

VITAE

THE MAGAZINE OF
VALENCIA COLLEGE



BRINGING HOME THE BACHELOR'S

WITH FIRST BACHELOR'S
GRADUATES, VALENCIA
HAS EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES
FOR HIGHER DEGREES—
AND EARNINGS.

2013

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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VALENCIACOLLEGE

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VALENCIA NEWS



More Than \$1 Million in Energy Costs Saved

Thinking green may save the planet, but it also saves money. By incorporating green technology in the college's air-conditioning, heating and lighting facilities, Valencia officials have saved \$1.3 million in energy costs in the past two years.

Starting in May 2011, Valencia has partnered with Cenergistic, a conservation company that uses data to help companies track and reduce their consumption of electricity, natural gas, fuel oil and water.

Patti Riva, Valencia's operations manager for energy education, has led the effort to initiate changes among Valencia faculty and staff to reduce energy consumption—and has worked closely with a Cenergistic team to monitor the college's energy use.

One of her strategies for reducing energy use has been to encourage campus departments to change the location of classes, so that on weekends and evenings, some sections of buildings are not in use—and the air-conditioning can be turned off.

Give Kids a Smile Day

Valencia's dental hygiene students provided free dental care and education for low-income children as part of Give Kids a Smile Day, a national event held each year in February by the American Dental Association.

Valencia partnered with dental assisting students from Orlando Vo Tech and the Dental Care Access Foundation to provide care to 80 children from the community.

The goal: teach kids the basics of brushing and teach parents the value of early fluoride treatments and sealants for preventing tooth decay.

Valencia's Dental Hygiene Clinic is a resource for people in the community, providing low-cost dental services including cleanings and X-rays. For more information, call 407-582-1305.



valenciacollege.edu/smile
Watch the video.





49 Head to College Thanks to Take Stock in Children

A college education can be life-changing—a golden ticket to a better future—and it’s a dream that came true for 49 graduating Orange County high school seniors.

In February, Take Stock in Children of Orange County awarded \$30,000 college scholarships to 49 students who have participated in the organization’s unique mentorship

program for five years.

At a ceremony held at Full Sail University, community leaders, volunteers, corporate sponsors and mentors—as well as the Orlando Magic dancers and the Magic mascot Stuff—cheered for this year’s high school seniors—the first group of students to graduate from the program.

Take Stock In Children is a statewide initiative that helps promising, at-risk children succeed. Valencia administers the program

for Orange County through the support of corporate sponsors, including the Orlando Magic Youth Foundation, Mears Transportation, Full Sail, Florida Citrus Sports, the Martin Andersen-Gracia Andersen Foundation and the Haddock Foundation.



valenciacollege.edu/tsic2013

Watch the video.

Nursing Faculty and Students Perform 26 Acts of Kindness in Memory of Newtown

How many Valencia College nursing students and faculty members does it take to change the world?

Apparently, not many.

That was the lesson that nursing faculty delivered last January and February as they urged students, staff and faculty members of the nursing department to join part of a national movement to perform 26 Acts of Kindness to help their fellow Americans.

The idea came from NBC news correspondent Ann Curry. In the days after the shootings of 26 children and teachers in Newtown, Conn., she tweeted this idea: “What if? Imagine if everyone could commit to doing one act of kindness for every one of those children killed in Newtown.” Her idea quickly gathered momentum and 26 Acts of Kindness was born.

At Valencia, Kim Laughman and Tommi Graves, along with a handful of other nursing faculty members, discussed different ways they could honor the victims and families by showing support for

their own community. The response, says Graves, was overwhelming. For three weeks, 26 full-time nursing faculty members and adjunct faculty, along with staff members and nursing students collected hundreds of donations, including coats for the homeless, food for low-income families, and Valentine’s Day cards for soldiers stationed overseas.





Ryan Dey assembles his project for UCF's pin-up review.



ON PINS & NEEDLES

Valencia architecture students pin up their work—and their hopes for admission to architecture school.

By Linda Shrieves Beaty

The temperature in the room is rising. So is the level of stress and excitement.

Architectural models, foam board and pins are scattered all over the floor at Valencia's Special Events Center. Nearly 80 architecture students are painstakingly pinning their favorite models, sketches and paintings to a 4-foot-by-8-foot board.

For the students, the boards represent more than a three-dimensional portfolio of their work.

These are their tickets to architecture school.

How well they present their work on those boards—known as pin-ups—is crucial. Their admission to architecture school hangs in the balance.

The excitement in the room is palpable.

So is the exhaustion.

"We haven't slept in, like, three days," said Valencia architecture students Angel Almanzar, 19, and Juan Diaz, 20. Working side by side, they have been fueling themselves with energy drinks like Monster and 5-Hour Energy.

Held at Valencia's Special Events Center on April 17 and 18, the UCF "pin-up" is an annual ritual for Valencia's graduating architecture students. Valencia students who want to be admitted to the University of Central Florida's architecture program present their best work—and then display it for a team of judges who will decide which students get the 38 seats in next year's junior class at UCF.

“

This was Show Time. If your board didn't sing, forget it.

— Jennifer Princivil, Valencia architecture professor

”

But the Valencia students are not alone at the pin-up. Students from 10 other colleges and universities are also competing, just as eager to get admitted to the UCF architecture program.

At UCF—and at architecture schools around the country—admission to the upper division (or junior and senior classes) in the architecture program is limited. This year, more than 80 students are competing for the 38 seats in the UCF program. Last year, only 44 students applied for admission to UCF's architecture program, so the competition is getting stiffer, says Lynn McConnell Hepner, associate dean of UCF's College of Arts & Humanities.

And that's just the beginning. When the Valencia students take their work to the University of Florida's pin-up—held only a few days after UCF's—they'll face even more competition.

"It's competitive, but that's a good thing," says Valencia architecture professor Allen Watters. "The competition is a friendly competition and it brings out the best in the students."

At the UCF pin-up, students have seven hours to pin-up their boards. When the doors to the Special Events Center open at noon, students stream in, carrying the models and work they've done during their first two years in architecture design classes. They also come bearing tools—scissors, X-Acto knives and lots of pins—for pinning their models and work to the large foam boards, which will be the canvas that holds all their work.

"It's always been a fantastic event," says Watters, who gets excited by the energy

the students generate. "There's always been a lot of excitement, but the event gets better each year."

While other students are buzzing around the room, Paola Munoz, 21, is busy in one corner, carefully pinning models and sketches up on her board. "I think I got about four hours of sleep last night," says Munoz. "I was up until 5 a.m. figuring out how and where to pin everything."

There are many rules, both written and unwritten. The top quarter of the board must be devoted to work done in a student's first year, so that judges can see the students' progression. And though they don't have to, most of the students display their best work at eye-level to attract the judges' attention.

But it's tricky, says Valencia student Chris O'Beirne, who is working next to Munoz. "You can't have too much white space, but you don't want too much clutter," says O'Beirne, 22.

Like many of Valencia's architecture students, Munoz took a circuitous route to architecture school. She started her college career at UCF as an engineering major. When she discovered she didn't like engineering, she transferred to Valencia to study architecture. "I wanted to do something more creative," she says. "Besides, it runs in the family," she adds, noting that her uncle is an architect in Ecuador and her cousin is currently studying architecture too.

While Munoz wants to attend UCF—and hasn't applied elsewhere—Juan Diaz is aiming for admission to the University of Florida's architecture school.

So when he takes apart his pin-up board, taking down the models and sketches and artwork, he'll drive to Gainesville and start all over again the next day, for UF's pin-up.

"For me, this is more of a practice for UF," Diaz said.

But the process—the nights without sleep and the madness of producing a 3-D portfolio in a matter of hours—is nerve-wracking. Even the professors, most of who went through the same process as undergraduates, remember pin-up vividly.

"You didn't sleep for weeks beforehand," says Valencia professor Jennifer Princivil. "This was Show Time. If your board didn't sing, forget it."

Adds Professor Christine Daelo: "This process is extremely nerve-wracking. Even if the air conditioning is cranked down to 30 degrees, you can feel the heat in the room."

