Conflict in the Pursuit of “Community”
By Brad Nesbitt ’09

“The Honors Floors’ mission is to create a living environment in which residents can share their intellectual enthusiasm and embrace honors community in their daily lives.” This mission statement can be found in the Member’s Guide to the Honors Forum, but it may soon need revision. Accompanying the above statement is a side-note, one which has lead to recent controversy; it reads, “Unless otherwise noted, incoming freshmen are housed with their Scriber Seminar classmates. However, freshmen also have the option of choosing to live on one of the two Honors Floors.”

Apparently, there is not enough room for both housing arrangements to coexist on campus. Honors Floors interfere with the First Year Experience housing initiative—housing freshman in dorms with their Scriber Seminar classmates.

“I disagree with the decision made, but understand and appreciate the reasoning behind it,” explained David Bernstein ’07, VP of Residential Affairs. As a former president of the sub-free floor, he is quite familiar with issues concerning theme floors.

He received an official statement on the matter from the Directors of FYE and Residential Life, which noted the “diminished utility” of theme floors throughout recent years (although Dr. Boshoff, Director of the Honors Forum, attributes the decreased popularity—especially seen since the elimination of Moore Hall—in part to his being asked not to promote Honors Floors last year). The statement explains that “it is no longer practical to create Honors houses for first-year students, since it would remove a cohort of students from the shared housing of their Seminars,” adding that the FYE initiative aims to foster a greater sense of “engaged learning” within dorms.

Before spring break, Bernstein organized an open student forum to discuss the issue, during which several advocates of Honors Floors voiced their opposition to the decision passionately. “The discussion was about a sense of community,” recalled Sharon Strom ’10. “If Honors Forum housing is lost, the sense of community is lost.” During the meeting, she provided a compelling protest, drawing from her positive experience as a freshman in Hawthorne House, an Honors Floor in Wecking Hall.

“A lot of people said that [Honors Floors] was their selling point for coming to Skidmore, and that was a part of the reason I came,” she explained. “It’s a quiet atmosphere; you’ll see people at ten or eleven o’clock on a Saturday night studying in the common room. It’s nice to see that, and to know that if that’s what I needed to do, I’d be able to do it.”

She also highlighted the advantage of living with non-freshmen: “I probably never would have met a lot of people who were not in my seminar or my class-year if had not been living on an Honors Floor. You get a flavor of what Honors Forum is like and whether or not you want to continue with it.”

Bernstein’s stance was similar. “I, as a student, understand and believe in theme floors,” he explained. “I believe that they are important in the process of finding those with similar interests, taking control over your lifestyle, and overall are a big proponent of building community.” It is important to note, he added, that the elimination of theme floors is not necessarily permanent. “If there is a negative impact, academically and socially,” he said, “I would be very surprised to see them keep this new housing initiative.”

The statement released from the Directors of FYE and Residential Life did propose an alternative solution for the meantime, suggesting that those interested in theme floors convene and apply for suites together. “Honors Suites,” however, might still fracture Honors Floors’ current sense of community. On the other hand, housing freshmen with their Scriber Seminar classmates offers a similar atmosphere—one of academic engagement and community—to a greater portion of Skidmore’s incoming student body.

As the issue currently stands, both FYE and Honors Floors seem to be pursuing a stronger sense of community. Honors Suites may indeed be an adequate compromise. If not, perhaps “community” among committed Honors Forum members can be achieved elsewhere and by other means.

The Honors Forum is Really, Really Great... FOR PORN
By Taylor Leake ’07

It was early in the morning when a blurry-eyed crew of Honors Forum students and their compatriots, forty strong, loaded onto a charter bus bound for Broadway. The trip down to the city to see Avenue Q, a satirical musical parody of Sesame St., was the brainchild of Honors Forum Vice President Alli Feigen, who organized, promoted, and lead the trip.

By the time the bus arrived on 42nd street, everyone was excited and very much awake. The group scattered in the hour between the drop off and the show, seeing the sights of Times Square, eating lunch, and exploring such wonders as M & M World.

