

# VITAE

THE MAGAZINE OF  
VALENCIA COLLEGE



## *At the Top of the Class*

Story on page 18



WINNER OF THE  
ASPEN PRIZE  
for  
COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE  
EXCELLENCE

# VITAE

Rooted in the Latin word for “life,” vitae (vee-tay) means: the course of one’s life or career; a short account of a person’s life; a résumé. Because the purpose of this magazine is to keep you connected to Valencia, the title Vitae reflects the collective résumé of alumni, faculty, staff and students who have proudly walked through our doors.

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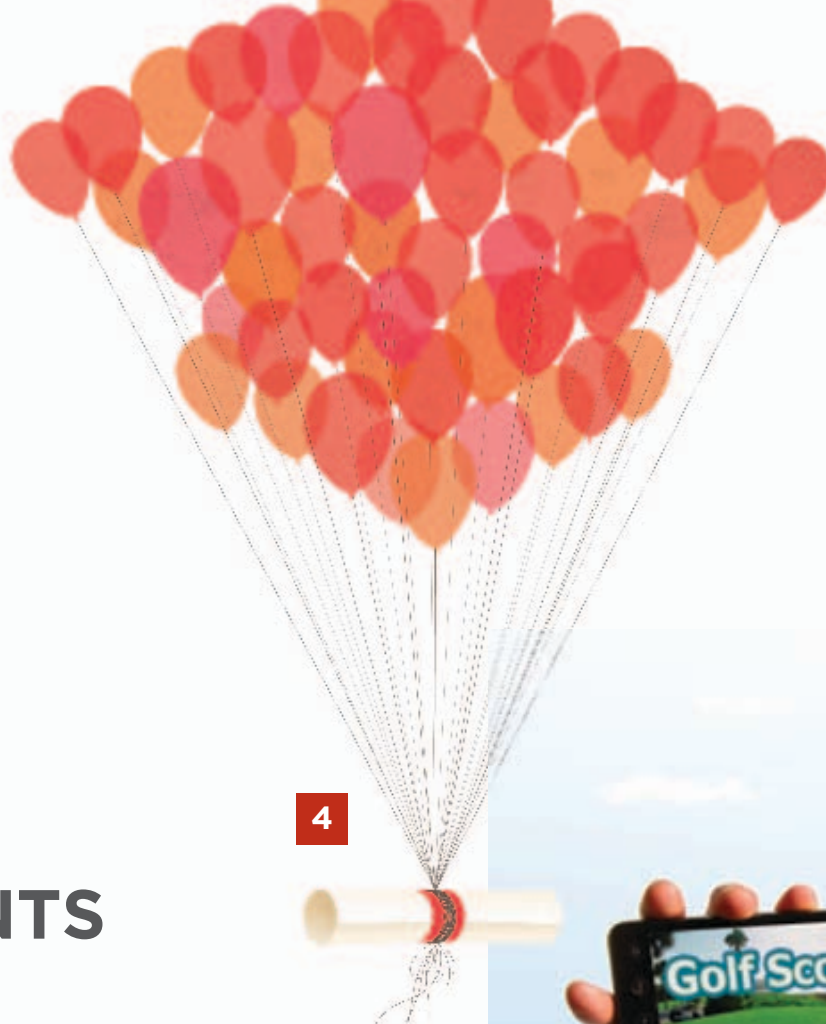
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**VALENCIA COLLEGE**

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# VALENCIA NEWS

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## Daughter of Martin Luther King Jr. Inspires Crowd

Dr. Bernice King paid tribute to her famous father and, drawing from his most celebrated speech, encouraged the hundreds of students, college staff and visitors

who gathered to hear her on Valencia's East Campus to "move beyond the dream."

King's presentation, which took place January 24, was meant as a call to action—especially to students—to become more civically engaged in their communities and the world.

King drew laughter from the

crowd when she explained the reason why the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C. didn't have the "I have a dream" speech inscribed on it and instead features another one of his speeches: "Even God was sick and tired of hearing 'I have a dream' and wanted the world to get on with the rest of [King's] ideas," she said.

Those ideas, she said, have to do with sacrifice, calling it "an uncomfortable word in this generation." She said students need to find some time to make a difference in the lives of others rather than focusing solely on personal gain.

She urged students to not only vote during election cycles but also to take their concerns directly to elected officials, to organize around a cause and to even become agitators in an effort to bring about systemic change.

"You know what's missing in our nation's capital? It's the voice of your generation," she said.



## Pulitzer Prize Winning Novelist Speaks at West Campus

Jennifer Egan, author of the 2011 Pulitzer Prize-winning, "A Visit from the Goon Squad," paid a visit to Valencia's West Campus in February as part of the college's Visions & Voices guest artist series. Egan gave a reading from the first chapter of her book and also explained how she developed its distinct characters—

from a kleptomaniac woman to a neurotic music executive—and their separate, yet related, plot lines. Egan has written five books, had short fiction featured in The New Yorker, Harper's Magazine and McSweeney's, and also writes articles for the New York Times Magazine. For information about upcoming artist visits to Valencia, visit [valenciacollege.edu/visionsvoices](http://valenciacollege.edu/visionsvoices).





## Smoke-Free Campus Starting in August

Valencia is moving forward with plans to go smoke-free on all its campuses by the start of the fall term. Several other Florida colleges and universities, including the University of Florida in Gainesville, have enacted smoke-free policies,

meaning they don't allow students, employees or visitors to smoke anywhere on school grounds. The University of Central Florida

(UCF) is considering taking similar steps.

"I hate to interfere in people's private lives and habits, but secondhand smoke affects everyone," said Valencia President Sandy Shugart in an interview with the Orlando Sentinel.

The college will spend the next

several months preparing students, faculty and staff for the change in policy, and has launched a communications effort with the theme, "Share the Air."

The Share the Air campaign includes campus banners, ashtray decals, printed informational materials and a new website, among other things. Valencia, in partnership with the Quit Smoking Now program, is also providing free on-campus quit-smoking programs for students, employees and members of the community who wish to kick the habit.

## Orlando Declares January 9 'Valencia College Day'

In honor of Valencia winning the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the Orlando City Commission proclaimed that January 9 would be recognized as Valencia College Day in the city of Orlando.

"They were not named one of the best community colleges in the nation, but the best, number one community college in the entire nation," Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer said.

Last December, Valencia was named the winner of the inaugural Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence at a ceremony held in Washington, D.C. The award came with \$600,000 in prize money.

During a city commission meeting, Dyer and members of the commission said the nation is finally discovering what they've known for

a long time: the excellent reputation of Valencia. In fact, Commissioner Samuel B. Ings said that he himself was a Valencia student during the seventies.

## Reel Brazil

There are many film festivals in Orlando but only one is devoted to showcasing the art and talent of Brazilian filmmakers.

The Brazilian Film Festival is now in its fifth year at Valencia College and has developed a large and enthusiastic following.

Launched in 2008 by Professor Richard Sansone, who teaches Portuguese and English as a Second Language, the festival is presented in partnership with the Central Florida Brazilian American Chamber of Commerce.



Scene from the film "Waste Land" from director Lucy Walker.

This year's festival—held in February—offered five feature films concluding with the U.S. premiere of "Matraga," which won five awards at the 2011 International Rio Film Festival. The films in the series were selected by Sansone and renowned Brazilian filmmakers Elisa Tolomelli and Malu de Martino, who also moderated each showing.





# LAUNCHING A NEW HONORS COLLEGE

*By Linda Shrieves Beaty*

Steven Crist wasn't your typical college student.

He struggled in high school, dropped out and earned his GED. In his first attempt at college, at Ohio State University, he floundered again. Searching for direction, he headed to Disney World's college intern program.

But in Orlando, he found his footing. While working at Disney, Crist began taking classes at Valencia and proceeded to wow his professors: juggling a 30-hour work week with a demanding class schedule in the honors program, he maintained a 4.0 grade-point-average and served as a leader in several student organizations.

Along the way, Crist's path changed too. Initially, his plan was to graduate from Valencia and transfer to the University of Central Florida, then apply to law school. Seeing his potential, his honors professors urged him to consider all his options.

Today, Crist has a full scholarship to Emory University in Atlanta and plans to continue to law school after graduation.

Now, Crist wants to give back to Valencia—so when Valencia officials began laying the groundwork for a new James M. and Dayle L. Seneff Honors College, he offered to help shape it.