Valencia's reputation heats up

The day after the students finish pinning their work to their boards, the judges—local architects and architecture professors at Valencia, UCF and UF—converge on the Special Events Center to score the students' work. Judges hand out scores from 1 to 10 for each board.

"I look at the density of the board, meaning almost the entire board is covered, the work is pretty well laid out and the content is interesting," says Daelo. "I always look for ones that are doing something different. Are they experimenting with different materials, for instance?"

The pin-up process even attracts former students, eager to see what this year's crop of graduates has produced. This year, one of the visitors is Charles Green, who graduated from Valencia's architecture program in 2011 and is graduating from UF's architecture program in May. Now he's headed to the University of California-Berkeley for graduate school.

Green applied to Harvard, MIT, Columbia University, University of Florida and Washington University in St. Louis, as well as Berkeley for graduate school—and was thrilled to get into Berkeley. He—and many other Valencia graduates who've been accepted to top-flight graduate schools—is proof that Valencia's architecture program is producing excellent students.

"I strongly believe in Valencia's program," said Green, 23, who transferred to Valencia after growing frustrated in an engineering program at the University of South Florida. "Wherever students want to go after this—whether it's UF or UCF or Berkeley—Valencia gives you a good base of design knowledge. The work here is comparable, if not better than, UF"

As Valencia students spread out to architecture schools around the country, they are discovering that word about the program is spreading.

At the University of Michigan—one of the top architecture schools in the country—professors are offering encouragement to applicants from Valencia. "Some of our students went up there and the professors were raving about them because they already have two Valencia students there who are doing quite well," said Valencia professor Kourtney Baldwin. "They already know the reputation of our program."

Here in Orlando, the architecture community is supporting—and noticing—the progress at Valencia's program. "I've been to three pin-ups now and I think that the quality of the work for pin-up is improving," said Dr. Frank Bosworth, director of the University of Florida's Citylab architecture program, an Orlando master's level program that has partnered with Valencia and UCF.

Bosworth believes the Valencia program is maturing rapidly, thanks to contributions from Orlando's well-established architecture community and the value of the 2+2+2 partnership between Valencia, UCF and UF. The partnership doesn't guarantee Valencia students admission to UCF and UF, but is a transfer agreement that ensures a student is taking the right classes for a seamless transition.

The growing maturity of Valencia's architecture program, says Bosworth, is demonstrated at pin-up events and by the large number of Valencia students being admitted to the University of Florida's architecture school. "Getting into the University of Florida is not easy. It requires a certain level of attention to detail, and to the quality of the work," Bosworth says.

Meanwhile, back on the floor of the Special Events Center, the Valencia students are relieved to finish their pin-up boards, but anxious to hear the results.

Jamie Connell, for instance, has applied to UCF and the University of South Florida architecture programs. And though she has already been accepted to USF's program, she's waiting to hear from UCF.

"I really love Orlando and would like to stay here," says Connell, 22. But whether she lands at UCF or USF, she'll be content. "There's a lot of competition every year because there are only a few seats available. Architecture is a competitive program." ◆



Mauricio Zamora hopes to get into UCF's architecture program.



Sara Ramirez puts the finishing touches on her board.

VALENCIA EVENTS

AUGUST

Through Aug. 2: Emerging Artists of Central Florida 2013

Anita S. Wooten Gallery,
East Campus
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts

Aug. 16-Sept. 27: Luba Lukova

Opening reception: Sept. 6 from
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Anita S. Wooten Gallery,
East Campus
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts

SEPTEMBER

Sept. 7: Osceola Campus Inaugural 5K

6:30 p.m.
All proceeds go toward the
Rotary Club of Lake Nona's
Sept. 11 Memorial Fund to support
Valencia scholarships for emergency
responders.
valenciacollege.edu/alumni

OCTOBER

Oct. 11 – 18: Demo'd—Art in Teaching Works by Andrew Downey

Opening reception: Oct. 11 from
4 – 5:30 p.m.
Anita S. Wooten Gallery,
East Campus
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts

Oct. 18 – 27: Chicago

Book by Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse,
music by John Kander, lyrics by Fred
Ebb, based on the play by Maurine
Dallas Watkins
Oct. 18, 19, 20, 25, 26 at 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 20, 27 at 2 p.m.
East Campus Performing Arts Center
Tickets: \$15 general admission;
\$12 students, faculty/staff, alumni
and seniors
Box office: 407-582-2900
valenciacollege.edu/arts

Month of October:

Valencia Homecoming

Watch for a wide variety of events
both on and off campus.
valenciacollege.edu/alumni



Poster by Luba Lukova

CHICAGO



Ceramic teapot by Valencia professor John Kellum

NOVEMBER

Nov. 1 - Dec. 20: Selected Fine Art Faculty Exhibition

Opening reception: Nov. 1 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Anita S. Wooten Gallery,
East Campus
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts

Nov. 1: House Band Concert

7:30 p.m.
East Campus Black Box Theater
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts

Nov. 15 - 16: Choreographers' Showcase

8:00 p.m.
East Campus Performing Arts Center
Tickets: \$12 general admission;
\$10 students, faculty/staff, alumni
and seniors
Box office: 407-582-2900
valenciacollege.edu/arts

Nov. 15: Strings Concert

7:30 p.m.
East Campus Performing Arts Center
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts

Nov. 22: Winter Choral Concert

7:30 p.m.
East Campus Performing Arts Center
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts

Nov. 26: Jazz Band Concert

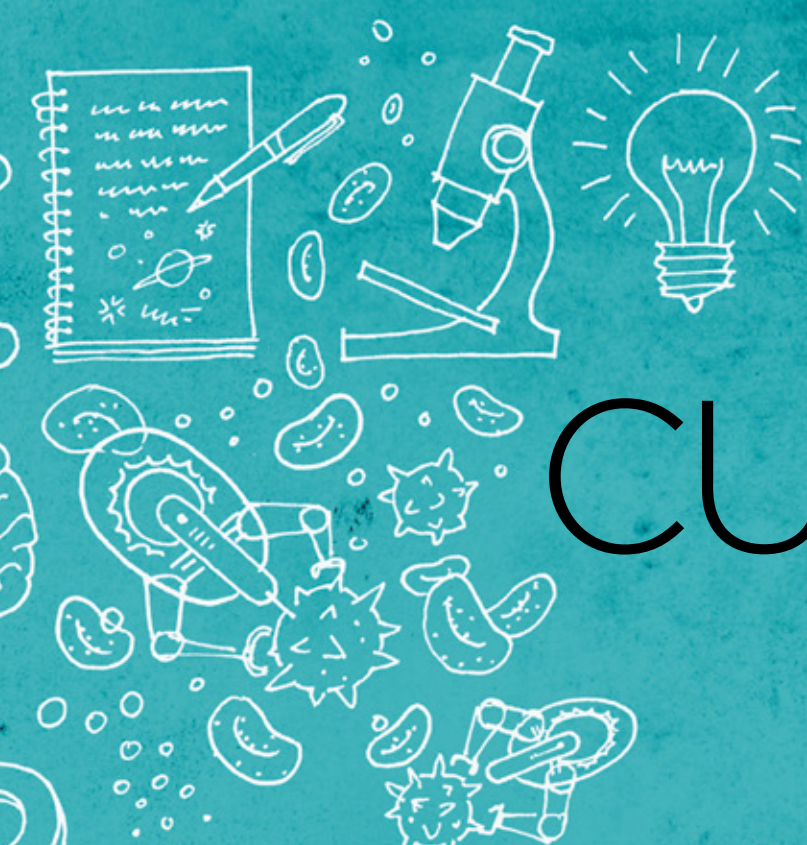
7:30 p.m.
East Campus Performing Arts Center
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts



Valencia House Band



Pictured from left to right: Carlos Crespo, Steven Forsyth, Noor Hashim, Angela Bardwell and Maria Wheeler.



CURIOUS MINDS

From George Lucas and prosthetics in *Star Wars* to human-robot interactions, Valencia students are conducting scientific research and expanding their horizons.

