



Hilltopics

University Honors Program

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Umph vs Arnold

by Camille Aucoin

With the launch of the new Residential Commons this year came the opening of SMU's new dining hall, the Anita and Truman Arnold Dining Commons. Throughout the summer, rumors have circulated that the new dining hall would include features such as custom burgers, a Mongolian grill, and more. Now that both Umph and Arnold are fully operational, we can finally decide the winner of the ultimate dining hall showdown.

Umph

On the home side of the field is Umph. Although it has a reputation for lackluster meals during finals weeks and overall "bad" food, Umph is quite possibly as good as it gets for a college student. With the full meal plan, it provides a wide variety of meals all day long, perpetuating a distinct feeling of home. For sophomores and older, Umph is all we've ever known. Umph also has the advantage of location. It's close to most classes and the north quad. The sandwich line at lunch time is a clear indication of this factor.

Arnold

The opposing team: Arnold. Location is working against this shiny new dining hall. Although very close to the new buildings, Arnold is comparatively far from the rest of campus. However, Arnold's gourmet environment is a big draw for both students and staff. The high ceiling, stainless steel serving areas, large projectors on the walls, and the elegant design of the whole building are all very aesthetically pleasing. The food is also beautiful and has so far been absolutely delicious. However, Arnold has the disadvantage of feeling less inviting than Umph. Rather than being served by a staff member, diners pick up a pre-portioned dish of their choosing.

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The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is the most dangerous terrorist organization in the history of the world. With hundreds of millions of dollars in its hands and control over substantial territory in Iraq and Syria, ISIS poses a threat not only to its regional neighbors, but also the international community.

people, which led him to reject any prospect of deploying US combat troops. However, since air strikes alone are not enough to destroy ISIS, the US also needs to coordinate with Middle Eastern ground troops. In Iraq, the US is working with the Iraqi army and Kurdish Peshmerga forces, but faces an issue in Syria, where ISIS leadership likely resides.

Progress is being made, however, despite the significant obstacles. Recently, the Iraqi parliament approved a new government that, with US support, will be more inclusive of Sunnis. This progress is the linchpin in undercutting the root of ISIS's goal of uniting Sunnis against the historically



Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, joined independent terrorist cells with the common purpose to establish an Islamic caliphate. The differences between ISIS and other terrorist groups like al-Qaeda include the abundant resources at its disposal and the significant amount of land it possesses which makes the realization of its purpose seem attainable.

The Obama administration, concerned about the prospect of an attack on American soil due to more than 100 US passport holders fighting for ISIS, announced a strategy against the organization that includes expanding its air strikes campaign to Syria.

One issue Obama faces is the war-weariness of the American

The US will not coordinate with the Assad regime, yet the Free Syrian Army (FSA) is not strong enough to defeat ISIS fighters. Additionally, the FSA is composed of many rebel groups, some of which are associated with al-Nusra, a branch of al-Qaeda with similar goals as ISIS. Therefore, the US is avoiding arming the FSA in any significant manner, as they cannot be sure that the heavy weaponry will not end up in the hands of al-Nusra or even ISIS. Furthermore, the US is concerned that because ISIS fighters are more effective than FSA rebels, ISIS will capture additional US weapons, as it did in Iraq when Iraqi forces originally abandoned their bases and fled.

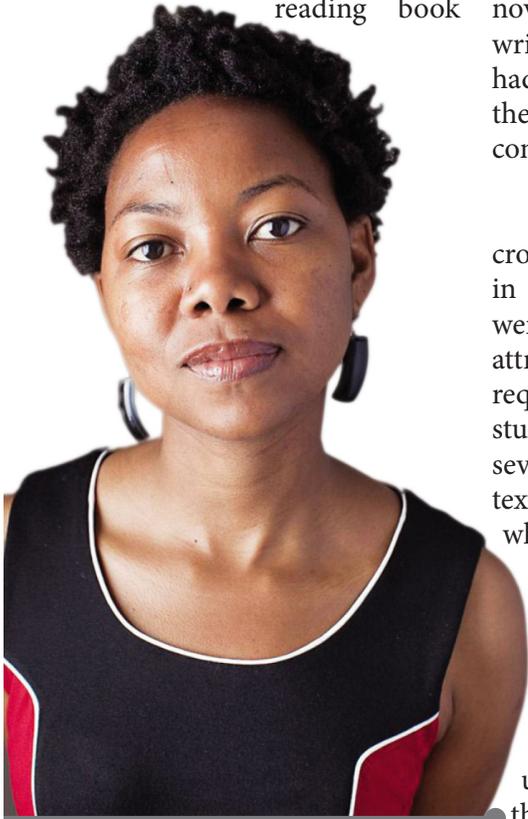
Shia-dominated government in Iraq. Although coordinating with the Iranian military is out of the question, Iran could still play a vital role in supporting Iraq's new government. Also, the US is in the process of establishing an international coalition that includes countries in the Middle East like Turkey, Jordan and Qatar, united in the goal to defeat ISIS. This coalition should greatly help in coordinating a focused, multinational campaign against the terrorist group.

