HONORS TODAY

The End of an Era...
Josephine Capuana has retired. With fond goodbyes and without a golden parachute, Josie left UB. She leaves behind a remarkable legacy —The Honors College.

I have been part of a wonderful partnership for over twenty years, where together Josie and I have been co-directors of the Honors Program (now Honors College). There have been some remarkable partnerships in the past, which may be analogous:
Adam and Eve—for wanting to be creative and to start something big;
Tom and Jerry—for a lot of fun and frenzied activity;
Beauty and the Beast—for the obvious reasons;
Hansel and Gretel—for we have often found ourselves wondering in the woods.

As I think back over her career, I have this vivid memory of the ever-articulate Josie each year standing in the front of an auditorium filled with visiting students and parents, extolling the virtues of our Honors College. Listening to her, I thought, how could anyone not want to come to UB with such an outstanding staff and program? And come they did. Starting with 20 students in 1981 and now, 27 years later, with 1060.

What was it about Josie that made her so good? Yes, she was articulate—but it was more than that. As an advisor, she had a passion for proclaiming the importance of a college education and how the choices one makes are pivotal in shaping one’s future. And she was sensible—good common sense was her strong suit. She would eternally espouse that it was OK to change your major. “You don’t have to know what you are going to do with the rest of your life at the age of 18!” In short, I believe Josie in her 38 years at UB had a greater impact on the career of more students than any other single individual in the history of the university. Sprinkled throughout this magazine you will read the words of only a few of the thousands that she touched.

I look at our years together as the early days of Camelot. It seemed there was nothing that we couldn’t do. We have had the support of four Presidents, six Provosts, hundreds of faculty acting together as instructors and mentors, and an unparalleled staff. Today, we publish two annual issues of this magazine, the national award winning *Honors Today*, which you hold in your hands. We have a Performing and Creative Arts Program, an Advanced Honors Program for Transfer and upper division UB students, and run a seminar program for hundreds of undergraduates. We give scholarships for Study Abroad, award research and creative project grants, and fund students to travel and present scholarly reports at national meetings. We number thousands UB graduates as our alumni. All of this has thrust us into national prominence as one of the largest and best Honors Colleges in the country.

Did I say that I was blessed with a great partner? What will we do without her? While we try to figure that out, Dr. Donald McGuire of the Classics Department has stepped in to act as Interim Administrative Director. And we are grateful. But he will find that Josie’s fingerprints are everywhere. Still, Josie always said that when she retired, she wanted the Program to be so strong that it would flourish and stand forever. She must have felt secure that we would be able to manage without her. She retired. But it will be hard.

KIPP HERREID
Academic Director of the University Honors College

Dr. Capuana was like a doctor; she cut straight to the nitty-gritty. She accurately and quickly diagnosed the problem, devised a course of action, and discussed the available options with her patient. She was exactly what a confused and indecisive student needed to shape things up. To impact lives so strongly and make it seem so effortless was her strength. Just what the doctor ordered.

ANDREW GALLAGHER, HONORS SCHOLAR, CLASS OF 2006
From the Editor:
In August I completed my first sprint distance triathlon consisting of a 400m swim, a 17k bike ride, and a 4k run!

Welcome Don McGuire!
We would like to welcome Dr. Donald T. McGuire, jr. to the Honors College. He has been appointed as interim Administrative Director for the Honors College since Josie’s departure. He is a professor in the Classics Department and has been the Director of Advisement in the College of Arts and Sciences at UB for the past nine years. He has served as an Honors Mentor and continues to teach Honors Seminars for us. We are excited to have Don leading our team!

On the Cover:
Dr. Josephine Capuana
Photo by Enid Bloch

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HONORS
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Assistant Administrative Director, Honors College

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Alumni Updates
What They’re Doing Now
Kristen played Juliet in a production of Romeo and Juliet at Shakespeare in Delaware Park.
Whenever I told my graduate school classmates and professors at Purdue University that I planned to return to my hometown of Buffalo, N.Y. to pursue a career in the arts, I was without fail met with looks of amusement and disbelief. The other members of my M.F.A. Professional Actors Training Program had aimed to set up in cities like New York, Chicago, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles—locations with internationally recognized theatre and film scenes. Most assumed either I was intimidated by the challenges of a big city, or I lacked faith in my skills as an actor. What my contemporaries and instructors did not realize was that I had long ago made a decision about the type of career I hoped to build, and that I had already been exposed to and captured by one of the best kept secrets of Western New York—its vibrant professional theatre community.

While I have always been drawn to theatre, it was in high school that I decided to make acting the center of my professional life. Before choosing where to apply for an undergraduate degree I spent time contemplating my desired endgame. What was most important to me: to be famous and make lots of money, or to have a rewarding life in the theatre? Having decided that the latter was most important, it seemed unnecessary for me to shoot for a major city in which I would spend most of my time fighting for work in a highly competitive, commercialized industry. Buffalo offered many opportunities in my field, as well as the chance to be close to my family and live a balanced, quality life.

The UB Honors Program and UB’s Department of Theatre and Dance turned out to be an excellent fit. It has been my observation that the best actors learn as much as they can about the world around them. An education focused on acting technique alone may lead to performers that don’t really understand the human condition they are charged to represent. I was grateful to receive a well-rounded undergraduate liberal arts education. In the Theatre and Dance department I took classes with Vincent O’Neill, Stephen Henderson, Saul Elkin, and Gerald Finnegan. These were the professional actors I had grown up admiring on Buffalo’s stages, and I devoured everything they had to teach me about my craft. Vincent gave me my first paying job in *Playboy of the Western World* at the Irish Classical Theatre when I was a junior, not to mention an introduction to his House Manager, the dashing Ray Kelley, who is now my husband of eleven years! I was fortunate enough to be cast in Saul’s Shakespeare in Delaware Park production of *Hamlet* that summer, and as his daughter in a production of *Merchant of Venice* my senior year. Stephen, my Honors Program mentor and the first to instruct me in the Meisner acting technique, was responsible for connecting me with his own alma mater, Purdue University, which offered a three-year M.F.A. program that focused on Meisner.