By Linda Shrieves Beaty

Steven Forsyth had just arrived after the four-hour drive to his parents' house in Coral Springs—finally taking a break from his studies at Valencia College—when he got an email from Angela Bardwell, a Valencia classmate.

“Huge research opportunity at UCF,” her email read.

Bardwell's email intrigued him. On the following night, a grad student at the University of Central Florida would be hosting a meeting for undergraduates interested in research, and Bardwell—already working as a research assistant at UCF—wanted her fellow honors students at Valencia to have a crack at opportunities to work in labs alongside UCF grad students and professors.

Forsyth debated whether to go. He phoned his mom at work. “What should I do?” he asked. Turn around and go back, she said.

With that, Forsyth hopped back in his car and left, without even seeing his parents. But the trek back to Orlando paid off. That night at UCF, Forsyth met graduate student Konstantinos Mykoniatis, who needed an undergraduate research assistant to help with his work developing facial recognition in robots. Forsyth volunteered. Today, Forsyth is helping out at Dr. Si-Jung Kim's Human-Computer Interactions lab at UCF and studying neural networks with his mentor, Dr. Colin Archibald.

And Forsyth, whose college dreams once extended no further than the Florida state line, now dreams of earning his honors degree from Valencia and transferring to Stanford, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology or England's Cambridge University.

“I came to Orlando because I followed friends who were going to UCF. When I started at Valencia, my plan was to get to UCF



as soon as possible,” Forsyth says. “But after I got involved in the honors college—and started doing this research—it broadened my outlook on everything.”

That’s the kind of story that makes Valerie Burks, director of the James M. and Dayle L. Seneff Honors College, smile.

Forsyth was precisely the type of student Burks envisioned when she and a team of others created Valencia’s new honors research program. Although Valencia has long had a stellar honors program that focuses heavily on the humanities, Burks felt Valencia needed more options for honors students who want to study science or go to graduate school.

“We’d seen the need for this,” says Burks. “We were sending our best students off to these really competitive research institutions—and they weren’t ready for it.”

So when Valencia announced plans to open the Seneff Honors College in the fall of 2012—thanks to a \$1 million donation from the Seneff family—Burks lobbied hard for a new research track, which would be housed at the East Campus and led by biology professor Keith Malmos. But when classes began, they were both nervous.

“You know the expression, ‘Build it and they will come?’” Malmos says. “Well, we were still building it as they were walking in the doors.”

The inaugural class attracted 30 students. Malmos spent the first year teaching them how to read scientific journals and helping them narrow the topics of their research. Looking back, Burks says, the first year “went phenomenally well.”

Even midway through the first semester, Burks and Malmos weren’t sure students would completely buy in to the concept, which requires them to spend their first year learning how to conduct research and find professors to serve as their mentors and complete a major research project by the end of their second year. “What we didn’t anticipate was how completely the students would see the vision—and become proponents for it,” Burks says.

The program has become surprisingly successful. And part of the thanks goes to a student.

From recession to robots research

Angela Bardwell isn’t your typical college student. She’s a mother of two young children and, after the recession walloped her business, she decided to go back to school.

Uncertain what to major in, she took personality tests at Valencia’s career center and her options were clear: medicine or psychology. Without the time or resources to devote to medical school, Bardwell began exploring career options in psychology. What intrigued her was industrial psychology. “I thought, ‘Oh

wow, I can work with robots and do all kinds of fascinating work,’” says Bardwell.

To see what the field was like, Bardwell began volunteering in 2011 at UCF Human Factors Psychology lab, where she helps Dr. Peter Hancock conduct research on humans’ ability to trust robots.

So when Valencia launched the honors research track, Bardwell was among the first to sign up. She and fellow student Jacob Whitney also launched a new campus organization, the Valencia East Campus Student Research Community (SRC). The club, which is open to all students, holds monthly gatherings with guest speakers, many of them researchers from UCF, Valencia professors presenting their research, and some Valencia students who’ve presented their preliminary research.

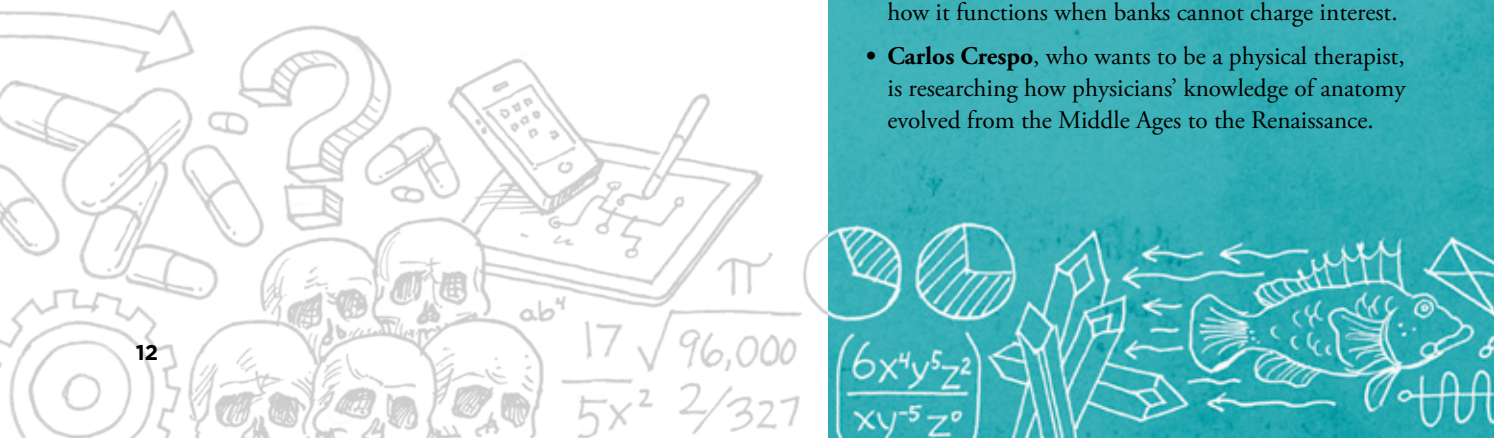
But the club’s most important role, says Bardwell, is letting other students know about an opening in a lab, or a professor or grad student who needs assistance.

Indeed, at UCF, researchers have scooped up the eager young Valencians. “No one says, ‘oh, you’re just a Valencia student,’” says Bardwell.

The Valencia students like Bardwell—who show up on time and work reliably week after week—have been a pleasant surprise for the UCF researchers. “All our students did was articulate a desire—that

RESEARCH ROUND-UP

- **Ashelyn Sidders**, who wants to become a pharmacist or conduct biomedical research, was so fascinated by her history of genocide class that she asked Valencia professor Michael Savage to become her mentor. She has since worked on an extensive research paper that details how the Rwandan Hutu tribes used Christianity to justify killing hundreds of thousands of Tutsis in 1994.
- **Jacob Whitney**, who is planning to double-major in sociology and statistics, is working on a research project that examines how educational technology (computers, iPads and cell phones) impacts study skills.
- **Maria Wheeler**, who wants to go to medical school, is fascinated by nanomedicine. This summer she will be working in a UCF research lab, where associate professor J. Manuel Perez and a team are using nanoparticles to encapsulate drugs and then target cancer cells.
- **Noor Hashim** has revived Valencia’s chapter of Phi Beta Lambda, an honor society for business students. Now Hashim, who wants to major in finance, is working on a research paper about Islamic finance and banking, and how it functions when banks cannot charge interest.
- **Carlos Crespo**, who wants to be a physical therapist, is researching how physicians’ knowledge of anatomy evolved from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.



they want to do research at a research university—and they were swallowed up by graduate students and professors who need help,” Malmos says.

Like many honors students, Jen Carl has so many interests that it was hard for her to focus on only one research project. Because she wants to become an orthopedic surgeon, Carl plans to double-major in biology and psychology. She wrote a research paper on

Soon she received an email reply: George Lucas would be happy to speak to her.

the psychosocial disorders associated with people with high IQs, but Carl has another passion: the science behind the medicine in the “Star Wars” films. Fascinated by the topic, she began digging around for research but couldn’t find books or papers on the subject. So, feeling plucky, she emailed Star Wars filmmaker George Lucas’s company to ask if someone there could talk to her about it.

