. Nestled on the ground floor of the Skiles Building, the LLC-supported endeavor provides Tech students with the opportunity to hear and be mentored by some of the nation’s premier poets.

Karlovitz Lecture Series
The Georgia Tech Honors Program and the College of Sciences present
Dr. Bernd Heinrich
From the Bees to the Birds: Research Adventures
Wednesday, March 7, 2012
Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons 144
5:30-6:30

http://www.honorsprogram.gatech.edu
Welcome To The Honors Program
New HPsters

The Georgia Tech Honors Program is delighted to invite eighteen students to join our program. As you meet them in your classes and see them on campus, please help us welcome them.

Destiny Cobb  
Biomedical Engineering

Milton James  
Biomedical Engineering

Alec Fenichel  
Mechanical Engineering

Emily Jones  
Economics and International Affairs

Adam Friedman  
Management

Sara Khalek  
Biomedical Engineering

Gautam Goel  
Discrete Management

James (JJ) Netter  
Industrial Engineering

Will Grande  
Biology

Rahim Panjwani  
Aerospace Engineering

Jacqueline Harris  
Bimolecular Engineering

Suvitha Radhakrishnan  
Management

Samantha Healy  
Biology

Arman Rye  
Industrial Engineering

Gillen Heisler  
International Affairs and Modern Language

Willem Schuttler  
Mechanical Engineering

Anubhav Jain  
Industrial Engineering

Matt Waples  
Materials Science and Engineering

Congratulations new HPsters! We look forward to providing a lively environment in which you and faculty members learn from each other through a common commitment to intellectual inquiry, careful analysis, and energetic exchange of ideas.
Lily Ponitz, Engineer Without Borders

by Hal Zhao

Not every college student spends his or her entire winter break volunteering in a third-world country, but Lilian (Lily) Ponitz, 2nd-year Environment Engineering student, has an outstanding passion for sustainable projects. Lilian is the first recipient of the Liam Rattray Award of Sustainability, a scholarship provided by the GT Honors Program Challenge Fund. She was awarded this scholarship for her contributions in the assessment of a sustainable water distribution system for the villagers in Mungoa-goa, Cameroon.

Lily is an active member of Engineers Without Borders (EWB), an organization at Tech driven to partner with local communities in designing and implementing sustainable projects. During winter break, Lily and others who traveled to Cameroon constructed a well for the villagers as the third step in the project goal in Cameroon of designing and implementing an effective water distribution system. The trip was successful. However, Lily said that the job does not end here. This upcoming May, another group of students will travel to Cameroon to set up an electric pump for the next phase of this project.

Lily says that she had not been on any trip like this before going to Cameroon, and she truly believes that this experience has been eye-opening and has influenced her in many positive ways. As of now, Lily is planning to work for a consulting firm after graduating and dedicating herself to performing and managing sustainable projects for diverse regions and groups of people.

Finally, Lily would like to reach out to every student who may be interested in sustainable projects. EWB welcomes members of various backgrounds every semester. She wants all who may be interested in these projects to visit ewb-gt.org and join their listserv. To learn more about her trip or if you have any questions, please email Lily at lponitz3@gatech.edu.

The Georgia Tech Honors Program Student Advisory Board is accepting applications for spring 2012. Those interested should contact Nicole Leonard at nicole.leonard@carnegie.gatech.edu.

Applications are due by 5pm March 16
Message From The Director
by Dr. Gregory Nobles

Get Ready for CASE Studies!
We are, as always, trying to do something new and useful in the Honors Program, and the first initiative of 2012 is a call for a new set of HP courses - CASE Studies. CASE is, as you might suspect, an acronym, standing for Connecting Academic and Societal Engagement, and “Engagement” is really the critical term, underscoring the importance of reaching out from the classroom to the community. CASE Studies can be an exciting new venture, not just for the Honors Program but for all of Georgia Tech.

Here’s the idea as we put it to the Tech faculty: “The purpose of these courses is to create opportunities for Georgia Tech undergraduates to develop meaningful research and working relationships with partners external to Georgia Tech, whether in Atlanta or elsewhere—preferably non-profit, community-based organizations, that work, as Georgia Tech itself aspires to do, to improve the human condition. Combining serious and substantial academic work in the classroom with direct, project-based contact with the external organization, CASE Studies seek to produce a positive outcome for both students and the community partners and, if possible, to develop an ongoing relationship that can be the basis of subsequent classes.”

You can call them “service learning” courses, I suppose, but I’ve never been too comfortable with that term. I’m all for service, and I’m all for learning, but somehow “service learning” has always seemed a bit smarmy and patronizing to me, about one peg above “charity.” I’ve also never been too comfortable with the Team Buzz good-deed-blitz approach, making a one-off foray to clean up a vacant lot or whatever and then being back by lunchtime for pizza and T-shirts. I always look to see who goes back the next day, and the days and weeks and months after that. That’s why the CASE Studies emphasis is on “engagement,” which suggests a more egalitarian and mutually-beneficial and, above all, two-way learning relationship between academic and community partners. If we approach our partners as allies and equals, with a willingness to understand their concerns on their terms, they have much to teach us.

I have no illusions that we can transform society in a semester. I do believe, though, that we can do some significant good if we commit to sustaining our work over the longer run, if we keep faith with our partners and keep coming back. In that regard, I think of what I call “legacy learning,” where the students from one semester’s class make a foundation for the next group of students to build upon. We all want, I hope, to do something meaningful and leave something useful behind us. With CASE Studies, you’ll have a chance to do that for academic credit, and you can be a credit to the larger community in the process.

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HP Recruitment Team

Interested in meeting prospective Honors Program students? Apply for the HP Recruitment Team!

We are looking for students to help with all admissions related events. If interested Contact Nicole Leonard, nicole.leonard@carnegie.gatech.edu.

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Newsletter Staff

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