The years I spent at Purdue not only challenged me as an actor but also gave me my first experiences as a teacher. My assistantship allowed me to teach basic acting to undergraduates, and I soon learned that in addition to my love for acting I had a strong passion for theatre education. I found that I enjoyed helping students to explore different cultures, observe human behavior, connect with other people, and, as a result, better understand their own selves. I should not have been surprised when Stephen Henderson contacted me as I was about to graduate from Purdue. He had heard I was interested in returning home and let me know about an opening at the Nichols School, an independent secondary school in Buffalo. I interviewed for the job my first Monday back from Indiana and by that Friday, I had been hired as a full-time theatre teacher at the Upper School.

I have been home in Buffalo since 1999 and have never once regretted my decision. My work at Nichols has been utterly satisfying. I direct the annual fall play and have been encouraged to create my own theatre curriculum for grades 9-12. As chair of the arts department I am able to collaborate with my talented colleagues in dance, music, and visual arts, and I learn more from my high school students about life and art than I ever could have imagined. As an actor I continue to perform throughout the year with local theatres, and have not been disappointed by the level of talent and professionalism I encounter regularly in the Buffalo theatre community.

I suppose that old cliché has proven true for me: sometimes what you’re looking for is in your own backyard.)
Feminists —
HANNAH E. DOBBZ
Advanced Honors Scholar
Class of 2009
HERE WE ARE!

As I write this I am in San Francisco—a hub for bleeding-heart liberals, tooth-and-nail radicals, student activists, aging hippies, queers, and people of every gender. And of all the differing words that people in this city use to describe themselves, they surprisingly often have one in common: feminist.

Whether feminism actually shapes their daily actions is debatable, but at least they’re not afraid of the word. In less liberal parts of the country, the word “feminist” is either misunderstood or downright reviled. Some go so far as to publicly denounce the whole concept, as if feminism were kicking adorable puppies on a regular basis.

These “post-feminists” argue that feminism has achieved all its goals. They say that women have the right to be voters and doctors and CEOs, and thus, pushing for anything more would be self-indulgent. After all, what else could we want?

Post-feminists overlook the movement that has survived the suffragettes, that grew with the ’60s, and that pushed on through Riot Grrrl. There are still groups around the nation that recognize the need for explicitly feminist space. I wanted to ask them why.

• Across the States, I interviewed women involved in feminist projects about why they do what they do.
• I talked to Sonya, an organizer for the annual Visions in Feminism conference in Washington, DC.
• I talked with Valerie from Twin Oaks, a “feminist eco-village” in Louisa, VA.
• I sat in on a meeting of the “Radical Wimmin’s Group” in Pittsburgh, PA.
• I talked to the feminists of Sassquat—a radical, queer, all female-identified squat in Philadelphia, PA.
• I interviewed 65-year-old Jan of SuBAMUH, a women-only land trust outside of Athens, OH.
• I traveled to the Allied Media Conference in Detroit, MI, where presenters included INCITE Women of Color Against Violence. Topics ranged from a women’s role in the creation of media, to women’s portrayal in the corporate manufactured media.
• I interviewed Jessica, founder of make/shift magazine—the newest edition to the country’s feminist canon.
• I sat down with Fred of Girl Army, a feminist self-defense collective in Oakland, CA.
• I also talked to Elizabeth of Banteay Srei, a program that works with Asian-American girls at risk for sex-trafficking in Oakland.

If we “achieved all of our goals” as post-feminism suggests, then why are feminists still so active? What are they working toward? Could they all just be delusional masses bent on the promise of twisted, matriarchal power? Because that sounds exhausting, I heartily hypothesize that the post-feminists are misled, and that while feminism has had many successes in the past, it still has so far yet to go.

The next time we speak I will be back in Buffalo (experiencing some variety of seasonal weather), and by December I will have compiled my data into the form of a 50-80 page document that will read much slower than does this article. When I uncover the truth I will be sure to also make it available in some memorable eight-word chant, and the long document will be optional.

The Research and Creative Activities Fund from the Honors College made the reality of my experience possible, and without it I would have been ill-fated to spend long hours at the computer, e-mailing faceless feminist after faceless feminist, to gain no more insight than what a few quotes can provide me.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that while much of the research funding at UB is granted for work in the hard sciences, the Honors College was able to recognize that my sociological research—although a softer science—is equally important. And I find that extremely admirable.

Josie was invaluable in guiding me throughout my undergraduate education. I daresay that the Honors experience without her, and her specific interest in my academic and professional development, would not have been the same - nor anywhere close.

CLAYTON ROBERTSON, HONORS SCHOLAR, CLASS OF 1992
Highlighting undergraduate research reflects one of the distinctive opportunities of an undergraduate education at UB.”

Michael Ryan, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education

On April 17, 2008 the University at Buffalo Community gathered for the 4th Annual Celebration of Academic Excellence. The “Celebration” has become a springtime staple on campus, a gathering that allows UB to recognize student and faculty achievement from the previous academic year. The event also places a special emphasis on undergraduate student research and creative activities. This past April approximately 150 student research posters were on display in the Center for the Arts Atrium.