What he and the others envisioned was an honors college that could offer students a wide variety of opportunities—for leadership, for scientific research and as preparation for rigorous work at the next level, whether it's at a state university or an Ivy League college.

"Not every student comes to Valencia because it's their only option," Crist says. "College is expensive now and there's a healthy portion of the student body at Valencia who could have gone to the University of Florida or other four-year schools. There needs to be something

to prepare them for a more rigorous education."

And, starting in the fall of 2012, the new Seneff Honors College hopes to do just that.

Funded by a \$1 million donation from the chief executive officer of CNL Financial Group and his wife, the new honors college will officially be open to students starting in the fall semester of 2012.

To expand the current honors program to a full-fledged honors college, Valerie Burks, Valencia's honors program director, assembled a team of students and faculty, including Crist, to help design four different honors tracks—each of which would lead to an honors degree at graduation. The different tracks will give students a chance to specialize and hone their skills in fields such as science, leadership, or more liberal-arts fields of study.



Above: Professor Keith Malmos (above right) helps honors students None Fowe Makue and Taina Torres in a biology lab. At right: Honors students David Wade and Michael Radecki prepare to dissect a termite.



Burks and her team believe that the new Seneff Honors College will offer something special—including the chance to take challenging courses with an average class size of 15 students. Classes at Valencia are led by professors, not teaching assistants. Honors students travel abroad each spring break with their professors, and each month participate in events such as “pizza with the professors.”

And, for parents and students, there’s a monetary incentive: In fall 2012, students who are admitted to one of the four honors tracks will receive a scholarship equal to full-time tuition. That scholarship will be renewed during the full two years of their enrollment, as long as they make good progress towards graduation.

Pitching the idea to high achievers may be tough at first because the college is new, Burks says. But parents who do the research, she says, quickly discover that Bright Futures scholarships don’t cover everything—Bright Futures now awards \$3,000 a year to A students and \$2,280 to B students. “Our message is: Come to Valencia, do well for two years—and then go to a school you never thought you could go to,” says Burks.

She ticks off the latest success stories: recent honors graduates who are now finishing their undergraduate studies at Columbia University in New York, Emory University, Amherst College and Smith College in Massachusetts.

Yet the students who graduate at the top of their classes aren’t the only ones eligible for the Seneff Honors College. One of the goals of the new college is to make it open to students who “earn their way in.” They are what Burks calls “diamonds in the rough.”

“Valencia is about giving people chances,” Burks says. And Crist is the perfect example.

#### Four campuses, four tracks

The new honors college will feature four different tracks, each of which will be housed on a separate campus.

- West Campus will be home to the interdisciplinary honors track, a humanities-style curriculum that features team-taught courses on a wide range of subject matter. The track closely resembles the current IDH program at Valencia.
- East Campus will host a track for students seeking to major in the sciences or other research-heavy fields. Students will learn how to conduct undergraduate research and will complete a research project and paper by the end of their second year.
- Osceola Campus will house the college’s leadership track, encouraging students to study different styles of leadership, while also serving in the community.

- Winter Park will be home to the “Jeffersonian” or general studies track. The track, which is still being developed, will be available in 2013.

In addition to the tracks, the new honors college will have more structured requirements. “Right now, students have a buffet-style program,” says Burks. “You take what pleases you. But, to use the food analogy, there’s nothing stopping you from taking four desserts. Now we’re going to require students to put together a ‘meal’ of balanced options.” For instance, leadership track students must take a leadership course, plus speech or composition classes, and must choose from a selection of courses in political science, government, psychology or sociology.

#### Leadership 101

At Osceola Campus, where the focus is on leadership, the primary course will examine leadership development from a philosophical point of view, rather than the traditional chamber of commerce vision of leadership. Students will, for example, read “Antigone” and view the film, “Twelve O’Clock High,” and study the leadership styles of many characters.

In addition, the students will be required to earn community service hours with a handful of Valencia partners, including Osceola County schools and Junior Achievement.



Melissa Pedone, who serves as dean of math and science at the Osceola Campus, says she believes parents and high-school students will embrace the program. This, she says, gives even the highest-achievers an alternative to the costlier option of attending the University of Florida or Florida State University.

Valencia, she says, can now offer “the traditional advantages of a community college education—the smaller class sizes, the more individualized attention. But these honors students will get individualized support because we will have a campus-based counselor. They’re going to get a lot of special care. They’re not going to be one of thousands going into the freshman class at the University of Florida.”

### The scientific mind

Meanwhile, at East Campus, professors Keith Malmos and Jack Rogers are crafting a research-based program designed to give Valencia honors students a leg up when they apply to graduate school or medical school.

The new track will enable students to work on research in a field that interests them—from biology to political science—and, with the guidance of faculty mentors, they will develop a thesis, conduct research and produce a final product, such as a research paper or presentation. At the close of their second year, the students will present their work at an honors symposium, or in a journal that is reviewed and critiqued by other honors students and professors.

Although Valencia’s science professors focus on teaching and not research, they are exploring ways for incoming honors students to participate in research. For example, Malmos, a biology professor, has talked with the owners of a local greenhouse operation about the possibility of Valencia honors students helping the company conduct research on strains of plants and pest management.

“If you’re in the sciences, you need to get published as an undergraduate if you’re going to get into grad school,” says Crist. “So this track is intended to be a nudge—to push students in that direction.”

### IDH redux

At West Campus, a team of professors, along with Communications Dean Beth Renn, will oversee the Interdisciplinary Honors Program (IDH), which will be a continuation of the already-successful IDH program.

In this four-course progression, students start in their freshman year studying the culture, art and philosophy of ancient Rome and Greece, Plato and Sophocles, and by the time they’re in the spring of their sophomore year, they are studying the 20th century, including the Harlem Renaissance, Hitler and World War II.

“We have been teaching this track for 34 years now,” says Dr. Gustavo Morales, a geology professor and member of the IDH team. “The strength of the program is the students’ ability to feel comfortable enough to ask questions on any subject”—and to challenge a professor.

Meanwhile, at the Winter Park Campus, professors Jean Marie Fuhrman and Suzette Dohany are designing the “Jeffersonian” or general education track. Designed to embody Thomas Jefferson’s ideals of education, the track will offer students a well-rounded education. As part of their global studies, students will regularly hold video conferences with students from Valencia’s European partner, Koning Willem I College in Amsterdam.

College-wide, faculty members are applauding what they see as the maturing of Valencia’s well-established honors program. “A lot of people think coming to Valencia is like coming to ‘Kirkman High,’” says Morales. “But that’s not true. They will be challenged here and they will get an excellent education.”

The new Seneff Honors College, he says, will deliver an even better education. “We have been voted the number-one community college in the country and the new honors college will build on that.” ■

*“Our message is: Come to Valencia, do well for two years—and then go to a school you never thought you could go to,”*

— Valerie Burks



Valerie Burks answers students’ questions about an honors trip to Italy.

# VALENCIA EVENTS

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## APRIL

### April 3 - Spring Symphonic/ Jazz Band Concert

7:30 p.m.  
East Campus Performing Arts  
Center  
Admission is free.  
[valenciacollege.edu/arts](http://valenciacollege.edu/arts)

### April 3-7 - Winning Play of the 21st Annual Florida Playwright Competition

April 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 at 7:30 p.m.  
East Campus Black Box Theater  
Tickets: \$10 general admission,  
\$8 students, faculty/staff, alumni  
and seniors  
Box Office: 407-582-2900  
[valenciacollege.edu/arts](http://valenciacollege.edu/arts)

### April 10 - Spring Choral Concert

7:30 p.m.  
East Campus Performing Arts Center  
Admission is free.  
[valenciacollege.edu/arts](http://valenciacollege.edu/arts)

### April 12 - House Band Concert

7:30 p.m.  
East Campus Performing Arts Center  
Admission is free.  
[valenciacollege.edu/arts](http://valenciacollege.edu/arts)

### April 13-May 18 - Annual Juried Student Exhibition

Opening reception and award  
ceremony on April 13 from 6:30-  
8:30 p.m.  
Anita S. Wooten East Campus  
Gallery  
Admission is free.  
[valenciacollege.edu/arts](http://valenciacollege.edu/arts)