At the show, the group either sang along with their favorite puppets to such songs as “The Internet is for Porn”, “Everyone’s a Little Bit Racist” and “It Sucks to Be Me”, or were pleasantly surprised at the slightly off-color humor that brought back memories of children’s television, with the addition of nudity, sexual content, and profanity of course. The puppet sex scene was a particular highlight, if not a slightly disturbing one (The Honors Forum would like to suggest “That puppet has nipples!” for Skindeep’s Blurs Overheard). Many were particularly taken in by the themes and songs about college (“What do you do with a B.A. in English?” opens the show, and “I Wish I Could Go Back to College” is perhaps the show’s climax). Mostly, though, the group was impressed with the talent of the cast as they made their puppets come alive, sing, act, and so much more.

After the show, there was more free time to roam about the wonder that is New York City. Some ate more food, some bought souvenirs, some enjoyed the exceptionally warm (at least by Saratoga standards) weather and hung around outside. Then the group loaded back onto the bus, and headed home.

Despite a rocky start and late departure due to a dining hall snafu, the trip was an astounding success. Students got to spend some time in an historic place, experience arts and culture, enjoy a superb Broadway show, and bond over the excitement of a field trip.

Honors Forum Calendar

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<td>April 10th</td>
<td>Shades of Gray: Exporting Democracy, Gannet</td>
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<td>Movie: An Inconvenient Truth, Spa</td>
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<td>April 24th</td>
<td>Movie: Fern Gully, Spa</td>
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Newsletter Staff: Erin Cassidy ’09, Brooke Cohen ’09, Allison Feigen ’07, Taylor Leake ’07, Brad Nesbitt ’09
Member Spotlight: 
Rob Campbell '10 and 
Dani Crickman '10

By Erin Cassidy '09

Freshman are the future, as the saying goes, but Rob Campbell '10 and Dani Crickman '10 are more than that; they are friendly too. Rob and Dani met one day early last semester when they were both going around hugging trees on campus and they both hugged the same tree at the same time. It was friendship at first sight and they say the tree was very prickly.

Rob went on the Environmental Studies pre-orientation program where, as he tells it, he climbed a lot of hills and ate some mushrooms. Later, on campus, Dani and Rob decided to join EAC (Environmental Action Committee) to find interesting people and help the environment.

Now, countless months after their meeting, Dani and Rob are active members of the EAC and in the middle of doing their joint citizenship project.

Dani said she got the idea for their citizenship project from an EAC movie series that was dropped last semester. They are doing an environmental movie series which started last month with Thirst and continues in April with An Inconvenient Truth (4/10 in the Spa) and Fern Gully (4/24 in the Spa).

In addition to raising awareness about environmental problems around the world, Dani and Rob also try to help Skidmore become more environmentally friendly by working on the new EAC campaign “Don’t Be Trashy,” which concerns proper recycling habits for students living in the dorms.

Dani is a possible English major and Rob is thinking about a Physics major and Philosophy or International Affairs minor. So, even though they are pursuing different futures, they both agree that, “if you do small things [to help the environment] and get others to do them too, you’re making an enormous contribution.”

Honors Forum Dinner and Dessert Discussion

By Erin Cassidy '09

The lemon meringue pie at the Honors Forum dinner on March 27th was pretty ordinary but the conversation over dinner and dessert was unusual. Honors Forum students chatted with faculty as they ate in one of the four sections of the second floor of the Dining Hall. About twenty people attended and there was lively conversation at all of the three full tables after everyone went downstairs, got their food from downstairs and came back.

The students at each of the three tables had their own discussions that seemed friendly and ranged from how people got interested in their majors and Professor Greenspan’s dogs at one table to job opportunities on campus and Professor Boshoff’s weekend adventure with convicted criminals at another table. At the third table, there was a debate between Olivia Owen ‘08 and Professor Burns as to whether diversity, as a concept, makes sense for Skidmore College. Overall, it seemed to be an invigorating experience for students and faculty alike to get a chance to chat with other professors and students in the Honors Forum community over dinner.

FORUM

FUN!

Illusions

Horizontal or diagonal lines?

Someone needs an editor!

Steve Mazza

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