Student presenters were chosen to participate based on input from their Academic Deans. Outstanding student research projects were nominated and selected from across all academic disciplines at UB. “Highlighting undergraduate research reflects one of the distinctive opportunities of an undergraduate education at UB,” noted Michael Ryan, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education.

UB students who had their work nominated were asked to create a research poster and then display and present their work to the campus community throughout that afternoon. UB undergraduates can work side by side with faculty researchers on cutting edge research, inventions, or real-world social issues. Along with gaining meaningful research experience that will assist them in their graduate studies and beyond, the opportunity to present their research to a diverse audience such as the one present at the Annual Celebration helps to make the experience that much rewarding. The opportunities to engage in meaningful research and to publicly present one’s findings lead to a powerful learning experience for our undergraduates.

The fifth annual Celebration of Academic Excellence will take place in the UB Center for the Arts on Tuesday April 7, 2009. The event is free and open to the public. For details on the event or for more information regarding UB’s effort to make meaningful research a reality for our undergraduate students, please go to the website for UB’s Center for Undergraduate Research & Creative Activities (www.curca.buffalo.edu).

You can also view a link to the student research project abstracts, and a listing on the UB faculty who mentored these students at: http://curca.buffalo.edu/symposium/index.php.

Photos: Jerry Godwin

Aaron Krolikowski, Honors Scholar, Class of 2009 discusses his research with UB President John B. Simpson.

Presenters and guests in the Center for the Arts during the Celebration of Excellence.

Amy Hardy, Honors Scholar, Class of 2009 presents her work at the event.

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Presenters and guests in the Center for the Arts during the Celebration of Excellence.
I have been working at Moog, Inc. for just over a year now, and I couldn’t be happier. As an electrical product engineer at Moog, I am responsible for the overall manufacturability, reliability, and survivability of my product. The program I am currently working on is the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft, and it is very exciting to be a part of something that is helping our armed forces. Moog won the contract to build the electronic units for the Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II. These units control the movement of the actuators that position the horizontal tail and wing flaps of the aircraft. There are three different variants that Moog is producing – the conventional takeoff and landing model, the short takeoff and vertical landing model, and the carrier-based variant. All require extensive design work and much qualification testing.

Walking into work every day, I never know what to expect. There is always a new problem to be solved or a process to improve in order to make our product better, cheaper, or easier to make. Recently, I moved from concentrating on the production of our current models to working on the flight qualification testing side. I am now responsible for test plans, processes, and data reports which give me exposure to the testing from beginning to end. Although I am still becoming comfortable in my new role, it is a step forward in understanding the overall functionality and limits of the electronic units and the systems into which they are installed.

Qualification of the units involves accelerated life testing, which proves that our hardware is reliable and will continue to function properly over time and in harsh environments.

Some of my favorite things about working at Moog are the cross-discipline opportunities, and the potential for movement within the company. In the past year, I have learned more than I ever thought possible. Although I learned a lot over my years at UB, Moog introduced me to the real applications of that knowledge. My experience with the creation of a product has taught me a great deal about the mechanical engineering side of things, how companies operate, the logistics of sales and contracts, and what dealing with customers entails. Now, I am learning more about electrical design and failure analysis. Moog encourages its employees to move around within the company, and to experience new positions. I feel that at Moog I will always be challenged and able to work on projects in which I am interested because there is such a wide variety of products and programs available.

Moog has locations world-wide, and I hope someday to get involved in a project that will allow me to travel to a foreign location. Another one of my aspirations, which I feel is very possible to achieve while working at Moog, is to be involved with the development and enhancement of space products. I hope one day to move into the Space and Defense division of the Moog family.

I am very fortunate to be in this field, and to be employed by a company that has so many prospects for success. With the ever-changing world around us, and with technology improving at such a fast rate, I feel that an engineer’s work will never be complete, and that is the best job security I can imagine!
Do you like New Music? If so, you probably love the Genkin Philharmonic – “A ten piece avant garde/progressive rock band, inspired by Frank Zappa, heavy on horns and rhythm.” According to the website www.cdbaby.com/genkinphilharmonic you can order the CD for $12.97. Sounding like the alien bar band in Star Wars on steroids, this student group of musicians was started as a chamber music class at UB in 1999 by Professor Jon Nelson. “We started playing for 700 people, and 300 got up and walked out during the first piece. I knew we were on to something.”

The Genkin Philharmonic (loosely translated the name means “cash only”) has morphed over the years to include current students, alumni, and, at times, even Nelson himself. Genkin has been a flagship ensemble for the UB Music Department. Their repertoire has been extremely challenging, and they have performed extensively in off-campus locations, as far away as Mexico City. The eclectic group invites musicians to join who are interested in being part of a unique musical experience. Nelson treats his students as a professional manager would treat his clients. He has mandatory practice sessions and requires that students are on time and have practiced on their own. Nelson takes his role very seriously, and in turn, his students are committed to Genkin.

Nelson credits the liberal atmosphere at UB with allowing such a group to develop and grow. He knows that this type of musical experience would not exist at most schools or music conservatories. While not all students in the group are music majors, they are all committed to this unique musical experience. Nelson takes his position as Director of Undergraduate Studies and Trumpet Instructor one step further by using Genkin as a vehicle to combine students’ creativity and musical ability.

A number of Honors Scholars have been part of this unique blend of music and musicians, and Nelson still stays in contact with several of them, including Mark Karwan (2003) and Matt Thomas (2005). Since graduating, Mark has relocated to Brooklyn. He spent one year studying at NYC’s bass collective, learning from a stable of the city’s best bass players and drummers in all styles of popular music, and then working at the school as an accompanist. For the past four years he has been performing as a member of bands, chamber groups, theater groups, and orchestras. He is also completing a three-year teacher certification program at The American Center for the Alexander Technique.

