

The View from Here

by Dr. Monica Halka

I'm hearing a lot of hype lately about massive open online courses (MOOC's), but I'm not sure why. Online courses have been around for over a decade, and they really don't seem to have caught on as a preferred method of learning. I created and taught the first online course at Portland State University back in 1998, and I can testify that, rather than being an easier way for students to learn, it requires much more fortitude and self-determination than classroom-style courses. The convenience of distance-learning may seem appealing, but mustering the self-discipline to keep up with course work is not something that comes easily to most people. I taught that online course (astronomy) three summers in a row, and the feedback from students about the experience was always mixed. The inability to ask questions in real-time frustrates when there is confusion over some aspect of the material. Server connectivity issues can foil well-intended study schedules. Even being in a different time zone can cause distress—I taught from Italy one summer and students got peeved when they didn't get answers to their emailed questions until eight hours after they sent them. "Sorry, but I sleep at night."

So I'll be interested (a little) to see the statistics on the completion rate of students who enroll in these courses. Naturally, thousands will sign up for the free MOOC's. That a majority will actually keep up with the work and get full course credit seems unlikely. And if more than ten



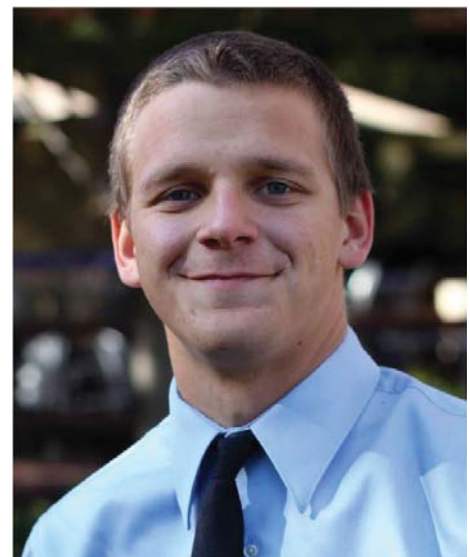
percent of the students enjoy this method of learning, I'll be surprised. All those who took my online astronomy course stated they would prefer to take in a classroom with other students and the professor present. So, while some of my administrative colleagues see the huge online university as the future of higher education, I am less than convinced. Instead I look to what my students yearn for in their education, and what I see is a greater desire for hands-on learning—creative involvement, community connections, and real-world results. If we can figure out how to make that happen, I think higher education will thrive and continue to produce engaged, active citizens who motivate each other as well as the next generation of students.

Welcome, Victor!

by Mike Jasper

The Georgia Tech Honors Program welcomes Victor Lesniewski as a new staff member for the Spring 2013 Semester. Victor is an Honors Program Alumnus, Class of 2011. "It feels good to give back to the Honors Program since I got so much out of it as a student," said Lesniewski. He noted that the Honors Program had an important impact on him as a student. "I came from high school with a very math and science mindset and left Tech more well rounded. The Honors Program completely changed the way I thought about learning."

Victor will be helping with the admissions process and communication. In addition, Victor will work on recruiting and outreach to potential new students. HP Students are encouraged to "swing by and say 'Hello!'"



What's Next and What Has Been

by Victor Lesniewski

In my last semester at Tech in the spring of 2011, the question of what was next produced an almost palpable angst. Having put in my time and efforts in succeeding at Georgia Tech, there were a number of opportunities for me to consider as a biomedical engineer, but there were more questions for me to consider as a person. My uncertainty stemmed not from what I should do next, but from who I could become.

In lieu of graduate engineering programs in Europe, I decided on a brash 180-degree turn and chose to work in Australia for a year. A month before graduating, I applied to serve as National Director of Business Development for AIESEC Australia, a global leadership development nonprofit run by young people with the shared audacity to envision and act toward peace and the fulfillment of humankind's potential. A month after graduating, I sat on the steps of the Sydney Opera House and wondered what the hell I had gotten myself into.

Australia was so many things. It was my Real World without the cameras but with unscripted drama and joy as our team of three Australians, an Estonian, another American, a Panamanian, and a Chinese girl lived and worked together. It was my adventure in earning a fraction of minimum wage in one of the world's most expensive cities, the visceral delight of walking across the Sydney Harbour Bridge for cheaper groceries. It was my childlike fascination at spotting a platypus in the wild. It was my late nights and subsequent sunrises, my small successes and larger mistakes in negotiating corporate partnerships



with Asia Pacific, my misguided energy drink intakes, my tears, my doubts, and my frustrations when having a purpose consume me.

Above all, Australia was discomfort—an undefined, blank space that cared little for my degree and provided just one year for me to create new relationships, to stretch myself in unfamiliar ways, and to leave a lasting and meaningful impact on the other side of the world. A year later, I am back in Atlanta, at least for a few months. The question of what's next has resurfaced, but now there is a relative calm and a growing excitement within me. I realize that what's next is not an existential question. It is not just what I do, but how I do it and learn from it. Reframing the question, the challenge is not in deciding what's next. The challenge is in asking what's now? What am I doing right now to make my vision and my path to it richer?



Congratulations to the Newest DC Interns!

Honors Program Students,

Jordan Lockwood

Mary Shoemaker

Emily Robey-Phillips

will intern in Washington, DC as part of Georgia Tech's DC Internship Program. Congratulations!

New Petit Scholar

Honors Program senior, Becky Byler, is impassioned by using engineering to alleviate human suffering and solve global health challenges. Whether directing community health programs in Latin America or applying her engineering skills through Engineers Without Borders, Becky has certainly been able to show compassion through engineering. However, none has had a bigger impact on her future career goals than her involvement with undergraduate research at both Georgia Tech and Emory University.