### April 20-21 - Spring Opera Workshop

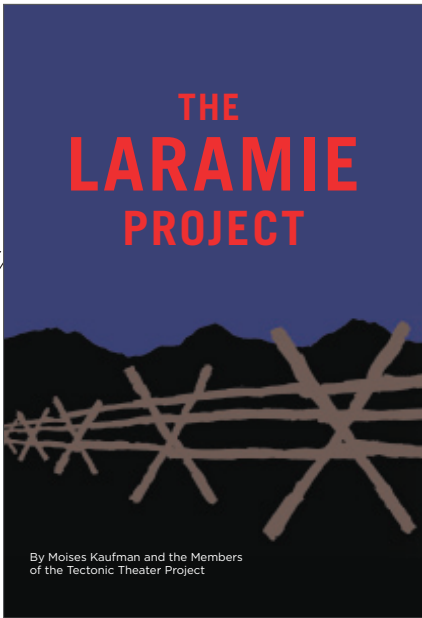
7:30 p.m.  
East Campus Performing Arts Center  
Admission is free.  
[valenciacollege.edu/arts](http://valenciacollege.edu/arts)

## MARCH

### March 31 - Run, Walk & Roll 5K Race

6 p.m.  
West Campus  
Annual race for scholarships, this  
time in support of criminal justice,  
firefighter and EMS students.  
[valenciacollege.edu/alumni](http://valenciacollege.edu/alumni)





## MAY

**May 5 - 43rd Commencement**  
 Silver Spurs Arena, Kissimmee  
 Admission is by ticket only.

## JUNE

**June 7-17 - The Laramie Project, by Moises Kaufman and the Members of Tectonic Theater Project**

June 7, 8, 9, 14, 15 & 16 at 7:30 p.m.

June 10 & 17 at 2 p.m.

East Campus Black Box Theater  
 Tickets: \$10 general admission, \$8 students, faculty/staff, alumni and seniors

Box Office: 407-582-2900  
[valenciacollege.edu/arts](http://valenciacollege.edu/arts)

### June 15-August 3 - Construction Series, Photographs of Silvia Lizama

Silver gelatin hand-painted prints that record the building of expressways in images that appear both ancient and contemporary. Opening reception on June 15 at 6:30 p.m.

Anita S. Wooten East Campus Gallery

Admission is free.  
[valenciacollege.edu/arts](http://valenciacollege.edu/arts)

## JULY

### July 13-14 - Valencia Dance Theatre Repertory Concert

8 p.m.  
 East Campus Performing Arts Center

Tickets: \$10 general admission, \$8 students, faculty/staff, alumni and seniors, \$6 Children 12 and under  
 Box Office: 407-582-2900  
[valenciacollege.edu/arts](http://valenciacollege.edu/arts)



Silvia Lizama, Construction Series



Robert Ross, "Behind Palmano's," from Small Works Exhibit

## AUGUST

### August 17-September 29 - Small Works by Central Florida Artists

Reception on September 7 from 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
 Anita S. Wooten East Campus Gallery  
 Admission is free.  
[valenciacollege.edu/arts](http://valenciacollege.edu/arts)



# *The* BRAINY

## *Valencia's Brain Bowl players form a fraternity dedicated to high-minded trivia*

*By Linda Shrieves Beaty*

**I**t's a Monday afternoon and in a windowless classroom lit only by the glow of fluorescent tube lighting, 10 students are assembled at two rows of desks, drinking iced coffees and sodas. At the front of the room, English professor Chris Borglum reads trivia questions at a rapid-fire pace.

Quick! Can you name from Greek mythology, this deity who is often described with the epithet "cow-eyed"? She presided over marriage and tied Alcmena's legs in knots to try to prevent her offspring's birth. Answer: Hera.

These aren't your standard "Jeopardy!" style questions. Nope, these are College Quiz Bowl level questions—meaning they're like Jeopardy questions on steroids. Take this one: Mexico's lone winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature is this man, author of "The Sun Stone" and "The Labyrinth of Solitude." Who is it? Answer: Octavio Paz.

Or how about this? What was this British prohibition of the importation of foreign grains unless British-grown grain exceeded 70 shillings per quarter? Answer: Corn Laws.

Welcome to Brain Bowl, Florida's version of College Quiz Bowl. It also has other names, including, Academic Quiz Bowl, and yes, even Nerd-Squad.

Originally begun as a USO activity during World War II, quiz bowls moved to colleges in the 1950s. At Valencia, the popularity of Brain Bowl (the name bestowed on the contest by Florida's community colleges) streams directly from the electric personality of coach and Valencia English professor Chris Borglum. Although the team began in 1982, Borglum brought a new intensity to the practices when he began teaching in 1993.

He teased and cajoled students into becoming more aggressive players—and pushed them to inhale volumes of information. Much of it is arcane, somewhat useless trivia.

Yet at Valencia, this trivia is taken quite seriously. The college's Brain Bowl squad has won five national community college championships over the years—2002, 2003, 2004, 2007, and 2008—and has several dusty trophy cases packed with awards and plaques.

Over the years, Valencia has been a giant-killer, going to national tournaments and knocking off teams from University of Michigan and Ivy League schools. One of the most famous moments in Valencia Brain Bowl history occurred in 2002, at a national tournament. There, students from four-year colleges made the usual snarky remarks about community college teams. Before a match, a member of Cornell's squad asked where the Valencia team was from. "Orlando," said a team member. "Isn't that where they have the factory that makes the boy bands?" she sneered. The Valencia team, led by an incensed Amy Harvey, beat Cornell, 215-165.

Today, that spirit lives on in Valencia's current team—a bunch that is both intellectually curious and a curious collection of individuals.

While College Quiz Bowl teams are almost uniformly white and male,

# BUNCH



Photograph by Kelly Warren-Underwood

*Not only are they a diverse group of many religions and heritages, but they also defy the geek stereotype.*

Brain Bowl team members attend a practice at Coach Chris Borglum's house before an important tournament.

Valencia's team shatters all those stereotypes. The "starting squad" includes 19-year-old Jihye Shin, who's Korean, a gifted honors student and prone to swearing like a sailor. Then there's Virginia Ruiz, a 31-year-old San Francisco native and Disney concierge who's studying to become a speech therapist. Also on the starting team is 23-year-old African-American student, C.J. Brown who reads *The Economist* and watches BBC America to keep up with world affairs. Rounding out the team is 18-year-old Kaitlyn Johnston, a home-schooled, dual-enrolled student who stumbled into the Brain Bowl practice one day when her mom was late picking her up after class.

The second team includes students who are newer to the game: 23-year-old Brady Harris, a pre-med student Jihye recruited from her honors classes, Julio Gonzalez-Zuluaga, another honors student whose "uniform" consists of a Led Zeppelin T-shirt, jeans and an Army jacket; 31-year-old Levar Burton (no, not the actor from "Roots"), a New Jersey transplant who's studying engineering; and Stephanie Martinez, a freshman who always thought of herself as a very bright student until she walked into her first Brain Bowl practice. Yet in this room, they show up two days a week, eager to learn—and show off their smarts. On Monday and Wednesday afternoons, the team gathers for a trivia marathon: three or four hours spent absorbing and spewing out a relentless

stream of history, literature, science and math questions

"We all have something in common," says Jihye. "Even if you're a science player or an opera specialist, we're all interested in learning new things—and we want to prove ourselves."

At practice, buzzers are set up, so team members can buzz in when they know the answer. But since there aren't enough buzzers to go around, the students improvise.

When they know the answer, they don't shout out or raise hands. "Buzz," they say, and then spit out the answer.

In one short session, there are questions about the Spanish American War, the Pythagorean Theorem, the head of the Norwegian puppet government during World War II (Vidkun Quisling), the Rodgers & Hammerstein musical "Oklahoma!" and the process in which one tectonic plate moves under another and results in volcanoes (subduction).

When they miss a question, they take notes on a laptop or in a notebook, careful not to make the same mistake again.

The team is packed with students who can spout poetry and literature, who know their way around philosophy and Greek mythology, but they're a little weak in the sciences. They have other Achilles heels—including popular culture. Although they easily name the plot by Max Planck's son to kill Adolf Hitler (Operation Valkyrie), they fumble a question about "Dancing with the Stars."

"I'm glad no one got that question right," math professor and Brain Bowl Coach Boris Nguyen tells the students afterward, "because it means you are studying and not wasting time watching TV."

Although most of the students are well-rounded, everyone has their favorite topics. C.J.'s favorites become clear during one practice.

Nguyen: "What animal population is being devastated by a contagious cancer?" C.J. buzzes in before Boris can finish the question. "The Tasmanian devil."

Nguyen: "Wow, how did you know that? C.J. shrugs. "It's one of my favorite animals."