Matt still plays with a majority of the members of Genkin in their own band called Third Space. They play original music highly influenced by the progressive rock sensibilities instilled in them by Genkin. As great as NYC is for music, it is still difficult to make a living at it, so Matt continues to work as a professional figure skater for his income. He hopes to eventually make the switch to music for his career, but for now he continues to play with as many people as possible and learn as much as he can.

Matt had this to say about his experience in Genkin, “My training under Professor Jon Nelson as a member of the Genkin Philharmonic had a resounding effect on my concept of my role as a musician. Professor Nelson had a vision of what he wanted out of that band, and was meticulous about his ways of getting it. He did not let up and demanded cohesiveness and rhythmical precision from each member. It was through that sort of training that I learned to play a variety of styles that allowed for a greater diversity in my playing."

What makes a student a successful musician? Nelson answers easily, “if music is something that you can’t talk them out of – if they have that look in their eye that they are going to do this no matter what – that is a start.”

Josie was so dedicated to student success. I didn’t complete my graduate school applications until the last minute, and sent my personal statements to Josie two days before they were due. Josie called me immediately, at 8:30 PM, and reviewed them with me over the phone. I was so touched by her promptness and sincere interest for our welfare. PREETHI GOVINDARAJ, CLASS OF 2005
KS: As a parent, what role did you play in Paul’s college search process?

PS: As a family, we looked at a wide variety of schools. The Honors College was something we were made aware of through some friends. It was described as a very challenging program, something that was a little intimidating at first. My son was a good student in high school, but this was a big step up in terms of challenge. As we looked at schools, UB was the only one we considered from an Honors perspective. Our first concern was to find a school that would suit his interests and then it became a question of what environment would best suit him. When we learned about the Honors College, it was an aspect of college we hadn’t seen anywhere else. I was very impressed. We told Paul that even if the academics proved to be more challenging than he could handle, to be given an opportunity like this, maybe a once in a lifetime chance – take it. Last year when he graduated Summa Cum Laude, Dr. Capuana came over to us and told Paul that while she believed in him from the beginning, she was very proud of him for taking the risk of being challenged a little more. We could not have been more proud. As parents we tried not to fit our child into a program that was traditionally only academic – the Honors College delivered a much more holistic experience. In virtually every other college and university we went to, there was a lack of involvement by the leadership to explain why they were special. They could talk about their credentials – that was impressive – but what Dr. Capuana did was to talk about how the Honors College would make a difference in Paul’s life. It was much more focused around what would help him be the kind of person he wanted to be, as opposed to him being grateful for the opportunity of being part of that school.

KS: As a successful businessman with close ties to Buffalo and the community, how did you feel about Paul’s decision to stay in Buffalo for college and attend UB?

PS: I think every parent would choose to support their kid’s wishes and dreams over the community. Had Paul decided to go out of town, we would have supported that. But at UB I felt like Paul would be part of something special. Within the landscape of this community, UB will have a lasting impact on Western New York. What President Simpson and others are doing is important for this community, vital for this community. The Honors College is something special because it shows someone like me that you can compete on a world stage. You don’t need to leave Buffalo to do that. What the Honors College does, just in its own success, is show how people are indentifying this college and this community as a place of choice from all over the world. I’m proud my son stayed here. I’m even more excited about the fact that my son comes out of an educational experience believing that he got the best education, not just that he chose to stay home. Now that Paul is in graduate school in the MBA/JD Program he is also beginning to look back and realize how special his experience in the Honors College was.

KS: As a parent, and as a leader in the Buffalo community, do you think that the education Paul received at UB and in Honors prepared him for what his future holds?

PS: I think that the Honors College and the academics are outstanding, but my experience was that the non-academic aspects of college are just as important. The counselors and mentors in the Honors College are special. Certainly the impact that people like Dr. Capuana made on Paul personally was unique. The way Honors helps these young people develop their world view is special. The team of people that have been assembled to lead the Honors College are as much a part of its success as anything else. They really made a very personal experience for Paul in a very large university – and that’s no small challenge.

KS: Looking back, do you feel as though the messages that Paul received as a student reflected your own personal beliefs as a parent about the importance of education?

PS: Absolutely. I remember Paul was having some challenges in one of his courses; he had phenomenal grades all of his years, but some classes were more challenging for him than others – and that’s to be expected. He went in and spoke with his advisor and to Dr. Capuana and one of the things they did for him was to
provide him the same counsel that we would give as parents — to keep things in perspective. They reminded him about what he was trying to do — that it's not just about the grades. I found that very validating. It let Paul understand that there is more to this at the end of the day than just whether you got a high GPA. That's especially important because this is our hometown, and I wanted my son to come out of college thinking about what he can give back to his community. His experience in the Honors College started to instill in him the idea that supporting other people's goals and dreams is as important as pursuing his own. I found that surprising because I actually believed that at a large public educational institution people didn't have time to do that; they didn't have time to take a personal interest. I didn't expect the level of personal attention to help Paul continue to develop that sense of being a “giver” in a community as opposed to simply a “taker.” It was just a tremendous gift that the Honors College gave to us.

KS: Your generous gifts helped several Honors students with scholarships and experiences usually only attained at the graduate level. What has contributing to the Honors College meant to you as a parent?

PS: First, we were deeply grateful that Paul was given this opportunity. But, as a parent, I do not believe there is a better value in education anywhere in the United States – anywhere. I felt compelled to contribute something back relative to what I honestly would have paid elsewhere. I would have gladly paid twice the tuition for Paul to get the same experience elsewhere if I thought that was where he needed to go.