Soon she received an email reply: George Lucas would be happy to speak to her.

During their hour-long interview, Lucas answered questions, told her about his own failures, and suggested she interview Jay Martin, who runs a bionics research lab that focuses on the latest in prosthetic technology. This summer, she has been invited to spend a week at Martin’s lab in Washington, D.C., to learn about the company’s work.

Emboldened by experiences like Jen Carl’s, the students in the research track have pushed each other to pursue their dreams. Each time one student lands a gig at a research lab—or interviews

a George Lucas—the students chalk that up as a win for everyone. That’s a chemistry that many colleges would love to replicate.

“We’ve been motivated by each other. Every achievement empowers us,” says Anthony “AI” Williams, a philosophy major who’s planning to go to law school—and has expanded his options to include colleges like Amherst and Wellesley.

Doing this kind of research, the students say, makes them learn more about the fields they’re pursuing. And it has opened the eyes of their friends and family members.

For instance, when Sidders describes the research for her genocide paper, many of her friends are taken aback. “When I tell people that I’m working on this, they say, ‘What year are you in college?’” Likewise, friends who now attend the University of Florida and Florida State University marvel that she gets to work one-on-one with professors. “They said they didn’t think this type of project would be possible in a big university,” she says. “It’s not that intimate.”

Despite their successes, the Valencia students weren’t sure how they would stack up against the competition at undergraduate research conferences.

When Whitney and Bardwell presented a research poster on the history of robotics at a conference in Gainesville, Whitney was nervous.

“Having a poster next to seniors and juniors at the University of Florida can be pretty intimidating,” says Whitney. “But when you tell them that you’re a freshman, they’re the ones who are intimidated. You can see it in their eyes.” ♦



Jen Carl (in class) will be heading to Washington D.C. this summer for a research project.



Jacob Whitney (right) works with East Campus librarian Erich Heintzelman to study technology and its impact on learning.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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

Dual enrollment: A bargain for parents, but not for colleges

By Linda Shrieves Beaty

Dual enrollment is a great deal for high school students and their parents—because they can take college classes for free. In the past, local school districts paid for students' books, while Valencia and the state's other two-year colleges waived the rest of the costs, including registration fees and lab fees.

Yet for Valencia, the cost of subsidizing dual-enrollment has grown significantly. During the last school year, Valencia provided about \$4 million worth of free courses to area high-school students.

During the 2013 legislative session, the Florida Legislature attempted to remedy the situation, passing legislation requiring that the state's school districts reimburse Valencia and other state colleges for dual-enrollment classes. The measure mandates that school districts pay the cost of tuition for courses taught by college faculty on college campuses. Courses taught at high schools or by high-school faculty would be reimbursed at lower levels.

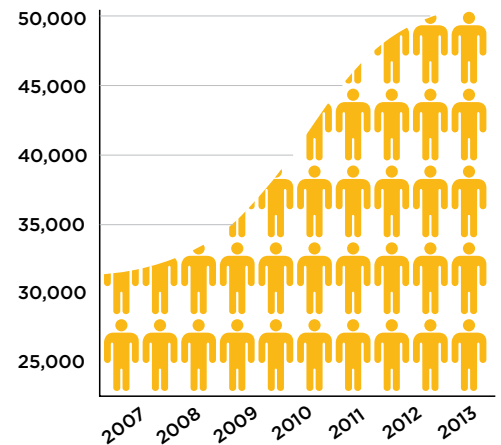
While a win for Valencia, it remains to be seen how school districts will cover the cost of the popular program. Valencia and school district officials will be meeting in the coming months to work out the details.

\$4 MILLION

WORTH OF FREE COURSES PROVIDED ANNUALLY AT VALENCIA

Source: Valencia College

50% ENROLLMENT INCREASE IN THE PAST SIX YEARS



Source: Florida College System



FLORIDA IS ONE OF SIX STATES THAT PROVIDE FREE TUITION AND TEXTBOOKS FOR DUAL-ENROLLMENT STUDENTS.

Source: Education Commission of the States.

FOUNDATION DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Promoting Women Engineers

In 2011, Progress Energy created a new resource—a full scholarship devoted to boost opportunity for women engineers. Working with Valencia, Progress Energy is committed to increase the number of women who earn Valencia engineering degrees, graduate from university programs and enter the local workforce.

Seeded with a \$50,000 gift and supplemented by an additional \$50,000 donation in 2012, the scholarship has already served 18 Valencia and UCF-transfer students. The program provides each student \$4,275 a year and will follow them from their freshman year at Valencia through graduation from UCF. Foundation board member Debbie Clements was instrumental in making the case for this innovative approach to the Progress Energy Foundation in North Carolina.

Already, this scholarship has impacted the lives of Valencia's female engineering students.

"Valencia is helping me live my dream of creating technology that will push the envelope of not only science, but also of imaginable capability. I'll be graduating in 2013 as an articulated pre-major for engineering. After graduation, I hope to transfer to Cornell and complete my bachelor's degree."

— Stacey Stewart

"Because of the generosity of scholarship donors such as Progress Energy, I will be able to attain my educational goals in engineering/survey technology, which will help me fulfill a longtime dream. As a result, a brighter future has become a little easier."

— Cheryl White

"When I first filled out the scholarship paperwork, I did it mostly with an attitude of 'it never hurts to ask.' I am very honored and humbled that you feel I am worthy of the financial support you are offering. These funds are a tremendous help in allowing me to continue my pursuit of an engineering degree."

— Kelly Starkey

With Progress Energy's help, these women are poised to be pioneers in their field. Sophomore Heather Lawrence is finishing a dual major in engineering and music and sound technology at Valencia. "I imagine creating outboard MIDI (Musical Instrument Data Interface) equipment for commercial audio use. I want to



Engineering major Stacey Stewart

work in a corporate think tank dedicated to the planning, building and implementation of a prototype, and then aid in the writing of computer drivers for Mac and Windows operating systems."

Heather also talks about the desire to carry the spirit of the Progress Energy scholarship with her in the future, continuing to provide access to technology and education to the engineers of tomorrow. "I want to be able to foster science and technology among our youth. I want to be able to teach others what I've learned and give to organizations that allow young people to interface with new technology. I had meager access to technology when I grew up, but it does not have to be that way for someone else."

Progress Energy remains committed to providing access—they recently awarded the foundation a \$75,000 grant to ensure that women in our community have continued opportunity in the engineering field.





NORTE

COET

PALHACO

CARNIVAL

FILM CINCO'S

CAPO

SUD ESTE

ANNUAL BRAZILIAN

GON

ZAG

VIVA

BRASIL

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PORTUGUÊS

Margaret

MEE

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RICHARD
SANSONE

NORDE
ESTE



Culture Bursts From the Screen at Brazilian Film Festival

By Roger Moore

Opening night of Valencia's Brazilian Film Festival finds Richard Sansone working the room like a seasoned politician. Smiles for everyone, hugs and handshakes. Friends from the region's Brazilian community, the Valencia community and former students come up for their hug.

"Hey, Eduardo, bem-vindo! Welcome!"

In his trademark cap, he flips back and forth between English and Portuguese with bilingual aplomb. Sansone is in his element, a room full of Portuguese speakers from Brazil and the Cape Verde Islands.

"This was something I became passionate about in graduate school," he says. The New Haven, Connecticut native had been pursuing a degree in Spanish, "but then I fell in love with Brazilian music, Brazilian food and the very welcoming Brazilian people." Sansone taught with the School for International Training, leading academic semesters abroad in Europe for the school before setting up a branch of the Vermont-

based college in Brazil. He came to Valencia to teach English as a Second Language back in 1989. Then, the idea of offering Portuguese came up. Back in the '80s, few would have predicted Brazil would suddenly emerge as an economic power, that the country, whose population has grown to over 190 million, would host the 2016 Olympics.

"There were naysayers" when the idea to add Portuguese offerings to the curriculum at Valencia was first broached, Sansone says. The college, even though it was adding languages to expand its international curriculum, was "full of doubters, people who went 'What? Portuguese? Why here?' But it was obvious, even back then, that Brazil was growing in importance, internationally and here in Central Florida."