Although the US will expand its air strikes campaign and receive assistance from the international community, ISIS remains a daunting threat, one that will require a multi-year military campaign to defeat.

Perspectives Bulawayo Brings Humor, Sincerity to Gartner Series Lecture

by Kenny Martin

No Violet Bulawayo, SMU alumna and award-winning author of this year's common reading book



We Need New Names, returned to SMU on Monday, September 15th for a lecture and Q&A about her novel. The event served as a culmination of this year's common reading program, which provided entering first-year students with a shared experience as

they made the transition to college life. Many first-year Discernment and Discourse classes used the novel as a basis for discussion and writing assignments, and students had faculty-led discussions about the novel in each residential commons the first week of school.

Bulawayo drew quite the crowd; many people had to stand in the back once all the chairs were taken. Part of that crowd was attributable to certain professors who required or offered incentives for student attendance, which explained several audience members blatantly texting during the lecture. On the whole though, the audience was attentive and appreciative, and had good questions for Bulawayo after she was finished speaking.

Bulawayo speaks with a thick accent, but she is very understandable. It was clear from the start that she has a wonderful sense of humor: she apologized to the freshman before beginning, saying that she knew they had been forced to read the book against their will. This sort of self-effacing and gracious humor continued throughout. She also, on the whole, speaks slowly, which gives the listener the sense that she has a

deep understanding and appreciation of the present moment—that she is aware of the importance of what is happening right now. This demeanor, along with her words themselves, made the discussion humbling and enlightening for the audience members. She talked of silence, of a troubled country, of discovering snow, of belonging, of home. She also read a section of the novel, affording the audience a privileged glimpse into the way she perceives and voices her own characters. Overall, she gave the audience a firsthand look at the connection between fiction and the real world, hopefully making everyone in attendance appreciate the novel more than they did before.

After the event, Bulawayo was very gracious in talking with students and others in attendance. She was wonderful to speak with one-on-one; those who did will remember it for a long time to come.

Bulawayo also said she has a collection of short stories in the works. It will be interesting to see what she accomplishes in the future; SMU is lucky to have her as an alumna and the audience Monday was privileged to hear her.



On Campus → Residential Commons:

Deal or Dud?

by Jacquelyn Elias

This year, SMU joins the ranks of other elite universities with the introduction of the new Residential Commons facilities, which promises a strong on-campus community that because it is where they attend many of their classes and receive close academic assistance. SMU tried to reciprocate this experience by having a classroom in the new Commons, but the majority of the students who the many pranks that the Commons have pulled on each other.

Despite these positive developments, the greatest challenge that the Commons system



welcomes diversity and fosters friendships. Let's break down the core elements of the Residential Commons to explore the strengths and weaknesses of this new system.

A good place to start would be comparing the current SMU

attend classes in the Commons do not actually live there. This disparity makes the Commons classroom just another place rather than a community-building opportunity.

Regardless, the real question is whether this

must overcome will be offering incentives to a traditionally off-campus community to stay in the Commons and participate in events. In order to achieve this, SMU will need to find a way to entice students to skip a party or two and spend the