### **Ouch, that smarts!**

At one practice session, C.J. buzzes in to answer this question: What cable channel begins each day with episodes of "The West Wing?"

"Bravo," he says. Jihye bristles. "You're such a weirdo."

C.J. gives her a wide smile in return.

Mocking each other—and making fun of their answers—is common practice during Brain Bowl practice sessions. After all, they spend hours together at practices each week—and squeeze into one of the college's 15-passenger vans for out-of-town tournaments. They share hotel rooms, rides, coffee, food, personal space. And insults.

Other than the fellowship of other brainiacs, there isn't much in it for the students. They get a small stipend, from

\$50 to \$500 a semester, depending on how many tournaments they compete in and the number of points they score.

But it's the camaraderie—and the wisecracks—that keep them coming back.

That's the test of new members says Borglum.

"It's going to get rough out there," Borglum tells new students. "We're going to mock your most cherished things. But this is funny; this shows we like you."

Finding students who thrive under such conditions isn't always easy. To recruit Brain Bowl players, Nguyen and Borglum scour among honors students, but also keep their eyes open for the student who makes obscure cultural references and who fit the Brain Bowl mold: smart, somewhat bored in class, and a little different.

An honors professor suggested that Jihye, now 19, check out Brain Bowl because she was largely self taught, a voracious reader and someone interested in all kinds of topics.

So she attended one practice—and immediately answered a question about John Milton's "Paradise Lost." That's rare—answering a question at your first practice—and the other players noticed.

When Borglum arrived at practice a little late, C.J. told him how well she was

doing. "She immediately began giving me a little sass, and I put my high hat on and pretended to be offended," said Borglum.

She responded with more sass. It was clear, they all agreed, that she'd fit in.

Virginia came through a different route—referred by a former Brain Bowl player who was helping her move and spotted a copy of Jean Paul Sartre's "No Exit" in her belongings. He asked if she'd read it—and why. When she explained that she just wanted to read it, he suggested she check out Brain Bowl.

Academically, Nguyen says, the players are not always the best students. They're knowledge junkies, but not people who learn in the traditional way that professors want you to.

"They tend to be so unfocused on a topic, they tend to go all over the place," he says. "But I believe that socially, they're able to adapt very quickly. They can run into a group of people and they know something like the capital of Uzbekistan... They tend to fit very well in the academic setting. I would expect many of them to become professors."

Indeed, one of their former Brain Bowl players, Damion Hammock, is now a math professor at Valencia.

Yet the Valencia team stands out from

other squads in many ways. Not only are they a diverse group of many religions and heritages, but they also defy the geek stereotype.

At the first national tournament he attended, Nguyen was shocked to see how geeky the other players were. "When we travel, I realize that our players are well-rounded, well-behaved," he says. "I see other players who are a little too bookish."

### All in the Family

The key to the team, if you ask Nguyen, is Borglum, who peppers the students with a relentless stream of questions, insults and banter.

He's funny and, says Nguyen, Brain Bowl's version of the Pied Piper. Borglum doesn't deny it.

"I have a saying," he notes with a laugh. "The Valencia brain bowl family: Once you're in, you can't get out."

The students are fine with that.

"I hate all this maudlin, syrupy garbage," says Borglum. "But I use the word love, unabashedly, all the time," Borglum says. "I tell them I love you and I will be in touch with you 20 years from now: That's why we can treat each other so meanly." ■



While Coach Chris Borglum reads the difficult trivia questions, Brain Bowl team members prepare to hit the buzzers.



## EXPERTS SPOTLIGHT

# Dr. Bruce Farcau: Eyewitness to History

By Linda Shrieves Beaty

When you think about the typical political science professor, it's easy to envision a guy in a tweed jacket who has spent years in college libraries.

But you might not think of Dr. Bruce Farcau, who dodged bullets during a coup in Bolivia, worked in Madrid studying the emerging European Union, and learned about corruption in Mexico first-hand.

Farcau, who teaches U.S. government as an adjunct professor at Valencia, took an unusual route to academia. Before he began teaching, he spent more than 20 years as a career diplomat with the U.S. State Department, serving in embassies in Bolivia, Ecuador, France, Spain, the Dominican Republic and Mexico.

Fluent in Spanish and French, Farcau earned his bachelor's degree from the University of California at Los Angeles, before joining the State Department's Foreign

*Although writing novels may seem odd for a diplomat, he wrote quite a bit as a political officer in overseas embassies.*

Service. He later earned a master's degree in international relations from Boston University and his doctorate from Georgetown University.

Yet what many of his students—and fellow faculty members—may not realize is there's another side to Farcau. When he's not teaching at Valencia and the University of Central Florida, or spending his summers filling in at embassies around the world while diplomats go on vacation, he writes spy novels.

"The novels are what I call 'airport literature.' It's Tom Clancy techno-thriller stuff," says Farcau, who has written six spy novels under his pen name, Alexander M. Grace.

He wrote the first spy novel, "Crisis," in 1991, while on a long vacation in Bolivia. "We were going to be there for three weeks, visiting my wife's family," Farcau says. "So I rented a laptop—which was state-of-the-art stuff back then—and started writing. I finished in two and a half weeks because I didn't have anything else to do. And, much to my surprise, I found a publisher for it."

Farcau, who spent the bulk of his diplomatic career in Latin America, has written nonfiction books about the region and recently finished a history of the Cold War. But he enjoys writing fiction too, and used Mexico as the basis for a historical novel, "A Little Empire of Their Own."

Although writing novels may seem odd for a diplomat, he wrote quite a bit as a political officer in overseas embassies. There, his job was much like that of a foreign correspondent—to get out, talk to people and learn the political situation, then write reports and send them to Washington, D.C.

And though Farcau has been stationed everywhere from Amman, Jordan to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, his favorite postings were in Paris and Mexico City.

"Paris is a beautiful place," Farcau says. "The weather is horrifically bad. It's dull and gloomy about nine months of the year, but it's a very nice place. It's easy to get around and there's so much history." And though many Americans are leery of visiting Mexico, Farcau loves the country. "We lived there about three years and I've been back repeatedly," he says. "I love the food, the shopping. I love the country."



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

A BRIEFING FOR ALUMNI, RETIREES, FACULTY, STAFF, AND FRIENDS OF VALENCIA

When the state legislature convened in Tallahassee in January, education was at the top of the agenda for Gov. Rick Scott and many legislators. But how the legislature will balance the state's financial woes with the needs of the state's students remains to be seen, says Bill Mullowney, Valencia's vice president for policy and general counsel, who also serves as the college's lobbyist in Tallahassee.

**Q.** Does it look like the legislature will cut funding to the state's two-year colleges?

**A.** Given the state's financial woes, it's likely that Valencia and the state's other two-year colleges may endure another year of budget cuts. "We appear to be at a loggerhead and it's very hard to say what's going to happen," Mullowney said. "But there's a better-than-average chance that we'll come out with a cut to the [Florida College] System and a recommended tuition increase. Then it'll be up to the individual colleges to decide how they want to handle that on their campuses."

Legislators are considering charging higher tuition for students majoring in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields, but community college presidents have resisted that notion. Charging higher tuition for those degrees would discourage many minority and disadvantaged students, they told legislators.

**Q.** Is there any good news for Valencia?

**A.** Yes. The House has introduced a bill that would enhance funds for PECO, the Public Education Capital Outlay, which pays for construction at the state's schools, colleges and universities.

The proposed House budget includes \$139 million in capital projects at Florida College System institutions—and is likely to include more than \$7 million for Valencia, Mullowney said. If the House's proposed PECO changes are passed, Mullowney said "this could restore funding for the two projects that were vetoed last year"—Osceola Campus's Building 4, which is currently under construction, and the West Campus chiller plant, which reduces cooling costs for the entire campus.

**Q.** What other issues are you watching?

**A.** Dual enrollment. Legislators want to encourage more students to participate in dual-enrollment, but Valencia and the state's other community colleges say they can't afford it. Last year, Valencia wrote off \$3.5 million in dual enrollment fees for local high school students, who by law are fee-exempt.

Digital learning. Legislators are interested in creating a "Florida Virtual College" based on the same premise as the successful Florida Virtual School. Designed to be a collaboration between the state's two-year colleges and four-year universities, it is still in embryonic stage.