I appreciate the notion that I was generous, but I actually only gave back to the Honors College what it saved me being such a great value. To support UB is really just to support ourselves. There are plenty of families who need that great value in order to be able to afford college. These are tough economic times and I think for those that can help others, they should. I think UB is a great investment. I don't know that it is easy to articulate a direct correlation between your gift and the community, but you see it in the long term. You see it in the faces of the kids on graduation day. These are the best and brightest of our community and, in turn, we want to attract people here from all over the world. There is no better way to do that than for them to be exposed to our community through UB and the Honors College. That's when you get people, when they are dreaming. Knowing their dreams can be fulfilled here in Buffalo? There is no price you can put on that.

I can help in a small way – I think a lot of parents can. Sometimes you will read in the paper about some very successful, very generous person giving millions of dollars to a university. Those are wonderful events, but I sometimes worry it discourages everyday families. They think, “I don't have millions of dollars so I can't make a difference.” We need to understand that even a small gift makes a difference and can have a huge impact on UB. I would invite people to give. Our gift was not significant; it was an acknowledgement of the importance of the Honors College to my family, to our community. Over time, these UB students that we help will grow up and invent the next Google or Microsoft. I'm hoping others will see that as well. There is no question it is the best investment my family could have made, and it's one of which we're quite proud.

PHILLIP M. EDWARDS, CLASS OF 2001

There was never a time at UB when Dr. Capuana’s door was closed to me. Her advising always extended beyond what I was doing this semester or the next to a more holistic discussion of where I thought I might end up. Having observed how Honors Programs at several elite universities provide service to their students, I have yet to run across an environment in which mentoring was so intensive and sustained as it was at the University at Buffalo. It continues to impress me how Dr. Capuana and her team have elevated the status of UB through the ongoing development of the Honors Program.

PHILLIP M. EDWARDS, CLASS OF 2001
My first administrative act at UB was dropping out of the School of Management. Too many required classes meant I’d lose French and Spanish – not a chance. My parents weren’t thrilled. But somewhere between Molière and Lorca, Cape Town and Besançon, it clicked. I had it good, and I wanted to give back to my country. I have also always liked a challenge. A couple of hours before the deadline, I registered for the Foreign Service Written Exam. This was going to be my life.

It rained on exam day. Hundreds of us trotted into a dusty lecture hall in an alien building at Buffalo State College. It was little more than the GRE on steroids with a lot of probing personal questions, U.S. history, and geography – not easy, but doable. By the time I got my results, I was already packing for Washington, DC and grad school. The State Department took about 5,000 of us out of 20,000 nationwide. Not bad, I had just won the right to take another exam.

DC isn’t what you see on the tour bus. I’ve been lost in ghettos that make the “Fruit Belt” in Buffalo seem tame, had my car broken into, and had friends mugged, beaten and shot. Never have I looked over my shoulder more in any place I’ve been. The homeless go unnoticed as the monuments, but the cherry blossoms are still lovely. Then there’s the politicians, DC beneath the shadows: where the lifeblood of the world’s still most-powerful nation runs deep; policies get cranked out into all hours of the night; embassies pop up like daisies; and the sidewalks creep with more spies than you’ll ever realize. Nothing is as it seems.

When I arrived at George Washington University, my advisors told me that applying for the Foreign Service should be a hobby. I disagreed. I joined meet-up groups, attended prep sessions, and practiced. I had heard too much about the oral exam to take it lightly. To my surprise, I encountered the quiet subculture of Foreign Service examinees. Between online chat-rooms and weekend training sessions, we prepared for the grueling daylong Herculean series of tests designed to stress the limits of your inter-personal skills, experience and psyche. This was the beast that ate dreams. Nobody passes on the first go; most give up after three. Then again, the same has been said for the written test.

It was winter again and I had to be in some underground government testing facility before the sun rose. DC was glistening after a rare snowfall, and I got off the bus early to revel in the comforting cold and watch the odd shadows bounce off the streetlights. There were thirteen of us that day. As I entered, two ill-prepared candidates scrambled to finish their paperwork and crunch out essays. The beast purred with satisfaction. We waited, a room full of the seemingly anxious. And then we tested. Ten hours later, one by one, we got our results. I was called last. Mr. Turnbull, they’re ready for you. I walked into a room of smiling faces and let myself sigh relief. I met the other survivor at the bar. After a celebratory Guinness, I went home exhausted and slept happy as hell.

Across the country, 5,000 were quickly whittled to 1,000. Still, I knew better than to
It’s been said of Arabic that every word means itself, its opposite and a type of camel. Linguistic complexities abound but that summer they were largely trumped by emotional distress. This should have been a hobby.

It was nearly broke, unemployed, and loan repayments began to kick in. I was stuck. I could try to get two-years of touch-and-go Arabic up to general proficiency in one summer, or get a job and keep waiting. Since Arabic is a critical needs language, a successful test would put me near the top of the list and all but guarantee me a job. But Arabic is also known as a super-hard language, and I’d only have one shot to pass. To pull this off, I’d have to postpone work, watch my miniscule savings run dry, and face some serious hardship if I failed. Otherwise, I could get a job and hope for the best. Hope wasn’t going to cut it. I enrolled in an eight week intensive Arabic course in DC, and booked a flight to Cairo. I was going to pass this exam or go broke trying. Debt was manageable; giving up wasn’t.