Estimates of the Brazilian population in the U.S. and Florida vary widely, but those numbers are soaring in South Florida, Tampa and Central Florida. Brazilian trade

and Brazilian tourism are having an impact.

“Now, everybody gets it and the naysayers have gone. It’s not just a language spoken in Brazil, Portugal, the Azores and the Cape Verde Islands. There are five African countries where Portuguese is spoken, so it’s an important world language.”

Early on, Sansone discovered that films from Brazil were a great shortcut for accessing the culture. Contemporary films like “Fica Comigo Esta Noite,” “Caixa Dois” and “Estomago” found their way into his classroom, expanding on the language lessons and ways the culture reflects the language.

And from those classroom offerings came a film festival.

As the Sixth Valencia Brazilian Film Festival got underway, a guitarist strummed through Brazilian folk tunes and jazz—yes, “The Girl From Ipanema” (a famous Rio beach) was on the set list. Native Brazilians gave a demonstration of Capoeira, a martial

art developed in Brazil by African slaves and adopted by the population at large, accompanying themselves with drums, maracas and the musical bows—berimbaus.

The packed atrium of Building 3 on West Campus had patrons sampling Brazilian cuisine—Risole de frango, Pao Delicia, Bolode de chocolate, Bombon de Uva.

Sansone soaked it all up. When he moved into teaching Portuguese, he thought “What better way to communicate another culture than through film? Film stimulates the imagination of students studying a language. It makes the culture and the people who speak that language come to life for them.”

Brazilian film producer Elisa Tolomelli helps line up the candidate films for the annual five-film festival, which Sansone and a committee watch and select.

“But can any one film from, say, Mozambique, give you an accurate picture of Mozambique?” Sansone wonders. “We show five films, and they have to present, overall, a balanced picture of Brazil.”

For Sansone, the festival is a way of “looking at another culture through the lens of film.”



Clóvis Júnior, Brazilian Folk Artist

Whether it is a scene of popular dance or saint-like figures, Clóvis Júnior’s paintings capture the rich culture of Brazil and its traditions through an intense palette of color and his unique stylizations of daily life. Since entering the art education program at the Universidade Federal da Paraíba in 1983 at the age of 18, Clóvis has been honored in more than 100 exhibitions in Rio de Janeiro, Paris, London and New York. With the growing international acceptance of his art, some have even called him the “unofficial ambassador to Brazil.”

Clóvis Júnior’s naïve style of painting seemed perfectly matched to the visual concept developed for the film festival’s poster—a concept based on a fiery-eyed serpent from Brazilian folklore. This snake-like creature, regionally called the Boitatá, has great fiery eyes allowing it to see everything at night. Much like the serpent, the lights in the theater go out in order to see life on the big screen—hence the statement on the festival poster: “In darkness, I can see light.”



Clockwise: Guitarist José Araujo and Joshua Toro, the youngest student of Capoeira Brazilian Pelourinho, Inc., entertain festival-goers; Richard Sansone chats with Brazilian film producer Elisa Tolomelli.



Tolomelli, whose producing credits include some of the most famous films ever to come out of Brazil—“Central Station,” “City of God”—attends the festival each year and talks about the movies and the culture they come from to festival goers. She says that rounding up a representative sample is getting easier, as the country’s film industry is experiencing a boom not unlike the overall Brazilian economy.

“We’re a very large country, and our different regions have different cultures within them,” Tolomelli says. “Every year, this festival has to show a mix of those cultures, but the Brazilian film industry is making films in every corner of the country, so it is not difficult. Different filmmakers come from all corners of Brazil, so even if the movie is made in Rio de Janeiro, it can speak of the culture of the Northeast,

for instance. Those films show more of the music of Brazil.”

Valencia’s Brazilian Film Festival is one of only two such events in Florida, the other being in Miami. The Valencia fest has support from the Central Florida Brazilian American Chamber of Commerce, which provides lodging for special guests and hospitality for opening night, and the University of Florida Center for Latin American Studies, which helps promote the festival and underwrites Tolomelli’s visits and other Florida screenings of the films she brings with her.

The sixth edition of the festival included a couple of biographical films—“Gonzaga: De Pai fra Filho,” is about the relationship between Luiz Gonzaga, famed accordion-playing popularizer of rural northeastern dance music called “Baiao,” and his

estranged son, who achieved folk rock stardom in the ’80s. “Heleno” is about a controversial soccer star, Heleno de Freitas. And Tolomelli’s latest production, “Margaret Mee and the Moonflower” is a documentary that captures the famous botanist as she seeks the rare Amazonian moonflower, which blooms but one night a year.

Sansone calls his now-established festival, which screens movies on West Campus and on the Osceola Campus, “a once-a-year experiment in sharing.” What he hopes this festival, this way of “looking at another culture through the lens of film,” accomplishes is akin to what he himself went through decades before: “that they see the people, hear the music and fall in love with a culture that I fell in love with way back then.” ♦

LET EVERYONE KNOW WHAT YOU’VE BEEN UP TO!

To be featured in Class Notes visit 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.

DiDonna brings the whole of local theater into Valencia, and vice versa

By Roger Moore



John DiDonna directs a scene from “Fat Pig,” with Olivia Richardson and Andrew Romano.

The actors aren’t “off book” or on stage, and the play—a production of Neil LaBute’s “Fat Pig”—is still many weeks away from opening night. But John DiDonna’s doing what he’s been doing all over Central Florida for the past 23 years—directing.

Sets haven’t been built in the small Black Box Theater, so DiDonna’s brought his players and production staff to the lobby of East Campus’s Building 3, where his young actors rehearse—reading their lines, since they haven’t had time to memorize them—in his office, mimicking the show’s office set, or on the lounge

chairs or the floor (meant to be a beach) in the lobby.

“This would be an excellent time for you to say something sweet to me,” Jessica Meguiar, in the title role, implores her bothered-by-appearances boyfriend Tom (Chris Markcity).

“I’m not brave,” Tom confesses. “I know you want me to be.”

DiDonna sits close. He never interrupts, except to move the players at the end of scenes—“OK, let’s hit the beach, baby. Over here. And, 3-2-1 GO!”

When they’ve finished a complete run-through of the play, he offers

notes. “They have to HATE you guys,” he says to Olivia Richardson and Andrew Romano, who play the characters who condemn this “Frankie & Johnny” romance between an overweight young woman and the slim young man who “feels right” when he’s with her, but worries about how “this looks.” “HATE you,” DiDonna adds for emphasis. “But then the audience has to realize, ‘That’s the person sitting NEXT to me,’ too. Give ’em that slap.”

DiDonna is the new chairman and artistic director of Valencia’s Theater Department, but he’s been teaching with the college, off and on, since

arriving here in the early '90s. And if you've ever been to a play in Central Florida, chances are you know the name. From Eustis to Sanford, Theatre Downtown to East Campus, he's been onstage and off—acting, directing, producing and even writing plays.



Helen (Jessica Meguiar) and Tom (Chris Markcity) in an intimate moment from the play.

That's his goal for the theater department—more interaction, more “getting them ready to go out there.”

He was Theatre Downtown's definitive Dr. Frank N. Furter in “The Rocky Horror Picture Show.” He was “A Man for All Seasons (Sir Thomas More)” in Eustis. He writes and directs the annual “Victorian Steam punk Circus troupe offering

Macabre and Delicious Halloween Treats” that is “Phantasmagoria.” And it wouldn't be Christmas without his turn as Scrooge in “Dickens by Candlelight.”

“You can't talk about theater in Orlando without talking about John,” says student actor Andrew Romano, after rehearsal. “Everybody knows him and wants to work with him.”

“When I was in high school, I kept hearing how fabulous he was,” gushes Romano's castmate, Jessica Meguiar. “And he IS. He excites you for theater. I HAD to come to Valencia.”

“The greatest thing about studying with him is that he's so connected to local theater, you meet and work with people outside of campus and get into that community, through him,” Olivia Richardson adds. “You do well here, you find work out there.”

