

UNDER CONSTRUCTION: Our New Community Service Requirement

THE ISSUE

Members vote at all-forum meeting by Rachel Silverstein '07

The idea of adding a community service component to the Honors Forum requirements has long been in the making, but this month it has finally begun to take shape.

At the Roman-style all forum meeting on Nov. 9, a group of about 35 students debated the meaning and merit of a community service requirement, and voted, ultimately, in favor of adding a requirement that could be fulfilled either within the campus community or in the Saratoga Springs area.

The discussion revolved around two main questions: 1. What communities should we be serving? 2. What form will that service take?

Some students said they thought the requirement would be best fulfilled through volunteer work in the community. Others, disappointed with the small turnout at the all forum meeting, thought it would be better to require an internal

fellowship promoting the mission of the Honors Forum, which states that our goal is to "strengthen the intellectual community" at Skidmore.

Most of those in attendance agreed that since several other campus clubs and volunteer regularly, the Honors Forum requirement should be one of a uniquely academic nature. The specific type of the service, however, is still uncertain.

Ultimately the group voted 17-6 in favor of a requirement. The majority of those present thought that restricting the requirement to serve only Skidmore or only the local community would be inappropriate, so they voted to allow students both options.

The requirement will affect the Class of 2009 and subsequent years. Current Honors Forum sophomores, juniors, and seniors will not be required to perform community service.

THE POINT

Adding passion to your community service requirement by Allison Feigen '07

Honors Forum members are active and passionate. However, possessing these exceptional qualities also means Honors Forum members are 1) a valuable resource and 2) busy.

The Honors Forum's celebration of the diverse passions and leadership skills of its members sets it apart from other honors societies. It follows that an Honors Forum community service requirement should put the "academic aspirations" which are its mission to encourage to the best possible use.

It is time for the Honors Forum to live up to its catch phrase and actually put "more" in our Skidmore education. However, "more" does not mean superfluous commitments. It should mean worthy pursuits that engage and excite its members. By adding a specific and narrow requirement which forces Honors Forum members to exclusively serve their own community we degrade their potential for meaningful endeavors.

"vated" members to design service projects reflecting their own unique academic passions.

The side effect of being a "highly motivated Skidmore student" is being extremely busy. Acceptance in the Honors Forum is based, in part, on leadership positions and community contributions all of which denote time consuming commitments. The many emails that HF director professor Boshoff received stating "I'm sorry I cannot attend the all-forum meeting, but I have to _____" support the fact that HF members are already spread very thin.

Those who aren't committed at all will be reevaluated in the new reapplication procedure. Therefore, an internal fellowship requirement which for some may be suitable but for many would be restricting would cause the Honors Forum to lose valuable members.

The Honors Forum should not limit its members' options when it comes to community service. It should, instead, trust them to choose a community and a type of service that excites them, makes the best use of their academic talents and passions, and allows them to truly take ownership of their education.

As the mission statement states "the 'Forum,' as the name suggests, is not intended to be an exclusive society but rather as a structure for organizing and promoting our common interests as an academic community." What better way to do this than to allow our "highly moti-

**All excerpts are taken from the Honors Forum mission statement on page 5 of the Member's Guide.*

COUNTERPOINT

Make HF our highest priority by bill stitson '09

Were you at the all-forum meeting on November 9? Statistically speaking, probably not.

In fact, only about 35 out of the 331 Honors Forum students were. Since the changes being made will affect this year's freshmen, at least they should have been there.

Upperclassmen have a lot of experience that freshmen don't, which can be an invaluable aid in decision making. Regardless of class, all members should care about what direction the Honors Forum is headed in.

That direction is one of required community service for membership. The debate on November 9 seemed to revolve around the word "community" and whether that should mean just Skidmore College or Saratoga Springs. Some students argued that a "required" service would breed resentment and insincerity. Others wondered what sort of "service" would count. It was eventually voted that there should be some sort of requirement, the nature of which left undetermined.