You can see the heat and taste the pollution in Cairo. The air hits your lungs like dirty smoke and the sweating never stops. My ill-chosen language institute was on the outskirts of town, in a failed urbanization project from the 1970s. Sand and trash were dumped on my block regularly and the live-chicken store sat comfortably next to the arcade. I spent seven weeks at what all my Egyptian friends dubbed a fundamentalist...
How Arabic Helped Me (continued)

institute where I struggled to defend evolution, and mixed gender classrooms. But the system was rote and regularly copying pages of dialogues by hand wasn’t getting me any closer to what I needed. After I got over three weeks of mild food poisoning, I hired a tutor and once again piled on the hours.

The program ended and I traveled alone trying to make sense of one of the world’s greatest ancient civilizations. But it wasn’t in the Nile Valley, so much as in Sinai where I finally recuperated. I had to get out of Egypt, but unlike my ancestors and some drunk Swedes a couple years ago, I wasn’t about to cross the Red Sea illegally. So I waited out my last week in Dahab, studying in cafes, schmoozing with European travelers and smoking copious amounts of hookah (…of the tobacco variety). I was ready, at least as ready as I was going be. I took a last walk through the City of the Dead in Cairo, and flew home on September 11, the date of my birth.

I had a week to recover before my phone date. I skipped through jet lag and begged everyone I knew that spoke Arabic to help me practice. Then 48 hours before the exam I came down with a vicious case of the flu. All of my senses were shut down; I had to reschedule or find a stronger version of Thera-Flu. Fatefully, Arabic exams were booked for six weeks, a delay that could cost me the job, and Thera-Flu wasn’t returning my calls. I took a double dose the next morning and prayed for mercy from my examiner. A Lebanese woman answered the phone and we were off. It went well enough and then the conversation took an unexpected turn… to the Bills. Sweet serendipity, she was a football fan! My prayers were answered.

Ten nerve-wrecking days later I found out that my results were enough to push me to number one on the candidacy list. I effectively became the Foreign Service’s top draft pick for the January 2008 class. The next four months were some of my happiest on this earth. I waited tables, temped, and played kickball. It was simply beautiful.

As all the fanfare of orientation, assignments and training subsides, I’m back to learning Arabic full-time, but at ease (and with a paycheck). Two years of consular work are on the horizon in Arabia Felix a.k.a. Yemen. I’m living my dream, and many pinches later I still find it hard to believe.

David C. Turnbull is an alumnus of UB’s Honors College and Advanced Honors Program. He graduated in 2005 with a B.A. in French, Spanish, and International Studies. He also holds an M.A. from the George Washington University in International Affairs. David is currently living in DC awaiting his departure to Sana’a. He can be reached at dcturnbull@gmail.com.
The End of an Era...

JESSICA (SEABURY) DUDEK
Honors Scholar, Class of 1994
Assistant Administrative Director, Honors College

During her 25 year tenure as Administrative Director, Josephine Capuana did not simply oversee UB’s Honors College, she became synonymous with the program she had stewarded since its inception.

Though Dr. Capuana, or Josie, as she was known to many, retired in May 2008, her influence lives on in the myriad achievements of the Honors alumni whom she mentored and nurtured. Brian Mitzman, (Honors Scholar, 2007) now a second year student at UB’s School of Medicine, says, “I attribute a large part of my undergraduate success to Dr. Capuana. Her ability to push me that extra mile helped me to achieve more than I expected. Although not always what I wanted to hear, her honesty was what I needed to attain my professional goals and grow into who I am today.”

Josie discovered instead that organization and supervision were her strengths. While at Buffalo State she had a part-time job coordinating the advisement program in the Dean of Students Office. The position introduced her to the field of college administration and prompted her to enroll in SUNY Albany’s graduate program in Student Personnel. That degree led her to UB, where she was hired as an academic advisor in the summer of 1970. After two years of providing general advisement, Josie became UB’s pre-med advisor, a position she held for the next ten years.

In 1983, UB launched the University Honors Program (renamed the University Honors College in 2007), and the administration tapped four undergraduate advisors, including Josie, to advise the select group of twenty incoming students. She soon became Assistant Dean of the Program and provided advisement and programming for the new Honors Scholars. She says, “The position appealed to me immediately because these were students who had a lot of interests and they liked the intellectual challenge of honors. I had always liked advising, and when I looked at the Honors students I thought that these are young men and women who have so much potential, who can go in so many different directions and have a great educational experience, if they receive the right motivation and are introduced to the right people.”

Josie became Administrative Director in 1986, and as the Program grew, so did the need for an academic director. Enter Clyde “Kipp” Herreid, Professor of Biology and Honors student mentor, who became the Academic Director of the Honors Program in 1987. Their pairing would turn out to be a seminal moment for the nascent program, as no discussion of honors at UB can take place without highlighting the synergy that Kipp and Josie generated in building the College to what it is today. To say that the two had an excellent working relationship is a huge understatement. Josie recalls, “We spent a lot of time early on talking. We both decided that I was not going to be his boss and he was not going to be my boss. We were both going to work for the good of the Program. We

Josie’s dedication to the Program and its students was a large part of the reason I chose to attend UB. Her strong support of all of us encouraged us to make the most of our time here. CINDY WACHENHEIM, CLASS OF 1991
I graduated from the Honors Program with a dual degree in English and Political Science. It’s no exaggeration to say that Josie steered me to a career marrying these diverse pursuits - journalism - and set me on a path of discovery that continues to this day. I am a reporter for Bloomberg News in New York, covering medicine and science, a job that challenges me every day to keep learning and push my education to new limits. Josie has a gift for seeing the talents in people that they don’t always recognize in themselves. In my case, it took Josie’s insight to help me find a career that taps my love of writing, learning and public policy. Without Josie, I doubt I would have stumbled into such a satisfying career so perfectly suited to me.