Matt Palm, theater critic with the Orlando Sentinel, notes that in shows like “Phantasmagoria,” the teacher in DiDonna is much in evidence. “Troupe members have a wide range of experience and ability. In working with them, he molds them into a cohesive unit, the newbies and the pros alike.”

DiDonna has his hands in so much local theater that he was sure his department would need him to “cut back” if he took on department chair duties. “But they said ‘NOoooo. That's why we WANT you!’”

That's just one of the reasons he loves working at Valencia. He points to play posters in his office, singling out faces—“I first worked with her here. I worked with him for years, here. Former Valencia student. Another former Valencia student. Here's another.”

“Student actors keep you fresh,” DiDonna says. “They keep you on your feet by challenging you. You get to watch them grow. I can experiment with ideas here that I take to shows ‘out there.’ And I work with young actors here that I can cast in shows off campus. It's a great circle.”

A graduate of Syracuse University and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, DiDonna came to Florida during the glory days

of “Hollywood East,” when TV shows like “Swamp Thing” and “Sequest DSV” and movies such as “Parenthood” were filmed here. After that work dried up, he decided to stay and continue doing theater, theater and more theater.

His enthusiasm for the art form seems unabated, all these years later. He turned the academic requirement of professors having to have “office hours” (“We call it ‘student engagement,’ here”) into a weekend session he calls “Acting Gym.”

“Saturdays, we invite all the students to come by and ‘play.’ We work on scenes, monologue-work. Guests come in and show them a little about stage combat. We go rock climbing. It's evolved into a way to continue their training on the weekend, and over the summer. They get to meet and mingle and learn from each other and interact with teachers that much more.”

That's his goal for the theater department—more interaction, more “getting them ready to go out there.”

He hopes this “everybody learning together” is something he can steer the school toward “in a casual way.” DiDonna has pushed to change the annual spring one-act play festival into something different. Next spring, student actors and directors will be doing Florida playwrights' one-act plays at the Lowndes Shakespeare Center, and not on campus.

And he'd love to spice up the program's production mix of classics, musicals and edgier current plays: Neil LaBute, one of America's more controversial playwrights this summer—“Martin McDonagh tomorrow.” He thinks McDonagh, the “raw” Irish author of “The Lonesome West” and “The Cripple of Inishmaan,” “would be a great fit.”

“Tough plays, we'd have to get the actors working in dialect. Let 'em learn Irish accents. That's what we're here for.”

THE FIRST

21

BACHELOR'S GRADUATES

By Linda Shrieves Beaty

Afnan Ali
Naved Baboolal
Deanna Blake
Christopher Blanchfield
Adam Boerhave
Allison Boone
Nadia Cerissi
Badreddine Hamdouch
Jacob Heck
Paul Hefelfinger
Paul Jaramillo
Erin Kelly
Nathan Maurer
Valerie McKinney
Mary Miller
Lenard Riley
Zenia Rivera
Annabelle Sanjurjo
Davide Sauveur
Hampton Story
Bladimir Uran

Making history is rarely easy.

For 21 students who walked across the stage at Valencia's graduation on May 5—and walked into the history books as the first students to earn their bachelor's degrees at Valencia—there were sacrifices along the way. Students in the Electrical and Computer Engineering program toughed it out in classes such as statistical theory and circuit analysis. Many of the students in the Radiologic and Imaging Sciences program juggled full-time jobs while taking classes online.

But their success is our success, as a college and a community.

"Each graduate's journey to completion exemplifies their personal pursuit of betterment and excellence," said Dr. Falecia Williams, president of Valencia's West Campus, where both programs are housed. "We wish them remarkable success in their careers and life!"

Here are four of their stories.



NATHAN MAURER

Engineering Technology. “When it started, I wasn’t sure what the coursework would be like,” he says. “But as the program started, I became more interested in electronics and engineering. And I was impressed by the level that they were teaching—especially since this was the first time for all these courses.”

Having taken classes at UCF, where many of the classes contained hundreds of students, Nathan was thrilled to find himself in classes with less than 20 students.

“At Valencia, if you need help at any point, you can sit down with that instructor and get help,” Nathan says. “At UCF, there was not one-on-one at any point.”

Now, at age 37, Nathan Maurer is proud to be in the first class of bachelor’s degree graduates from Valencia College. His wife, and three children, ages 9, 7 and 10 months,

In the late 1990s, Nathan Maurer was working in the clean room at Lucent Technologies, making microchips—a job that ignited his passion for electronics and engineering.

But just as Nathan was hitting his stride at work—buying a house and beginning to take college classes in electronics—the realities of the global economy crash-landed on his doorstep.

Lucent Technologies was sold to another company and, then, in 2005, the Orlando plant closed down. The 1,600 jobs, making microchips, were sent overseas. And Nathan Maurer found himself with a home, a mortgage and no job.

Quickly, he scrambled to find a job and landed one working for a landscaping company, then working the night shift at Walmart. Meanwhile, he returned to Valencia, where he had taken a few classes

earlier in his career. Here, he began ramping up his efforts to earn an Associate in Applied Science degree in Electronics Engineering Technology.

Life, however, moved on while Nathan was in college. He got married. When his wife, a legal

Nathan was thrilled to find himself in classes with less than 20 students.

secretary, had their first child, Nathan continued to go to college, but became a stay-at-home dad instead of putting the baby in day-care. To help pay the bills, he began working as an online tutor.

After earning his A.A.S., he tried to find a job in his field, but with the recession gripping the nation, he couldn’t find anything. So Nathan signed up for Valencia’s new bachelor’s degree program in Electrical and Computer

were in the audience—and his mom, who lives in Michigan, watched the commencement on her computer, by live-streaming video.

After graduation day, Nathan wants to land an internship in the field—and then a job.

“My long-term goal,” he says, “is a permanent position with a power generation unit.”

When Zenia Rivera graduated from a private Orlando college with an associate degree in nuclear medicine technology in 2008, she figured landing a full-time job would be easy.

It wasn't. Although the health-care field is growing, Zenia discovered that the Orlando area was already full of nuclear medicine technologists—and even though the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts higher-than-normal job growth for workers in this field, Zenia couldn't find any full-time jobs.

"I took as many classes as I could so I could be in that first graduating class."

"There aren't many positions and the people in this field tend to stay where they are," she says. "They get a job and they stay there." And with local colleges pumping out new graduates each year, Zenia found the region was saturated with nuclear medicine techs.

Unable to find a full-time job, she settled for a part-time job at a hospital in Lake County—which means a one-hour commute from her home in Deltona.

Frustrated—and worried about paying back her student loans—Zenia started investigating going back to college to earn a bachelor's degree in radiography. When she learned that Valencia College had started a new bachelor's degree program in Radiologic and Imaging Sciences, Zenia was thrilled. Although she could have attended the same private college where she earned her associate degree, she was already feeling overwhelmed by the student loans she'd taken out to pay for that.

At Valencia, however, the cost of earning a bachelor's degree was significantly cheaper than at a private college.

She was also excited because Valencia's classes were primarily online, allowing her to do her classwork and homework anytime—even if that was 2 a.m. For Zenia, who has a three-year-old daughter, "that flexibility is great."

Although most of her contact with her professors was online, Zenia enjoyed their interaction. "The instructors are very knowledgeable," she says. "They really help you out. They're there to make sure you get

through the program and they really care about our success. That's super important, especially for working professionals—to know that the faculty will really work with you."

Like many of her classmates, Zenia, now 32, worked while earning her bachelor's degree. And Zenia, whose bachelor's degree specialization was quality management, now hopes to find

a job in the field. "I really like the whole quality aspect—making sure that everything is done in a certain way, making sure the machines are up to date and working properly and everything is done according to regulations," she said.

Eager to be one of the first students to earn a bachelor's degree from Valencia, Zenia took more courses than she might have in order to finish by May 2013.

"I could have graduated in the summer," she says, "but I took as many classes as I could so I could be in that first graduating class."