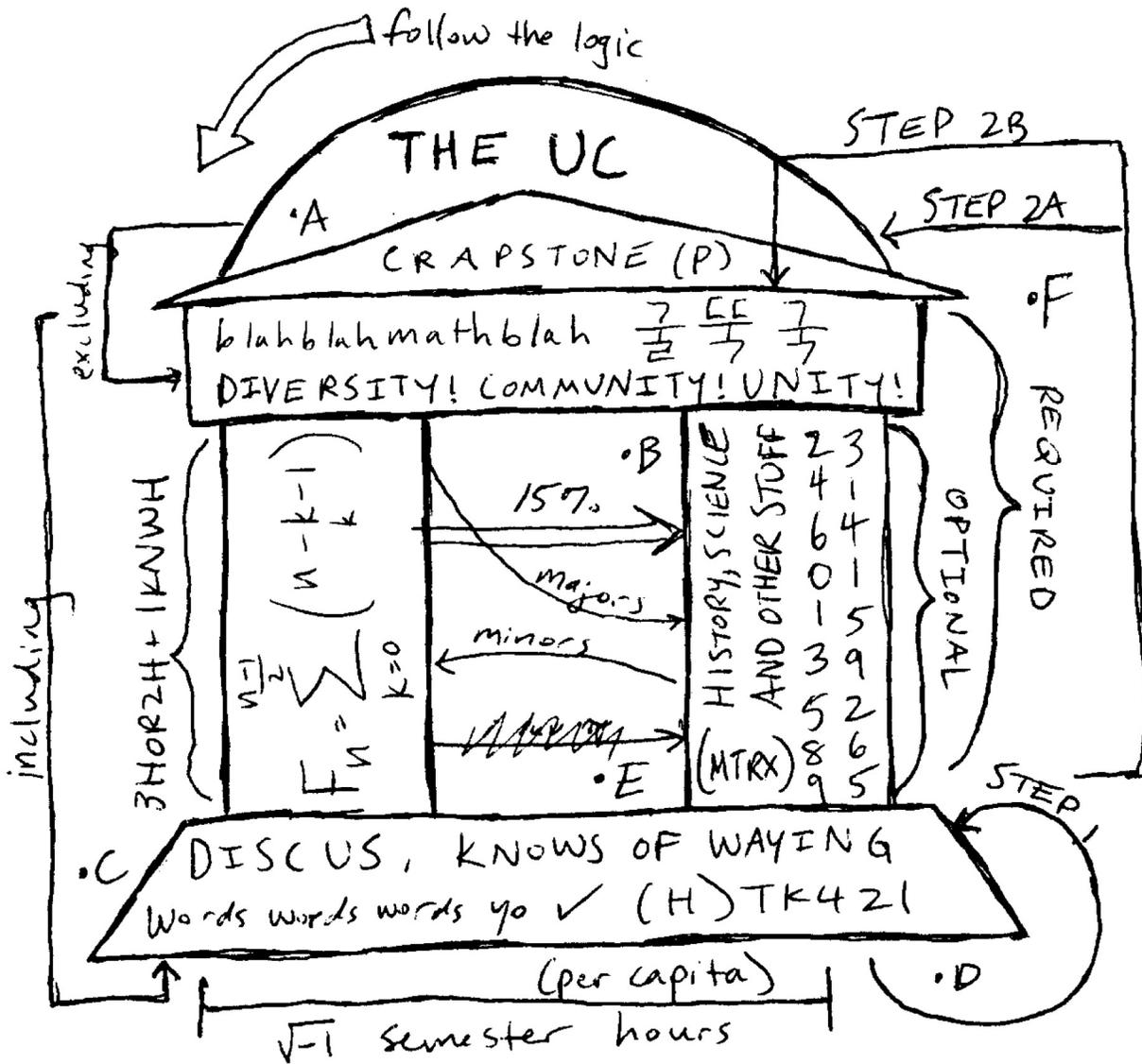
residential situation to the Oxford and Cambridge college model from which it was based. In both systems, the universities provide smaller communities for students by forming self-governing colleges. Colleges are responsible for choosing and feedings residents, hosting social and athletic events, offering small group tutoring, teaching some classes in house, and providing study areas while the university oversees academics and administrative work. In the British schools, student life revolves around their college

system will actually work. Already, the Residential Commons has broadened opportunities for a more diverse living experience by housing students of various classes, majors, and activities. Nearly every night (at least on my floor), the hallway tables are occupied with students talking and completing homework assignments from chemistry to reading Shakespeare. In addition, the Commons system has already produced a sense of pride in its residents, which is evident through

night with their residents instead, which, so far, has not proved very successful based on the lackluster attendance of the Commons Olympics and similar events.

In the end, the Commons system will benefit everyone differently. Those speeding off-campus Friday nights will probably not get much out of it. Those who would rather spend the night watching Netflix with friends will find a tight-knit environment to do so.

HOW FRESHMEN SEE THE UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM



AO

Comic by Andrew Oh

On the Field • • • • • • • • • • New App Gives Fall Sports a Hand

by A.J. Jeffries

As a member of the soccer team, I was rather devastated looking out into empty stands at every game last year. Nothing is more thrilling for an athlete than a big game in front of a bigger crowd, so when I saw the passionate support for the basketball team last year, I envied that level of support. I wished for the day the stands at Westcott would be as full as Moody Coliseum was for every home basketball game last year. There was no magic lamp involved, but someone in either the mob or the administration found a way to fill the stands at every sports game. Thus, the new Varsity app was born.

For those unfamiliar with the concept, students who wish to join The Mob are now required to collect 130 points by attending fall sporting events. They sign in through the app, which recognizes that they are attending one of the games selected for each team, and are awarded a certain number of points. This is an idea that sounds fantastic in theory, but I was skeptical as to its effectiveness in practice. The app has a few potential pitfalls.

From my perspective, the Varsity app does not require students to stay at the games for any length of time. This became a problem at the women soccer team's home opener, when all of the fans left at halftime. The app also awards many more points for football games than any other sport to the point that students need only attend the four Varsity-eligible football games and one other sporting event of any kind. Despite these flaws, I was cautiously optimistic about what this season could hold in terms of fans. The results, as I have seen them thus far, blew anything I could have hoped for out of the water.