LISA RAPAPORT, CLASS OF 1995

recognized that together we could build something.”

And build something they did. Under the guidance of Kipp and Josie the Program grew from initially admitting 20 freshmen annually to incoming classes of over 300 students.

Today the Honors College boasts over 1,000 current students and more than 2,000 alumni. Kipp, who describes Josie as “a great team leader and a great friend,” credits his colleague with much of that success. “Josie’s long experience, vision, and academic savvy consistently allowed her to solve problems that would stump normal mortals,” he says. “She was always an advocate for students, relentlessly encouraging them to stretch their wings. The Honors College could not have had a more creative, sensible administrator at the helm.”

Josie is quick to point out that the success of the College stems from the efforts of many at UB. She notes that the Honors Council, the faculty governing body of the Program, has always been an active and important participant in shaping its policies. She adds that interacting with the faculty on the Council and those who served as mentors was a “great opportunity” which made her appreciative of how difficult it is to be an excellent teacher and researcher at the university level. “I think that we were also very lucky with the graduate students and professional staff who came to work with us,” Josie says. “They believed in our mission and were willing to work as part of a team. With their energy and ideas, it became a real group effort in making the College successful.”

Of all of these positive professional relationships, Josie says that her favorites were the ones she formed with the Honors students. From the moment they considered enrolling in UB’s Honors Program to the time they graduated, she played an integral role in the lives of her students. Josie was often the first UB person prospective Honors students met during their campus recruitment visit; she delivered her famous motherly “Sex, Drugs, and Canada” speech at each Honors orientation; she counseled students on roommate and relationship problems, courses and careers; she also presided over the annual Honors Convocation, reading the names and accomplishments of the graduating students as they walked across the stage. “The major satisfaction is watching these young men and
women change in the four years, to see them grow and to see them willing to take on new challenges,” she says.

Sujata Sofat (Honors Scholar, 2005) echoes the appreciation of numerous Honors Alumni in articulating the qualities that made Josie special. “I loved meeting with her because she always had a sense of why I was there and where I was headed; without me saying a word. Her insightful was always heartwarming and right-on. I always felt remembered, even as a student who met with her only about once every semester. I felt that there wasn’t anything I could bring to her which I considered a problem or a stress or a frustration that she didn’t make me feel calm about. She made me feel that there was nothing she couldn’t help make better for me. I always got the appropriate direction from her and always felt that she was an advocate for my education and academic goals. I know she helped me achieve all that I wanted to as an undergraduate because of this.”

Such feedback from alumni is common, and Josie has always been grateful to hear it. “I think that that has always been the most satisfying,” she says, “when they leave here and then some of them will come back to thank me for just being there. Sometimes that is the most important thing, to be willing to listen to them and to provide a place for them to fall apart if they are going to fall apart and then I can listen, offer some advice and help them come up with a plan.”

Interestingly enough, the students exerted a similarly positive influence on Josie’s life. She had periodically considered earning her Ph.D. and, partially at Kipp’s prompting, Josie enrolled in a higher education graduate course in 1990. She recalls, “I had butterflies and frayed nerves, just like the freshmen, because it had been 20 years since I had been in the classroom as a student.” After taking additional courses, Josie applied to the Ph.D. Program and did her year of residency while also working full-time in the Honors College. Her dissertation, which examined the history of Honors Programs at the University at Buffalo, entailed long hours of research in the University Archives. Josie says, “In many ways it was really the enthusiasm and curiosity of the honors students that was the impetus for me to go back and get my Ph.D., because I think for the first time I really enjoyed learning. Returning to school to earn my Ph.D. was an immersion in the educational and intellectual experience of higher education.”

Despite the energy generated by working with bright and motivated students on a daily basis, Josie says that the administration of the Honors College was not without its challenges. In the beginning there were questions about how the elitism of an exclusive Honors Program fit with the more egalitarian mission of a public university. Josie explains, “The challenge was to build the Program carefully. We began to see Honors early on as a more global presence in the University, as something that could push the University further to come up with ideas and programs that would bring more students in. We were always out there trying to create different ways to spread Honors throughout UB.” In particular, Josie notes that initiatives such as the Performing and Creative Arts Scholarship and the transfer and current programs that existed for most of the 1990’s were established to make honors accessible to a more diverse group of UB students.

As part of the legacy that she leaves behind, Josie hopes that she has helped to build a vibrant, thriving College that will continue to be an integral element of undergraduate education at UB. She explains the relevance of a strong honors presence: “I think that the
Josie Capuana led molding, maintaining and advancing the Honors Program into what it is today. Each student, including myself, benefited (and will in the future benefit) incredibly from the Honors Program: the education received, the efforts it made to lead students to think creatively - both inside and outside of the box - and to constantly challenge thoughts and ideas in order to develop new and original points of view.  

DAVID PALAMÉ, CLASS OF 1999

The End of an Era (continued)

Honors College can keep people focused on the fact that undergraduate education at a research university is important and that it can drive the quality of the graduate students and faculty who choose to come here,” she says. “Undergraduate education can really be the impetus in increasing the reputation of UB.”

As for her own future, Josie is uncertain what retirement has in store for her just yet. She is an avid traveler and she has two remaining continents, Australia and Antarctica, to visit. She has told her students countless times that it is alright not to know what you want to major in or what career you want to pursue. So she adds with a laugh, “And there is no reason that at the age of 61 you should know what you want to do with the rest of your life!” For the moment she is happy to look back at the fond memories of her Honors students and grateful for the opportunities she had during her long career at the University at Buffalo. “Early on the reality came to me that my role was to make things happen, to remove the stumbling blocks and to create something. It was that whole creative process that was so satisfying. I have been very lucky. I have loved everything that I have done here.