Her mom, her brother, her husband and her daughter, Leilani, planned a special celebration for graduation. The family—originally from Puerto Rico, but now living in Deltona—stayed in a hotel near Disney the night before graduation and then watched with pride as Zenia walked across the stage the next day.

"I'm extremely excited," says Zenia. "And so is my family. They are so proud of me and they've been so supportive. They've helped me through this whole experience."



When Mary Miller enrolled at the University of Central Florida in the late 1980s, she followed her passion—and studied music. A trombone player, she majored in trombone, minored in voice and even served as the marching band president for the Knights.

But along the way, Mary began wondering how she'd be able to make a living as a music teacher. With those doubts troubling her, she dropped out of UCF and joined the U.S. Navy—as a musician. After going through the Navy's Virginia training camp for musicians, she was assigned to, of all places, Orlando. And here she played in the Orlando Naval Training Center's band, playing for the base's weekly graduations, playing Fourth of July events, playing at Disney and at UCF football games.

But when the Navy announced that the Orlando base would close in 1995, Mary found herself at a crossroads.

“I made up my mind that I will not be defeated by the other obstacles that life is putting in front of me.”

Ultimately, “the band went to Jacksonville and I stayed here.”

For a while, Mary managed a music store, but the pay was discouraging. “I thought, ‘I need to find a career that’s going to enable me to survive on my own,’” she recalls. After doing some research, she discovered that Valencia College offers an Associate in Science degree in Radiography.

Intrigued by the field, she signed up for classes and, in May 2001, graduated and landed a job at Arnold Palmer Children's Hospital.

There, she worked her way up from X-ray technician to lead X-ray tech before cross-training to become a CT-scan technologist. Today,



MARY MILLER

she's the hospital's lead CT-scan technologist.

And though most of the people in the field have two-year, associate in science degrees, Mary wanted a four-year degree. “Some people have asked me why I want it, and I always said, ‘I want it for me.’ I wanted a four-year degree when I was a music major—and I want one now,” she says.

However, money remained a factor. When UCF offered the four-year radiography degree, the cost of the tuition was higher. So Mary put off enrolling, wondering if the investment of money would pay off in the long run. But when Valencia took over the four-year Radiologic and Imaging Sciences program that UCF had shuttered, Mary was one of the first to sign up.

“I was already familiar with the school and the staff. I knew that the instructors want us to succeed,” she says. “As soon as (Valencia) announced that they were taking over the program, I jumped on it like I was a dog on a bone.”

Valencia's online program enabled the 46-year-old Miller, who works three 12-hour shifts each week, to take classes and do homework at her convenience.

Along the way, she discovered that taking bachelor's degree coursework changed her outlook about her job. “It broadens your perspective,” Miller says. “Before, it was just a job, not my career. Now I don't think just about what we're doing at my hospital. Now I think, ‘Where do we fit inside the community of radiology?’”

Still, earning her bachelor's degree hasn't been easy. During the past two years, Miller had major surgery and four family members passed away. Yet she persisted.

“It's been a battle to get this far,” she says. “I've learned to be so tenacious. I made up my mind that I will not be defeated by the other obstacles that life is putting in front of me.”

And she was determined to be at commencement, no matter what.

“You could not stop me,” she says, laughing. “After all this, believe me, I was sprinting like FloJo across the stage.”

Bladimir Uran was in his freshman year of college—at the University of Rhode Island—when his parents decided to move to southwest Florida.

Forced to decide whether to move with them or stay in Rhode Island, Bladimir, who had lived in Rhode Island since the age of nine, opted to stay at URI. But as the months passed, Bladimir struggled with the large classes at URI and lost his financial aid.

His path to college then detoured to Florida, where he worked for a year before enrolling at Edison State College in Fort Myers. There, he loved the small classes and the interaction with his professors. After earning his A.A. at Edison State, Bladimir moved to Orlando to study engineering at the University of Central Florida.

But after he arrived on the Orlando campus, he found himself facing the same problems that

plagued him at the University of Rhode Island. “Once again, in those big classrooms, it was hard to concentrate,” says Bladimir. “It’s hard to listen to a teacher when he’s all the way down there... and you’re all the way up here.”

Bladimir decided to take a few classes at Valencia, in hopes of boosting his GPA. He knew the classes would be smaller, and if they were anything like Edison, he’d get more interaction with the instructors.

As luck would have it, one of his first classes was taught by Dr. Ali Notash, who taught the class about lasers. “I thought it sounded pretty interesting,” Bladimir recalls. “I began thinking, ‘Maybe I want to go into this field.’” So when Notash told Bladimir that Valencia was planning to take over UCF’s bachelor’s program in electrical engineering technology, Bladimir was excited. Finally, he could get an engineering degree at a college that offered the small classes where he could thrive.

And after he started in Valencia’s engineering program, in classes of 20 to 30 students, he was excited to find that Valencia’s professors teach engineering from a hands-on perspective, not the theoretical material presented at most universities.

“When we came here, we didn’t know how to use some of the equipment in the lab, like oscilloscopes and that kind of thing,” Bladimir says. “So the professors took us back to basics.”

In addition to smaller classes, the professors reached out to help students. “My professors here know me,” Bladimir says. “One of my teachers said, ‘Email me any time of the day and I’ll get back to you.’ And they do. I sent him an email at 12 a.m. and I got an email back from him at 12:03 a.m.”

During the program, the students in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Technology program learn, among other things, how to program microcontrollers and microprocessors. For his senior design project, Bladimir and a classmate are designing and building a machine that will sort candies like Skittles and M&Ms by color.

“It’s definitely challenging, but you learn a lot,” Bladimir says.

Now, at age 29, he’s on the verge of making history—becoming one of the first students to earn a bachelor’s degree from Valencia College. And Bladimir, who learned English by watching cartoons, now hopes to get a job in the power-generation field or communications engineering.

He also hopes that other students will discover Valencia’s small classes and hands-on approach to engineering education.

“Hopefully the word will get out about this program,” he says. “The only reason I found out about it was because I took Ali Notash in a lasers class...but it turned out to be pretty cool.” ◆◆

BLADIMIR URAN





Javier Garces: Growing the Horticulture Program

By Linda Shrieves Beaty

EXPERTS SPOTLIGHT

When you're sick, you go to the doctor. When your dog's sick, you take him to the vet. But when your plants are sick, where do you turn?

To people like Dr. Javier Garces, who is a doctor of plant medicine.

Garces, who leads Valencia College's horticulture program, was one of the first seven students to earn his Doctorate in Plant Medicine from the University of Florida. The program, which began in 1999, consists of courses and practical training in agronomy, entomology, nematology, horticultural sciences, plant pathology, as well as soil and water science.

For Garces, who grew up in Miami, farming might have seemed a natural career, especially because his grandfather, a Cuban émigré, operated a small farm near Homestead. While Garces loved visiting his grandfather's farm and tending the tropical fruits he grew, he still wasn't certain what career path he would choose when he set off for the University of Florida.

But in his junior year, as he was casting about for direction, he began thinking about agriculture. "I wanted something that would allow me to be inside and outside, not just in a cubicle," says Garces. "I found that there were a lot of opportunities in agriculture, not just in Florida but throughout the world."

From there, he earned his bachelor's and doctoral degrees from the University of Florida—and then set out to work for one of the region's large tree and shrub farms. Although he loved teaching employees and occasionally giving speeches at scientific meetings, Garces leaped at

the chance to teach in a classroom.

"I love interacting with students, helping them figure out their goals, letting them know all the different options available in horticulture and agriculture," says Garces, 36. "That's one of the beauties of the field; there's so much diversity in employment. Sometimes the hardest part is deciding on one particular area you want to specialize in."

Since joining Valencia in 2009, Garces has encouraged local businesses to offer more internships to the college's horticulture students and has partnered with Leu Gardens, the city of Orlando's botanical garden, to hold two classes at the gardens each year. Those classes are taught by the garden director, Robert Bowden.

He and the horticulture students have also established a community garden at Central Care Mission, a rehabilitation center for formerly homeless men, and are planning another at the Edgewood Children's Ranch.

Today, Garces is witnessing the fruits of his labors.