By kickoff of our home opener against Duke there were, by a rough guesstimate, about 1,500 people in the stands. The biggest crowd SMU men's soccer has seen in years got to watch us upset Duke, a team that broke the top 20 last year and seemed poised to do the same this year. Based on the level of crowd noise, the "SMU! SMU! SMU!" chants reverberating through the stadium, and the excited fans lining the fences when we came over to thank them for their support after, they seemed glad to have come. Our fans may have only attended for the Mob points, but they stayed because they were genuinely enjoying a spectacular soccer game.

All told, the Varsity app is part of an elite group of ideas that are beautiful in concept and even more magnificent in execution. I can only hope that the students who had so much fun watching us rout Duke return for the rest of the season. One thing I know for sure, though, is that this semester our sports teams will have a hitherto unprecedented opportunity to play in front of the kinds of crowds I once thought unique to state schools.



Upcoming UHP Events & More

by Camille Aucoin, UHP Office Coordinator

By now, you may have been alerted to the existence of the brand new University Honors Program website. The overhauled website features far more information on the different aspects of UHP, a new photo library, and a new online calendar listing all upcoming UHP events. Listed here are several of the exciting upcoming events in the Honors Program:

Saturday, October 4th

Bus Tour of Dallas hosted by Dr. Doyle

Reserve your seat now!

Thursday, October 9th

Information Meeting for the brand new Taos Richter Research Internship Award

Ongoing

Honors Receptions in the Residential Commons

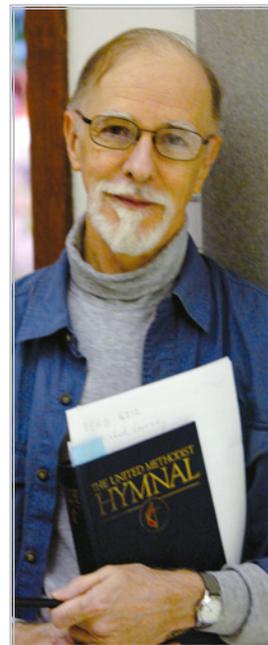
Visit the new Honors website for more information including times and locations of these events, and keep up to date on Honors events by checking the website and liking our Facebook page!

Meadows Off to a Strong Start ≡≡≡ *Arts Review*

by *Kenny Martin*

The Meadows School of the Arts dazzled this month, presenting two major concerts on campus. On Saturday, September 6th, Emanuel Borok, SMU Distinguished Artist-in-Residence and former concertmaster of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, and Alexander Kobrin, winner of the 2005 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, played four of Beethoven's ten violin sonatas. The recital was the first of three in a complete performance of the Beethoven violin sonata cycle by the duo. The other two performances will be on March 7 and May 11, 2015, both at 8 pm in Caruth Auditorium.

The performance was delightful. Borok never overpowered the piano, and the two communicated well throughout. Especially in the opening sonata, there was some concern regarding Borok's sound, which often had a harsh, biting quality, especially contrasted with Kobrin's, which was singing and exceedingly lyrical. Yet as the program went on, it became apparent that this contrast is in fact one of the great strengths of the duo; it allows them to explore often-ignored possibilities in the music and the end result is much more reflective of the true character of Beethoven's writing. Certainly though, Borok could be singing (and Kobrin harsh) if needed, and overall their conscious mastery of tone was remarkable. The pair received an enthusiastic standing ovation, and the only shame of the night was that they didn't indulge the audience with an encore.



Equally as wonderful a concert was SMU Professor Larry Palmer's organ and harpsichord recital on Monday, September 8th. Palmer has taught at SMU since 1970, and this was his 45th annual faculty recital. It was also his last—he is officially retiring at the end of this school year. Palmer played six works for organ and six for harpsichord, ranging from Baroque to über-Contemporary, separated by an intermission. His playing was superb; his command of the instruments and his formidable dexterity are to be envied. Moreover, Palmer is internationally renowned as a leading authority on historic keyboards and Baroque musicology, and his playing represents an expert's interpretation of music which consistently proves among the most difficult to interpret. He certainly is one of SMU's true gems.

The audience members, which were fewer than they should have been, received Palmer well, but did not give a standing ovation until after the encore. They should have. He played Couperin's lilting *Les Barricades Mystérieuses*, which has become his standard encore over the years. He ended the piece, like he had every one of the night, with a small, giddy smile, a visual affirmation of the inextinguishable joy for music that he had been sharing all evening. It was contagious, and one thing was certain as people walked out of the auditorium—he wasn't the only one smiling.

Larry Palmer will be featured in several upcoming concerts, on October 16 and 17 and November 20. See the Meadows website for more information and plan to attend. You won't regret it.

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