*For updates throughout the legislative session, go to [valenciacollege.edu/generalcounsel](http://valenciacollege.edu/generalcounsel)*



Photo by fguardian2



## A look at Valencia's upcoming production of "The Laramie Project."

By Roger Moore

"The Laramie Project" is a play that turned into a theater phenomenon and became a cause, a theatrical plea for tolerance.

An epic work about a hate crime that shook America—Matthew Shepard, a young gay man, beaten and left to die over eighteen agonizing hours tied to a barbed wire fence outside of Laramie, Wyoming, on Oct. 7, 1998—"Laramie Project" promises to be a daunting summer challenge for Valencia's theater program, technically and emotionally.

But cause and message aside, it would be a mistake to label this groundbreaking work "a gay play," says Julia Gagne, Artistic Director of Valencia College Theater and director of this June's production of "The Laramie Project."

"It's about this town, Laramie, grappling with what happened, and then the media onslaught that came after," she says. "These people couldn't believe that this happened in their community. They wanted to say, 'Laramie's not like this.' But a lot of them come to the conclusion that 'Yes, it is like this. And isn't it sad that there's a city or a state or a country where this can possibly happen?'"

The members of New York's Tectonic Theater went to Laramie, Wyoming after Shepard's murder and interviewed 200 townspeople—cops, preachers, friends, family. They dug into news reports, press conference transcripts. From that they created a sixty character exploration of what happened, how it happened and how

Laramie dealt with it. Typically, eight or more actors play those characters—interviewers and interview subjects.

The play's large cast and stark setting and subject matter have not been a hindrance to its success. "The Laramie Project" has had more than 2,000 productions in the past twelve years, tens of thousands of performances in countries from Canada to New Zealand.

"The play introduced the event to people who had never heard of Matthew Shepard," says Aaron Babcock, Technical Director with the Entertainment Design and Technology Program at Valencia and production designer for "The Laramie Project." "It's how I learned about Matthew, what really happened to him. I expect some of our actors and many in the audience will learn about this the same way—through the play."

From its very first productions, reviews have praised the show's blend of the "chilling with the redemptive" (The Boston Phoenix). Gagne says that the power of the show is its objectivity. The authors came into it with a point of view, but took even the most insensitive remarks by townsfolk seriously.

"For instance, the character who says 'that this crime was fifty percent Matthew's fault, and fifty percent the people who attacked him,' is not made to seem outrageous," Gagne says.

"It sounds like real people talking, having a conversation," Babcock adds. "The company caught the flavor of the townsfolk."

The impact of these interviews and monologues will



be heightened, Gagne and Babcock hope, by producing the show in the Valencia Performing Arts Center's Black Box Theater "arena style," in the round, with no scenery. The audience will be close to the performers, lending the performance a personal intimacy. It's a play that cries out for a nearly bare stage, minimal props and costumes, though they're pondering ways to include video to capture the media frenzy that followed Shepard's murder.

Gagne sees many things a college theater company can learn from a show like "Laramie"—the idea that plays have a life beyond the stage and the best of them transcend the need for sets and props, and learning that theater can affect social change.

"Just weeks after Matthew Shepard's death, these actors [portrayed as interviewers in the play] went out there," she says. "That took guts... They thought 'We need to speak to this event, and put this into context and find out what happened and what Laramie is like.' The townspeople seemed to benefit from these conversations as much as the actors. I hope student actors are amazed that theater can do this."

Tectonic Theater members went back to Laramie, ten years after their first interviews, for an epilogue that catches up with many of those characters, including the two convicted murderers. But all that the updating proved to Moises Kaufman, credited as playwright on this collaborative script, "is that not much has changed," a lament that has become his mantra in the years since tackling this project.

"Has society changed? Are these messages people still need to hear? The social situation hasn't changed much in the years since Matthew Shepard's death," Gagne says.

And, adds Babcock, "It's pretty clear that we're not done with this 'Project.'"

"The Laramie Project" will be performed June 7-10, 14-17 at the Black Box Theater at the Valencia College Performing Arts Center on East Campus. Ticket information: [www.valenciacollege.edu/arts](http://www.valenciacollege.edu/arts)



Julia Gagne, artistic director of Valencia College Theater, will tackle the challenge of directing "The Laramie Project."

*The authors came into it with a point of view, but took even the most insensitive remarks by townsfolk seriously.*





# At the Top of the Class

Aspen Prize judges explain why Valencia beat out all other colleges to be named the nation's best.

*By Linda Shrieves Beaty*

**P**op the champagne corks and start spreading the news. Valencia College has been named the winner of the 2011 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, which recognizes the best of the nation's 1,200 community colleges.

The award, which comes with a cash prize of \$600,000, was presented to Valencia College President Dr. Sandy Shugart at a Dec. 12 ceremony in Washington, D.C.

The panel of judges selected Valencia after a nine-month examination of the college's graduation and placement data, as

well as the number of students who transfer or complete their degrees and certificates—and how the college measured up when it comes to providing access to minority students.

Officials from the Aspen Institute, the nonprofit think tank that sponsored the prize, named Valencia one of the 10 finalists for the award in October 2011. Later in the fall, judges visited the college and conducted in-depth interviews with Valencia officials.

The name of the winning college was kept secret until the day of the announcement. Yet judges interviewed later said Valencia was a clear winner. The

runners-up were: Lake Area Technical Institute of Watertown, S.D.; Miami Dade College; Walla Walla Community College, in Washington; and West Kentucky Community and Technical College, in Paducah, Ky.

"What in the end clinched it for Valencia was they seemed to do everything well," said Anthony Carnevale, director of Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, who served on the selection committee. "A lot of the colleges did several things well, but Valencia did well in every measure, even under difficult circumstances."



Aspen officials noted Valencia has a graduation rate significantly higher than the national average for community colleges—and that nearly half of the students are minorities. The judges also examined the employment rates and wages of Valencia graduates, noting that even though Central Florida had an unemployment rate at about 11 percent at the time, Valencia graduates were being hired at rates above the local average and were earning wages higher than the average for the region.

The panel was also struck by the way that Valencia's faculty and staff work together to ensure that students succeed.

"We were incredibly impressed with the intentionality with which Valencia takes on the student success mission within all of those domains.

It's really clear that everybody we met with is committed to student success. That is said all the time, but what we experienced, both by looking at the data and by visiting the college, is that people at Valencia understood that it was the [college's] responsibility to ensure that students succeed at higher rates," said Joshua Wyner, executive director of Aspen's College Excellence Program. "Students have to do their part," but Valencia demonstrates that there's a lot colleges can do to change the outcomes by better teaching and better advising, he added.

Wyner said that the judges were excited by the college's Teaching and Learning

Academy and the faculty's willingness to re-examine the ways that they teach.

"In the end," said Carnevale, "it was a relatively easy choice."

For Aspen officials, the next challenge will be spreading the word about the work Valencia is doing—at higher education conferences, including the upcoming convention of the American Association of Community Colleges. In addition, Aspen officials are also considering a new initiative: a leadership or fellowship program for future community college presidents.

Already, Wyner and the Aspen team are working on a book about leadership at community colleges—and the vital role it plays in the success of colleges such as Valencia.

*"A lot of the colleges did several things well, but Valencia did well in every measure, even under difficult circumstances."*

Inspiration for the book and the leadership program grew out of the meetings that Wyner and the judges had with Shugart and the presidents of the four runners-up. The Aspen team was struck by one common theme: Nearly every top-performing college had a president who'd been in the job for a decade or more.

In every case, excellent community college presidents demonstrated a willingness to commit to a college for the long haul and the ability to communicate with a wide range of audiences, from state

legislators to business leaders to K-12 principals.

"One of the things that we take from that is that sustained excellence requires time," Wyner said. "When people are looking for leaders for their colleges, they ought to be looking for qualities that suggest that a leader is willing to stick with it for a period of time. Given that the average tenure of a community college president is three or four years, I think that the presence of leaders who have been there for a decade or more in all of these winning colleges tells us something."

In addition, he noted that each of the top five colleges have presidents who strongly believe that all students can succeed. "We often think about the skills that people

need to be leaders, but the belief systems—the belief that every student can learn and that we as adults can get better and the belief that we can continuously improve

—seemed so important in each of these places."

In the coming months, Wyner and the Aspen team plan to talk extensively with Shugart and the other college presidents to learn more about what works on their campuses.

"None of them is perfect," Wyner said. "Each of them has something to learn from others. And that's what we want to share."