Enrollment in Valencia's horticulture program has jumped 40 percent over the past three years. Now he dreams of adding greenhouses and spreading his love of plants to the wider Valencia community. "Introduction to Horticulture is for everybody," Garces says. "One of my goals is to have that count as a general education science class. We have about 900 culinary students who I am sure would love to take that as their science class."



CLASS NOTES

1



John Brakin '69


I became the director of missions for the Hill Country Baptist Association in Kerrville, Texas in April and will assist 35 Southern Baptist churches in their ministry.

Louise M. Gouge '88

I am celebrating the release of my seventh Harlequin Love Inspired Historical novel.

1 Faith Amon '94

Faith Amon, founder of graphic design firm Frecklefoot Creative of Orlando, was featured in the August 2012 edition of USA Today, in a story about entrepreneurs who hire their mothers. She was featured on The Today Show for the same story:

 www.today.com/video/today/49964547

2 Cynthia Harris '99

I am currently a candidate for City of Orlando Commissioner, District 5. Through my extensive career in social work and criminal justice, I have been very passionate about my community and I have looked for different ways to live by this virtue of public service.

3 Todd Sykes '01

I recently accepted a position as Central Florida market manager for Florida's Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater. I previously worked for Senator Marco Rubio, Senator George LeMieux and Senator Mel Martinez.

4 Angel L. Ramos '02

My first child, Chloe Grace Ramos, was born on December 12, 2012.

5 Julie Rae (Bartleson, Abbot) Bennett '03

In addition to earning the Construction Document Specialist (CDS) designation through a Clemson University-offered NAWIC Education Foundation program in 2011, I have more recently acquired my Construction Industry Technician (CIT) and Construction Bookkeeping Technician (CBT) professional certifications through Clemson. The National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) has more than 140 chapters nationwide and advances the causes of all women in construction, from tradeswomen to business owners. As the office manager and service coordinator for APG Electric's Lakeland and Orlando operations for more than 15 years, I am proud to have attained these professional certifications while serving as the NEF Education Chairwoman for NAWIC's Great Orlando Chapter 73 in 2011-12 and 2012-13.

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6 Douglas William Chaffee '03

After five years at UCSF Medical Center in San Francisco as a practice manager, I am now at Stanford University working as a faculty administrator in the Department of Electrical Engineering and loving every minute of it! I have been happily married to my spouse Jeffrey for almost 5 years! Marriage equality for all!

7 Marceline (Marcy) Porter '05

I hold an Associate of Arts, a Bachelor of Science in Psychology, and a Master of Science in Counseling Psychology. I am a Registered Mental Health Counselor for the State of Florida and have provided services to adults with chemical dependencies, and developmental and mood/thought disorders over the past five years. I currently serve the local community as an activity therapy assistant/residential care coordinator for a residential treatment facility.

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8 Sharon A. Moore-Smith '05

I have had two major events happen to me this year. The first: I started a position in January at SeaWorld® Orlando in PR/marketing and love every minute of it! The second event is I started my own social media marketing management company. I help small businesses create a social media plan to help them reach their target audience without spending too much money or time.

Elizabeth (Penrod) Hunt '07

I graduated from UCF with a bachelor's degree in Business Management in 2010 and am now working for a large hospitality company as a human resources coordinator.

Ana Maria De La Rosa '08

I recently returned home after serving two years in Northern Peru as a member of the U.S. Peace Corps where I was a community health volunteer in Tumbes. My work included everything from HIV/AIDS prevention to building a special needs school in that community.

9 Stephanie Severe '10

I am a senior at Florida Atlantic University and am graduating this year with a B.S. and a B.A. in biology. I am preparing to take the Graduate Record Examination and hope to get into the physician assistant program at Nova Southeastern University next spring.

Jennifer Graham '10

I have been attending Rollins College as an International Affairs major. While attending Valencia, I completed a civic leadership internship where I applied my knowledge working with Senator Bill Nelson. This opportunity laid the groundwork for my interests in government and the international diplomatic process.

10 Susannah Jo Snavelly '11

I am majoring in Human Resources Management at UCF, preparing to graduate with a B.S. in August 2013. After graduation, I hope to continue working in human resources at Regal Marine Industries, my employer of almost three years.

An avid world traveler, I have recently expanded my trip portfolio to include a week in Ireland and two visits to Washington, D.C., with my brother, Valencia alumni John Snavelly. I also discovered a passion for politics, and devoted my free time last fall to promote Gov. Mitt Romney's presidential campaign with the Republican Party of Florida.

11 Brandon Hartmann '11

Since graduating from Valencia, I have been pursuing a bachelor's degree from the University of South Florida. Recently I was re-elected to serve a second term as senator for the Student Government Association. Additionally, I was inducted into my second fraternity, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, last month. The picture shown is of me and a fellow Greek holding our fraternal hand signs to represent our organizations. This summer I will be involved in a health internship to assist me in my goal of becoming a physician.

Francoise Kogan '11

I was accepted as a transfer student to the University of Miami School of Nursing for the fall 2013 semester. I was also accepted into the UM Honors Program.

12 Esperanza Perez '12

I am currently at UCF's Burnett Honors College working towards my bachelor's degree. During my time at UCF, I am focusing my volunteer efforts in the non-profit sector to help them succeed and grow, including internships with the Heart of Florida United Way and the Hispanic Business Initiative Fund. After graduating, I plan to work on an MBA and enter the field of finance with an organization that has a heart for philanthropic work.

As a recent Valencia graduate and alumni leader, I am a testament to the opportunities that Valencia offers its students. I was a part of the Honors College, Valencia Volunteers, Phi Theta Kappa, and I helped in various committees. These all helped me sharpen my skills, network and make connections in my community. Thanks to Valencia College I am better prepared and knowledgeable about how to be successful academically.

Rose M. Caldero '12

I am entering my final year at UCF and will be graduating with a B.S. in Legal Studies and a minor in Criminal Justice. I plan to pursue a law career and will be applying to Barry Law School in fall 2014.

13 Yassir Baroudi '12, '14

I graduated in 2012 with an A.S. in Building Construction and am now an architecture student with plans to graduate in 2014. I am proud to see the Muslim Student Association I served in as founding president grow with the purpose of bringing positive Islamic representation to the West Campus. I work in the Atlas Access Lab, and am proud to be a student leader. Valencia College had made an unforgettable positive impact on me, and I appreciate the growth opportunities it has provided for me.

14 Cristina Millan '13

I am very excited to announce that my graduation finally arrived. This was a great accomplishment in my life!

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All Class Notes photos courtesy of featured alumni.



Hieu Trung Nguyen '13

My name is Hieu Nguyen and I am an international student from Vietnam. When I was in Vietnam, I was a really bad student with a really low GPA. However, after more than two years at Valencia, I have achieved a lot of things that I never would have imagined while in Vietnam.

As a Valencia student, I received five scholarships from the Alumni Association and one from the Black Advisory Council. Also, the Valencia chapter of the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS) gave me a chance to travel to San Francisco to expand my knowledge as well as my potential in architecture. As a result, I graduated this spring with an Honors degree

in Architecture (A.A.) with a 3.92 GPA and I was accepted into the University of Houston and the University of Florida to continue my architecture education.

I want to thank Valencia for the experiences that changed me into a different person, my parents and my friends for supporting me, and my professors, especially Professors Baldwin and Watters, for teaching me valuable lessons and bringing me closer to my dream. Finally, I truly want to thank America for giving me an opportunity to come here to pursue my dream.

Leaders Wanted!

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2013 EVENTS SNAPSHOTS



Valencia Alumni 5k

The 8th annual Run, Walk & Roll 5K raised more than \$5,000 for scholarships, this time to support criminal justice, EMT and paramedic students.

Legacy Class Gift

Zia Ansari, Alumni Leadership board member, helped raise \$10,000 in an annual fundraiser to encourage graduates to “leave a legacy” for students in need.



Osceola Building 4 Dedication

Former Valencia trustees Jose Hoyos and Jeanne Van Meter, who holds a rendering of the new building. Above: Officials from Hunton-Brady, Clancy and Theys, and Valencia cut the ceremonial ribbon.



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