Becky's involvement with two undergraduate research labs sparked an interest in developing and implementing novel diagnostic tools to serve humanity and provided a foundation for her long-term goal to directly impact global health initiatives through engineering. Recently, Becky was given the opportunity to further explore this integration between global health and engineering when she was named a 2013 Petit Undergraduate Research Scholar.

The Petit Scholars program is a prestigious research program for top bioengineering and bioscience students and serves to develop the next generation of leading bioengineering researchers. The program provides undergraduate students with a 12-month, paid research experience. Scholars are matched with a mentor to conduct independent research projects at the Parker H. Petit Institute for Bioengineering and Bioscience. Over the next year, Becky will conduct research under the mentorship of graduate student Gonghao (Billy) Wang in Dr. Todd Sulchek's BioMEMS and Biomechanics Lab. Although Becky currently works in Dr. Sulchek's lab, the Petit Scholars Program will allow her to work on an independent research project that could lead to primary



authorship of scientific publications and presentations. Specifically, Becky aims to develop, through MEMS design and fabrication, microfluidic technologies that can be used for Malaria diagnosis and population surveillance. To Becky, the Petit Scholars program offers a one-of-a-kind experience: a multidisciplinary, integrated look at how research can be used to directly better the lives of those internationally. She will use this opportunity to better define how she will impart her cross-disciplinary scientific knowledge and global health experience to support international bioengineering research upon graduation.

Spring News from HP

Dr. Nobles will be teaching in New Zealand (along with Dr. Hugh Crawford) January through March, so while the cat's away...Dr. Halka, Ms. Leonard, and new staff member, Victor Lesniewski, along with student assistants, Mike Jasper and Katie Geddes, will be responsible for wreaking havoc in the HP office. Help us out by partying with us at HP open brunches. We have already scheduled two of them for January 29 and February 21 from 11 a.m. to noon. Brunch and gossip! Also, please do mark your calendars for our annual Karlovitz Speaker to be held Wednesday, March 6, 5:30 p.m. We know it

will be standing room only for Dr. Helen Fisher speaking on "Your Brain on Love." Dr. Halka will be buried under files again, attempting to select new HPsters from the Fall 2013 incoming class. Your opinion is highly valued: Know a prospective freshman for next year who might be great in the Honors Program? Let us know. We'll certainly check out their file. And, of course, don't forget the annual Honors Program Expo, which is always held Thursday of dead week. It always lifts spirits. Make plans to present your project, poster, Pecha Kucha, anything! And best wishes for a great holiday from the Honors Program.

Message from the Director

by Dr. Gregory Nobles

I have seen the future, and it works—and it might even work at Georgia Tech.

A few weeks ago, I went to Philadelphia with five other Tech colleagues (pictured at right) to attend a conference celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania, and we all came away energized and inspired by what the Netter Center has done in concert with West Philadelphia, the neighborhood just adjacent to Penn. Together, they've turned what had once been an occasionally antagonistic, frequently dangerous university-community relationship into a much more workable and mutually beneficial arrangement—not perfection, maybe, but probably the best such situation in the U.S. We have quite a bit to learn from them as we think about how to work with our own neighbors near Georgia Tech.

The Netter Center takes Penn students and faculty beyond well-meaning volunteerism to a level of deeper engagement. They've helped faculty members develop dozens of Academically-Based Community Service classes, service-learning courses that put a premium on serious academic work to undergird both the service and especially the learning. They've also established an ongoing relationship with the schools in West Philadelphia, putting Penn students together with high school students from the community. On the whole, the Netter Center is doing important work, and if you want to see everything they're up to, go to www.nettercenter.upenn.edu. It's worth the trip.

At Georgia Tech, we're not there yet, but we're moving in a similar direction, just a couple of decades later. In the Honors Program, we're looking to increase the number of CASE Studies (Connecting Academic and Societal Engagement) courses, and Sarah Perkins in Tech's Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement is a good ally in promoting service-learning among students and faculty. In the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts, Dean Jacqueline Royster has created the



Westside Community Alliance to encourage and coordinate meaningful two-way partnerships between Georgia Tech and our Westside neighbors. And at the Institute level, Dr. Ellen Zegura, of the College of Computing, has led a strategic planning task force with a broad, even global, focus on service learning and research. We have many of the pieces in place, and now we need to push his sort of work up the list of Georgia Tech priorities to the proverbial next level.

Getting there isn't just a nice idea; it's a necessity. At the Netter Center conference, Ronald Daniels, president of The Johns Hopkins University, made a straightforward statement about his university's situation that resonates with ours. "We don't have an exit strategy," he said, meaning that here's no way to walk away from the city and the communities immediately adjacent to the university. The same is true of Georgia Tech. We're not going away, and neither are the people who live around us. We're in this together, maybe more than we think. And since that's the case, maybe we need to think more about what we hope to see in the future, and how to make it work.

SAVE THE DATE!

Wednesday, March 6, 2013

5:30 - 7 pm

Location TBA

"YOUR BRAIN ON LOVE"

With Dr. Helen Fisher

Part of the Karlovitz Lecture Series in cooperation with the College of Sciences

<http://www.honorsprogram.gatech.edu>

[4]

NEWSLETTER STAFF

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Dr. Monica Halka, Associate Director

WRITERS: Monica Halka, Gregory Nobles
Victor Lesniewski, Becky Byler

LAYOUT:

Mike Jasper



103 A. French Bldg

Design by: Hannah Earle, 2011