So stay tuned. As the nation's best community college, Valencia will be at the forefront of that conversation. ■

# Putting the App in Applicable Job Skills

*Valencia's computer programming professors hatch an idea to help students sell their skills—by creating applications for mobile phones.*

*By Linda Shrieves Beaty*

Anyone who says he can predict the future is either a fool or a liar.

But when it comes to computer programming—and what direction it's headed in—Valencia professors Colin Archibald and Lisa Macon may be a little more prescient than the next guy.

Two years ago, the two Valencia professors could see that the next big wave in computing would be on mobile phones or smart phones. And, they figured that the business world would need—or want—people who knew how to program applications for smart phones.

Each of them came up with the idea separately, but Macon says she was inspired after stumbling across a college student at a game development conference in San Francisco. Like her, he was doodling away on his Macbook and the two began talking. He mentioned that he'd created a mobile-phone application that regularly downloaded content from a popular website—Perez Hilton's site—and sent it to people's smartphones. Every month, he was earning \$3,000 from that lone app.

Macon began thinking about that. If app programming could help her students pay the bills or earn a little cash on the side, it might be worth pursuing. Archibald agreed.

So, with funding from the Valencia Foundation, they took classes to learn how to create mobile applications (or mobile apps) for cell phones. Archibald, who's based on East Campus, learned how to program applications for phones and tablet computers that use Android programming, which was created by Google. Macon, meanwhile, learned how to create applications for Apple

devices, such as the iPhone, iPad and iPod.

In Fall 2011 for the first time the class was offered, with Archibald teaching the students how to program apps for Android phones, and Macon teaching them how to program for Apple's iPhones.

At first, all the students were computer programming students. But as word of the class spread, students from a wide variety of majors have asked if they could take the course.

"I would love to be able to tell that English major with a great app idea that they can create their app, but at this point, it's not that easy," says Macon, who notes that the class has two prerequisites, COP 1000, which teaches basic computer programming, and COP 2800, which is Java computer programming, the language required for writing mobile apps.

But there's widespread interest in the topic, from students and industry, say both professors. Banks want mobile apps because they want to make online banking convenient for customers. Doctor's offices want apps so patients can make appointments using their mobile phones. Even colleges are interested in creating apps that will present virtual tours of campuses on a student's phone or tablet computer. And any company that sells products, whether it's clothing or Kleenex, wants to be able to sell their products using a mobile app.

"Now companies are screaming we need a mobile app, but they don't know what it should do or why they should have it," Archibald says.

Students, on the other hand, think that learning how to write apps could turn them into the next Bill Gates.





## SWEET SUCCESS

“Everybody has an idea, and everyone thinks that if you make a 99-cent app, you’re going to be rich. And it’s not really working that way,” Archibald says. “It’s a digital gold rush—and that’s exciting. It’s not all that realistic.”

Many apps, for instance, are free. The app that Archibald created to demonstrate for the class keeps track of a user’s bowling scores. The free app, which is available in the Android marketplace, has been downloaded 2,900 times. “But it’s free, so I’m not making any money on it,” Archibald says. “I wanted the experience of putting something out there that could be used.”

The beauty of the class, he says, is not that creating an app is going to make a student rich. But employers are asking for students who know how to create mobile apps.

Eric Sepulvado, for instance, earned his associate’s degree in computer programming in December 2011 and has been able to show potential employers a portfolio that includes apps he created.

“For me, the class was very beneficial because I had an interest in developing these apps. I feel like learning mobile apps gives you a pretty good foot in the door for new web developers,” says Sepulvado, 31. “I can’t just go out and put together software for banks for their ATM machines, but I can do an app for them.”

Sepulvado will soon put one of his apps—one he created for the Valencia course—on the market. The app lets golfers calculate their scores on their smartphones, eliminating the need for a pencil and scorecard.

Sepulvado’s golf app was one of many that students created that surprised the professors.

“They were wildly all over the place, creatively,” Archibald says. “It turned out that they had all sorts of interests that they could incorporate into their apps.”

One student created a virtual online library—which allowed her to catalog the books she had in her collection. “It looked like you were in the library and you could go around and leave notes about your reading collection,” Archibald said.

Another student, Brent Richardson, created an app that turns your smartphone into a pedometer, or step counter. “These devices have very sensitive sensors inside them... you can actually measure how far you’ve walked and you have your phone anyway,” says Archibald. There’s one

hitch: the phone has to be on constantly to function as a pedometer and that can drain battery life.

### The Future of the Class...

Currently being offered as a special topics class, the course is still a work in progress.

After one semester, Archibald and Macon decided to split the course into two separate classes. Now students can take one 3-credit course that teaches them how to write apps for Android phones, while another 3-credit class will teach them how to create iPhone apps.

But the students are eager to take the class, which will put them on the cutting edge of their industry—thanks to professors who recognized a coming trend and jumped in to teach their students.

And that, says Macon, is the beauty of a community college. The faculty—who aren’t required to conduct research—have the time to learn new skills and incorporate them into classes. So students at Valencia are learning how to program apps, when many of their colleagues at four-year colleges and universities may have to teach themselves those skills.

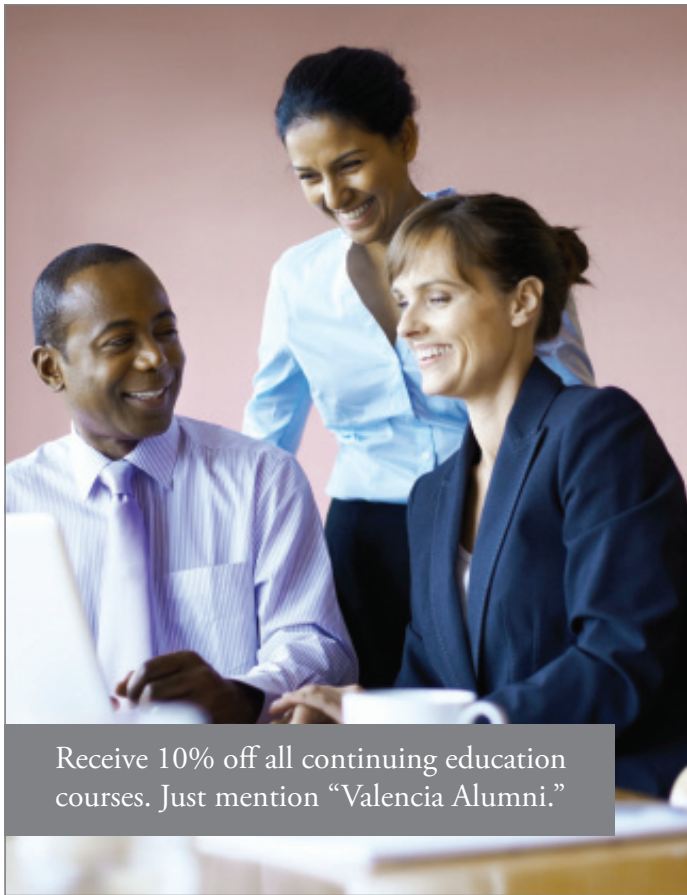
“We’re ahead of most universities in what we offer. We are light years faster in changing the curriculum,” Macon said.

And that has enabled Valencia to send students like Sepulvado into the job market with the latest skills. “On the Android side, we’re pioneers,” he says of Valencia’s team. “The class really worked out well for me. Although I’m more comfortable with Android, I’m very interested in Apple. So for me, the opportunity to learn a little bit on both platforms was excellent.”



Eric Sepulvado turned his class project into an app that allows golfers to keep their scores on their smartphones, eliminating the need for pads and pencils on the golf course.





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# CLASS NOTES

## 1 Michael Dippy '89

Michael (on right of photo) is one of the founders and the current executive director of IDignity, a non-profit that assists the poor and disadvantaged in overcoming the barriers to obtaining legal identification documents. IDignity was founded in 2008 and has since served more than 7,000 clients in Central Florida. Michael was honored to have been recently designated a “Local Hero” by Bank of America and to have concluded his term as the Orlando Sentinel’s “Central Floridian of the Year” for 2011.

He also serves as outreach chair for First United Methodist Church of Orlando.