The real issue, though, revealed itself through the attendance. To be frank, Honors Forum is not a priority for most students, and is lost beneath classes, clubs, sports, and nightlife. An additional community service requirement would scare away prospective members, like Carolyn Lo (class of '09) who originally envisioned Honorvs

Forum as an opportunity for academic challenge. The Member's Guide confirms the mission of the Forum as being academic in nature:

The central goal ... is to strengthen the intellectual community ... encourage the academic aspirations ... as a structure for organizing and promoting our common interests as an academic community.

In high school, programs like Odyssey of the Mind and Gifted and Talented education satisfied these objectives without a service aspect. Here, the Honors courses accomplish much of the mission. Beyond the classroom, however, organizations and events such as the Debate Society, the Writing Center, tutoring, the Academic Festival, and this newsletter, are not required. A few members (including myself and Matt Cronin, '06) offered an alternative to the service requirement: Get involved in one of these organizations, or create a new one. This would reorient the Forum back to what it claims to be, and would revive our dying sense of fellowship.

Everyone has some extracurricular interest to share with those around them. Students can be brought together through common pursuits such as debate, literature, philosophy, film, the Icelandic alphabet, whatever. Yes, right now it is possible to start a Film Society, but

not everyone has that initiative. Telling students that they have to be in one of these organizations in order to be in Honors Forum will spark that initiative in someone, and others will follow them. This gives a tangibility to the Forum that doesn't exist currently, which will result in sincere participation.

It would even be possible for an Honors Forum member to start their own as a part of this requirement. Additionally, the new groups that will be created will serve the college community as a whole, because they are not exclusive to Forum members. The Writing Center helps everyone. The Debate Society offers public speaking practice to anybody who wants it. This alternative will certainly benefit the entire college community.

Imagine the possibilities: Just like we can choose how we get our Honors credits, we could choose which extracurricular venue to join or start. This is the kind of thing students want to be a part of. This solution provides students with enrichment tailored to their own unique intellectual desires, brings members together in a way that the word "MANDATORY" sprawled across an email header never will, and allows the Forum to grow into what it really wants to be, which is far more than just a few academia buzzwords strung together in a mission statement.

Let your voice be heard! Send us your thoughts on the new community service requirement. Clip & drop into intercampus mail by December 7.

YOUR
 INPUT

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Jon Brestoff '08

by Molly Appel '07

It was during high school when Jon fully realized the impact that food has on the way a person feels and functions. Since then, Jon has researched and studied anything he could get his hands on about nutrition and diet.

Jon came to Skidmore knowing exactly what he wanted to do, and has let his passion for nutrition, community involvement, and education inform the way he has approached his tenure at Skidmore. Jon is an Exercise Science/Bio-chemistry double major, and has aspirations to obtain his M.D. or P.H.D. in the study of metabolic diseases.

Last summer he was intern for the Clinton Foundation. He served as a consultant for their joint initiative with the American Heart Association to reduce the rates of Childhood Obesity, advising some of the top people in these organizations.

His particular project was to help establish nutritional criteria for kid's menus at fast food and fast casual (i.e. Applebee's, Bennigan's, Friday's) restaurants.

Along with being the VP of the class of '08, SGA Senator-At-Large, and Exercise Science Dept. Student Rep, Jon is the founder and President of SNAC – Skidmore Nutrition Action Council, whose major campaign is community education.

Jon has received a Student Opportunity Fund for himself and 9 others (both faculty and members of SNAC) to attend the AHA's Obesity Lifestyle and Cardiovascular Disease Symposium in Washington, DC. He will then create a 1-hour Power Point Presentation examining the contentious debate on the actual nature of the obesity problem, and present it 3 times to the Skidmore and Saratoga Springs community.



An exhibit to die for

by Bill Stitson '09 and Erin Cassidy '09

It was a dark and stormy night, Friday, October 28, 2005, and the Lucy Scribner Library had just unveiled its current Special Collection exhibit, *Dracula: The Reception*.