## 2 Joan (Senn) Giovanni '93

Joan is the development manager for the Alzheimer’s Association, Central and North Florida Chapter, where she says her role includes fundraising and “so much more than that. I build relationships with people and help them to understand how a single person can make a difference against a terminal disease. I provide tools and resources that empower people to honor their loved ones through Walk to End Alzheimer’s. I connect caregivers with support systems so they feel less alone in what they are experiencing. I celebrate their successes and comfort them in their loss. I help others walk the path I traveled when my mom was living with Alzheimer’s disease. Above all, I communicate what a difference the Alzheimer’s Association made to me as a caregiver, and became their employee so that I might help others. I didn’t see this path when

I was a student at Valencia College (before my mom’s diagnosis). But each role prepares us for the next, and my career in marketing and communications (as well as my B.A. degree in Psychology at UCF) brought me here, where I honor my mother every day.”

## Abdelaziz Bennouna '01

Abdelaziz is an owner and managing director of Medigreen Waste Services, a biomedical waste transport company that is licensed and insured by the Florida Department of Health. He and his business partner, Kwame Bentsi-Enchill, met in a Calculus II class at Valencia. The company serves the cities of Orlando, Miami and Titusville and the counties of St. Johns, Hernando, Brevard (Medical Examiner’s Office) and Osceola, including several small-to medium-size medical facilities. Three months ago they opened an operations center in Ft. Myers to better serve the South Florida region.

## 3 Paul Robert Allen '02, '07

Paul (in foreground of photo) is involved with Central Florida Gaelic Sports, Inc. and is the public relations officer for the Orlando Hurling Club.



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#### Angel L. Ramos '02

Angel is employed as the student services coordinator for the School of Nursing at Georgia Southwestern State University. He began his career in the education management profession as a tutor for the GEAR UP Program at Valencia College and went on to obtain a B.S. degree in liberal studies from the University of Central Florida. After graduating from UCF, he became a high school teacher and went on to earn an MBA from Georgia Southwestern State University in 2010. Angel lives in Americus, Ga., with his wife, Michelle.

#### 4 Michael A. Ruiz '03

"After surviving the tremendous loss of my wife and mother of our three sons to lung cancer a few years ago, my family has been able to move forward with life," Michael said. "I am newly married, have moved into a new home, and am back in school. I am just two classes away from obtaining my Masters of Information Systems Management degree with a concentration in Information Security. I have been employed at Lockheed Martin for ten years and work as an Information Assurance Engineer."

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#### Marc Sanchez '04

Mark graduated from the University of North Carolina in 2008 with a degree in economics (with Highest Distinction/Phi Beta Kappa) and was recruited to join Wachovia's Corporate and Investment Bank in Charlotte, N.C. He later accepted an offer to join Bank of America/Merrill Lynch and was promoted to Associate Vice President in June 2010.

#### 5 Ruth Joseph '07

After graduating from Valencia with an A.A. degree, Ruth received a B.S. with Honors in Public Administration and Nonprofit Management from the University of Central Florida. A month after her graduation from UCF, she started a nonprofit organization which is building a school in Picmy La Gonave, an isolated island in the western part of Haiti with more than 10,000 children. Currently, the nearest school to Picmy is 60 miles away and there are no roads, so education is nonexistent.

#### 6 Chatranant (Savigamin) Costello '08

Chatranant just started her own mobile gourmet food and catering truck, "Eclectic Kitchen." "The kind of food I cook comes from a broad and diverse range of sources," she said. "The theme of the opening menu is based around my upbringing in Thailand and the various street foods offered in my



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hometown of Bangkok. My objective is to cook tasty, fresh-made food. My first employee is an internship student from Valencia College's Culinary Management program." You can find Eclectic Kitchen on Facebook and Twitter.

#### 7 Kwame D. Walker '09

After successfully completing the Bridges to Success Program and graduating from Valencia College with an A.A. in business administration, Kwame enrolled at UCF where he's pursuing a B.S. degree with a double major in marketing and management and entrepreneurship. He is involved with several campus organizations, holding leadership roles in the African American Student Union and on the Black History Month Committee. A mentor and motivational speaker for inner-city youths in Orange County public schools, Kwame was recently awarded the COMPACT Mentoring Program Distinguished Alumni Award 2011 and the UCF President Student Diversity Leadership Award. "Being a first generation student I refer to myself," he said, "as the young militant who is leading the next generation of my family members through the low socio-economic, and uneducated wilderness by being the first to carve out a path for them to follow."



## IN REMEMBRANCE

### Mary Smedley Collier '82

Feb. 14, 1925 to Dec. 26, 2011

by Geraldine Gallagher

Mary Smedley Collier, Valencia's first-ever Distinguished Graduate, was born on Valentine's Day 87 years ago. Her holiday birth foreshadowed Mary's spectacularly big heart and her easy affection for those who surrounded her. People were drawn to Mary, and her circle of friends is enormous. You always left her presence feeling better about yourself and the world.

I met Mary in early 2001, the beginning of a friendship that means the world to me. Her relationship with Valencia and with our foundation showed me that this is a place where opportunity thrives and deep friendships are formed.

Mary has been an encouraging friend, counselor, mentor and True North to our Valencia staff, students, alumni and board members.

Each time the foundation launched a new initiative or campaign, Mary was the first to raise her hand, to lead it and to invest in our students. Every bit of good news about the college or foundation was avidly shared

with her family, friends and, I observed, people she had just met.

Mary returned to college in her 50s, after her children were grown. She was Alumni Association president twice and served the foundation since 1987. Her Valencia diploma hangs proudly in her home office. Just this fall, Mary was named Woman of the Year for Education by the Women's Executive Council for her Valencia philanthropy and service. That award remained on her coffee table through the holidays, I suspect so her visitors would notice it and she could tell them more about Valencia. I know that was true when I visited.

When she needed time to think or write, Mary would escape to the West Campus library, even in recent years.

Mary was one of the wittiest people I've known, often at completely unexpected moments. I feel sure that Heaven became a whole lot funnier once she arrived, with that innocent smile, deadpan delivery and slightly wicked sparkle in her blue eyes. Her pastor agrees.

Mary was humble, kind, generous and gentle ... a gentlewoman, a graceful woman, and a woman of grace. Her faith was central to who she was and informed all of her beliefs and actions.

Among hundreds of fond moments and deep conversations, we enjoyed Celtic Woman performing at

the Amway Center, her passion for Magic basketball, and many a thrillingly fast-paced ride in her Jaguar.

She made a difference in the lives of so many, and through her endowed scholarships, Mary, her husband, David, and the entire Collier family will transform the futures of countless generations to come. Valencia was just one of the causes near to her heart, including her church, the Heart Association and the families of migrant citrus workers.

Shortly after Mary passed away, the Valencia Alumni Association leadership team voted to honor her legacy by naming the Mary Smedley Collier Distinguished Graduate award, which recognizes an exceptional student each year—the grad who shares the commencement address and receives a junior/senior scholarship to their new university.

So, forever more, our most brilliant student will carry the Collier family name.

My favorite Gaelic blessing ends with the words, “and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.”

I have no doubt that Mary Smedley Collier is well in hand. And so are we for having known and loved her.

Mary was born in Anacortes, Wash., to Melvin and Louise Smedley. With siblings Joan and Melvin, they moved to San Francisco. After recuperating from serious illnesses which hospitalized her for several years as a young child, Mary excelled in school.

She met David Collier, a handsome Naval Chief Petty Officer, who quickly stole her heart. They married a year later, relocating to Tacoma, Wash. The couple opened a used car dealership and had their first three children, Lynn, Susan and Mike.

In 1953, the couple loaded their family and their worldly belongings to move to Orlando. They returned to the automobile business, and Mary helped while raising the children, who now included their youngest, David.

For almost 60 years, Mary was active in her churches, especially her beloved First Presbyterian Church of Orlando, where she served as Elder.

Mary’s professional pursuits included real estate and a pro shop. But she was drawn back to the auto business. After her husband passed away, Mary and their son Mike took over the dealership, where she led for a decade before retiring last year.

She supported her alma maters, Valencia and UCF, from which Mary graduated both times with highest honors. Reading, writing and learning were among her passions, but first on earth was her family, which has grown to eight grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.



The Collier family: (back row, from left) Mike Collier, David Collier; (front row, left to right) Lynn Collier Bishop, Mary Collier, David Collier, Susan Collier Sprouse.



### **Megan M. R. Lefranc '10**

After graduating from Valencia College in 2010, Megan transferred to the University of Florida (UF) and earned a B.S. in finance. Last summer she did an internship in wealth management with UBS, one of the largest investment banks in the world. Originally from France, Megan is also a student assistant at the UF International Center. She hopes to obtain a job as an analyst in an investment bank either in New York, London or another financial capital.

### **Paula A. Caicedo '11**

Paula is a full-time student majoring in finance at the University of Central Florida. She is also employed as a tax specialist.

### **8 Steven R. Crist '11**

Steven attends Emory University in Atlanta, Ga., where he finished his first post-transfer semester with a 4.0 GPA. He has joined the Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity and is an executive director for TEDxEmory.

## CLASS NOTES



### **Cassandra (Goodwin-Emery) Daniel '11**

After graduating from Valencia with an A.A. degree in business management, Cassandra now attends Rollins College where she hopes to graduate in 2014.

### **Dawn (Nall) Ginnetti '11**

Dawn attends Smith College in Massachusetts as an Ada Comstock Scholar. She is majoring in American studies, focusing on social justice with a minor in government. She expects to graduate in May 2014.

### **Wade Lanier '11**

Wade recently accepted a position as a registered nurse in the Progressive Care Unit at Health Central Hospital. He plans to enroll in UCF's RN-to-BSN Program starting fall 2012.

### **Robert Thomas Stio '11**

Robert is pursuing a bachelor's degree at Rollins College. In the coming semesters, he hopes to study abroad, first in Rome and then another term in Morocco (where, thanks to the Valencia Honors Department, he was able to travel to during the spring break honors trip in 2010). This opportunity coincides with his studies in Arabic and interests in Middle Eastern culture. Robert has his own weekly radio show on WPRK-FM 91.5 every Friday from 10 a.m.-12 noon. The name of the show is "Fight Back Friday: AKA the Grunge Before Lunch," playing a variety of 90's grunge and hardcore rock 'n roll.

### **9 Melvin E. Thompson '12**

Melvin is pursuing a major in psychology and a minor in writing at Rollins College. "Education has thoroughly impacted my life," he said. "When I first enrolled at Valencia College my goal was to learn a vocation to get a better job, hoping to be able to do college level work. Never did I envision myself being an Honors student or being involved in so many college activities."

# Leaders Wanted!

Help us to create exciting, new Alumni Association programs and activities. Consider becoming a member of the Alumni Association Leadership Team or a leader of a special project. Information is available on the alumni website or by calling the Alumni Relations Office.

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## Helen Parramore: A Modern-Day Renaissance Woman

By Melissa Tchen

Helen Parramore taught humanities at the West Campus for close to 20 years before retiring in 1991. Now, 21 years later, she is still an embodiment of the subject she once taught—a modern-day Renaissance woman who is an author, artist, world traveler and life-long learner.

As a professor, Parramore kept in touch with her artistic side by adding courses in art appreciation, art history and even studio art to her teaching load. She was also a contributing writer to the Orlando Sentinel and several textbooks that the humanities department put out. But it wasn't until her retirement that she found time to devote herself to the creative endeavor she had always dreamed of—writing her own books.

Now an author several times over, Parramore has written a memoir, a novel and several children's books, which she also illustrated. While Parramore won't reveal her age, she has had quite a full life from which to draw inspiration.

"Skunk Stew," Parramore's memoir, tells the difficult story of her childhood—growing up often hungry and homeless during the Great Depression, left to be raised by an eccentric mother after her father's suicide.

While her childhood certainly was not easy, Parramore feels that it helped nurture her creativity.

"When you read the childhood of a lot of writers, you find many were amazingly difficult or lonely—and writing was a great outlet for them," said Parramore. "Sometimes I wonder if people with happy, serene lives could ever be creative in any way."



Even in her fiction, Parramore has been able to draw on personal experiences. Her novel, "Maiden Voyage," follows an American woman as she sails around the Greek isles in search of ancient artifacts. Besides having taught ancient humanities, Parramore has traveled to Greece more than 10 times and also shares a talent with the novel's main character—both are artists.

Being an artist has come in handy for Parramore as a writer, allowing her to illustrate her own children's books. Each one has a different illustration style that suits the mood of the story. Her styles span from the realistic portrayals of Florida frontier life in "Maudie's Promise" to the black and white pencil drawings in the fantasy, "The Frigments of Fern Valley" to the colorful, child-like illustrations of "Brian's Bird Book."

Parramore produces plenty of adult art as well. Her latest is a series of paintings that tackle the serious subject matter of 21st century news. Throughout the past decade she has collected news stories that caught her attention with compelling headlines or photographs. She then captured the stories by painting them—doing a series of 14 works. Shown together, the pieces are quite gripping.

"People think it should be pretty and entertaining, but no, it's not—it's pretty serious," said Parramore. "Beauty can be horrible at the same time."

It's this type of art appreciation that Parramore shares with others through the life-long learning organization, the Academy of Senior Professionals at Eckerd College, or ASPEC. Parramore displays her artwork at ASPEC and leads one of their art interest groups, as well as one in reading the Greek classics.

As for her own writing, Parramore is considering self-publishing her latest manuscript, a comedy murder-mystery entitled, "The Butler did it Every Chance He Got." Keep an eye out for it on Amazon.com where all of her books are available for purchase.

Parramore lives in St. Petersburg, Florida, where in addition to her creative endeavors, she enjoys spending time with her children, grandchildren and soon, her first great-grandchild.

Photos by Ellen Stedman



Top Painting: Afghan Refugee Children (mixed media, acrylic, colored pencil, from the "Millennium Images" series). Bottom Painting: Bauxite Mines in Greece (on-site watercolor)



# 2012 VALENCIA JOB FAIR

Valencia Alumni, join us to learn about local career opportunities, network with employers, and possibly interview on the spot.

## **FIND JOBS SPECIFIC TO YOUR DEGREE AND/OR CERTIFICATE**

The Job Fair will only host employers from select career fields. Attendees should hold a degree and/or certificate or have work experience in one of the following areas:

- Arts and Entertainment
- Business
- Computer Engineering and Electronics Technology
- Hospitality and Culinary
- Information Technology

## **NEED JOB PREPARATION HELP?**

Valencia will offer a series of free résumé writing and interviewing workshops leading up to the event. See website for more details

## **WHEN:**

Tuesday, April 10, 2012  
3:00-7:00 p.m.

## **WHERE:**

Valencia College, West Campus  
Special Events Center (Bldg. 8)  
1800 S. Kirkman Rd.  
Orlando, FL 32811

## **KNOW BEFORE YOU GO**

No RSVP is required - just come ready to meet potential employers. Bring several copies of your résumé to hand out. Come dressed for success (interview attire).



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To be featured in Class Notes visit [valenciacollege.edu/alumni/class\\_notes.cfm](http://valenciacollege.edu/alumni/class_notes.cfm) and fill in the submission form or mail to: Class Notes Editor, Valencia Alumni Association, 190 South Orange Avenue, Orlando, FL 32801.



If you wish to include a photo, please use the following guidelines:

- Candid shots of you interacting in an authentic setting are preferred. Avoid sending traditional portraits.
- If sending electronically, files should be in jpeg or tif formats. Files should be 300dpi resolution at 4"x6" (this would be a file approximately 1mb to 3mb in size).

The Alumni Association can also help to spread the word! Let us know about your meet-ups, networking events, annual retreats, reunions and save-the-dates that your

fellow alumni might like to attend or did attend with you. Whether it's getting a group together for sporting events, charity fundraisers, a day at the parks or just brunch and lunch, let us know. And if you send pictures we might just include them in the next issue. We can share your adventures and good times with our readers so next time they can plan on joining in on the fun!

And don't forget if you have an idea for a future article, please contact the Alumni Association. Send all suggestions to [alumni@valenciacollege.edu](mailto:alumni@valenciacollege.edu).

# 2012 EVENTS SNAPSHOTS

## Tina's Turnout

Friends and family of the late Tina Collyer, a Valencia grad and Orlando paramedic, gathered for the first-annual fundraising walk to support the "Tina's Heart" Memorial EMT Scholarship in her honor.



## Retiree Luncheon



Betty Palmer (far left) speaks, while (upper right) Dave Hosman and Lynn Capraun reminisce. Cliff Morris (bottom right) speaks to the group.



## Osceola Building 4 Groundbreaking



Cassandra Haley, Kathleen Plinske and Deidre Holmes DuBois (above, left to right), break out the shovels, while students, faculty and staff celebrate the construction of the fourth building on the Osceola Campus.

## Bernice King Visit

The daughter of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. urged students to become more civically engaged in their communities.





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Has successfully completed a certificate program or earned a degree at Valencia.

### STUDENT MEMBER

Has started but not yet completed a certificate program or degree at Valencia.

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