Actually, it wasn't particularly stormy, though the décor and props within the Pohndorff Room of the third floor and the costumes worn by students in Professor Phyllis Roth's Intro to Fiction class certainly lent themselves to the atmosphere. Both the Pohndorff Room and the display cases in the lobby showcase the Phyllis Roth Vampire Collection, given by J. Christopher Giancarlo (class of '81) and his wife, Regina, and generously supplemented by Professor Roth and friends. The Reception itself was sponsored by the English Department, Honors Forum, and Scribner Library.

Downstairs, each case exhibits its own perspective on *Dracula*. The first case, nearest the door, includes the versions of *Dracula* shown through plays, books, and even postage stamps. The second displays Bram Stoker's 11 other works. The third contains examples of how *Dracula* is depicted in the media, from the one-dimensional version of Stoker's character in pop culture to how *Dracula* appears more green as his audience becomes younger (think *Scooby Doo*). The fourth and final case houses many other works based on Stoker's stories, like Anne Rice novels.

Upstairs, the open-casket reception provided food and fancy. The 1922 film *Nosferatu* by Friedrich Murnau was shown along side the more recent *Bram Stoker's Dracula* by Frances Ford Coppola. Various posters hang about the room, including one from the Leslie Neilson movie *Dracula: Dead and Loving It*. Cobwebs drape down from the walls and ceiling. Accompanying all this was "finger food" served along side a sketchy, unlabeled punch of some sort. Outside the Pohndorff Room lies more of the collection, including *Dracula's Children* by R. Chetwynd-Hayes, which has in it a *Draculain Genealogical Table*, and *Sherlock Holmes VS Dracula* by Loren Estlemen.

The collection includes over 120 titles and paraphernalia, and the exhibit was assembled by Brooke Cohen ('09), Courtney Flynn ('08), Erik Wilson ('08), Hannah Goodwin ('10), Kate Laurents ('08), Lily Gedney ('07), Melissa Macey ('09), Michelle Bernier ('09), Ruth Hofheimer ('08), Shruti Subramanian ('09) and Professor Roth herself.

FORUM FUN! WORD SCRAMBLE

Directions: Unscramble the letters to form words and then unscramble the letters in the circles to spell the answer to the riddle

I run but I never walk. I have a mouth but I never talk. I have a bed but I never lie. What am I?

MVAP

O

RYOT

O

MNTIEOXANIA

O

KIGNHNATIVSG

O

ACFITFR

O

ARNALIEP

O

Answer

Stay Tunes for Next Month's Newsletter for the Solutions!
Created by Samantha Morrison

Honors Bio class spends a day at the Pleasant Valley Dairy Farm

by Taylor Leake '07

"Eat your Vegetables" is not just a parenting phrase for Paul and Sandy Arnold, owners of the Pleasant Valley Farm: it's a business slogan.

On October 31st students enrolled in BI 115H, Ecology of Food, got to see why when they visited the organic farm. Upon arriving at the farm, students were given a tour of the Arnold's fields, storage facilities, washing stations, and green house.

Paul Arnold led the impressive tour starting with the fields that hold between 30 and 35 different kinds of fruits and vegetables. The students saw everything from blueberries, squash, broccoli, and brussel sprouts to turnips, radishes, onions, and kale. The fields are small—only 100 yards across—and the Arnolds can manage them with a small staff who



tate the crops constantly keeping the soil healthy, one of the Arnold's main goal. "Healthy soil and healthy plants mean healthy food" said Paul Arnold explaining how he tried to keep the soil fertile by covering it with straw mulch, which also serves as a weed deterrent.

After seeing the chickens the Arnolds keep—around 30 egg laying chick-

ens and 150 larger meat chickens—Paul showed off his root cellar, which sports a dirt floor and 100% humidity and is kept at a constant 35 degrees to keep vegetables fresh through the winter. Next Paul showed off his barrel washer, a large wooden hanging contraption that hangs from the ceiling and spins, allowing easy and fast washing of vegetables.

The students enjoyed the trip, and learned quite a bit. While on the farm, they considered such questions as agricultural sustainability, inputs and outputs of the farm, field quality and farming practices, and animal husbandry regimens. The trip informed the topic of Ecology of Food, allowing students to see how food is grown, and what it means from an ecological standpoint.

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