CLAUDE WELCH, SUNY DISTINGUISHED SERVICE PROFESSOR, POLITICAL SCIENCE

Josie consummately combined interest in each Honors student as an individual with a sense of where the entire Program/College needed to head. As it mushroomed in size, her intelligence and good sense made her a model administrative head. What a wonderful role model!

I am thankful that people gave me a chance to show what I could do. In a way, Kipp and I had carte blanche to create the Honors Program/College. We did have plenty of help along the way from the faculty, staff, and students but it was this open atmosphere that gave us the energy and inspiration to make things happen.”

Dear Honors Alumni, Faculty, and Friends...

As some of you may know, after 38 years at UB (27 with the Honors Program/College), I decided to retire as of May 30, 2008. It was not an easy decision to make but I knew in my heart that the time had come to move on. To what, I am not sure, but as I have said to many of you over the years, there is no reason why at the age of 18 (or 61) you should know what you want to do with the rest of your life! So now it is my turn to figure out what my next step will be. I know it will include some travel and volunteer work, but what else I am not sure.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your wonderful contributions to Honors over these many years. For the early Honors Scholars, you took the biggest chance on us when we were the new kid on the block. But the “good vibrations” were there and by working hard, your successes became our successes. You allowed us to showcase the quality of undergraduate education at UB and in turn, helped to strengthen its visibility and importance in a Research One university. Working as part of a great team with Dr. Herreid and the Honors staff helped to make the “magic” happen! It was a team effort all the way and one that has made a lasting impression on my life as well as yours. Thank you to the faculty who gave so much of their time and effort to us, by teaching Honors seminars, mentoring Honors Scholars, serving on the Honors Council and being there when we needed support.

I have often said that college should be the best four years of your life. For me, these have been the best years of my life! The friendships, challenges, the opportunities to create vibrant and meaningful learning experiences for so many students, to see their excitement and to encourage them to take advantage of all that life offers have been immensely rewarding to me. So now it is my time to be adventuresome, to try something new. You are welcome to keep in touch with me if you like. I can be found at josie.capuana@gmail.com.

So I thank you for all of your support over these past 27 years, and I hope that you will continue to support the Honors College in every way possible.

Best wishes, Josie
1984

HELEN (HESS) CAPPUCCINO
Helen and her husband Andy have six children—Jacqueline 27, Andrew 21, Mac 20, Jake 16, Nick 15, and Lizzy 13. Helen works at Roswell Park as a Breast Surgical Oncologist, and Andrew is a spine surgeon who runs Buffalo Spine Surgery and works for the Buffalo Bills. Jackie is a graduate of Canisius College, Mac is at NYU, and Andrew is at Ohio State. Nick and Lizzy are ballet dancers who have spent summers with New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theater and Bolshoi. Jake is a junior at Nichols High School. They split their time between Lockport and New York City.

1988

STEPHEN KUBOW
Stephen is completing his fifth year as Director of the Center for Academic Success at Kean University, in Union NJ and his fifteenth year as a faculty member in the Department of Chemistry at Kean.

1991

KENNETH PIZZUCO
Ken is currently living outside Cincinnati, OH working for Multi-Color Corp. as Director of Purchasing.

1992

CINDY ADAMS
After spending her twenties in Boston working at Harvard and the Old State House Museum, Cindy is now an English teacher at Clarence High School in NY.

2000

CARRIE (HARDER) BARTSCH
Carrie received her Ph.D. from the University of Dayton in Electrical Engineering.

2006

KEITH KAMHOLZ
Keith earned a Master’s Degree in Digital Imaging and Design at NYU’s Center for Advanced Digital Applications (CADA). After graduation, Keith had an internship at Framestore CFC and worked on a commercial airing during the 2008 Beijing Olympics. He is now a full-time CG artist at Absolute Post, working on various productions.

1998

WILLIAM BANAS
William has been married for 14 years to his wife Elissa and they have two daughters, Alexandra (9 years old) and Kathryn (6 years old). He recently finished his M.S. in Aerospace Engineering at UB under a NASA fellowship, and is “ABD” (All But Dissertation) with respect to his Ph.D. in Aerospace Engineering.

2001

PHILIP EDWARD
Phil recently accepted a position at University of North Carolina located in Chapel Hill as an Assistant Professor. He teaches in the School of Information and Library Science.

2003

KRISTINA SWAMY
Kristina received her B.A. in French Language and Literature from Stony Brook University and continued on to the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California for her M.A. in TESOL and certificate in Teaching French as a Foreign Language. Currently, she is serving in the Peace Corps in Bijie, China as a University English teacher at Bijie College.

2004

LINDSAY (PRATT) QUINTILONE
Lindsay is currently an assistant district attorney in Livingston County, NY.

2005

SUIJATA SOFAT
Sujata is currently a fourth year medical student at the University of Buffalo and is applying for a residency in General Surgery.

1999

TRACY (SWEDROCK) HEFFRON
Tracy and her husband Brian have a two year old daughter, and just had a son in February. She is currently working as a Physician Assistant in an Internal Medicine office in Geneva, NY.

2002

LUCY BOULATNIKOV
Lucy is an engineer for GM Fuel Cell Division in Rochester, NY.

2003

JOANNE CROFTS
Joanne married Zachary Fowler on August 9, 2008. They currently reside in Buffalo, NY.

2004

VANDREI FERRARIS
Vandrei married Michael Vandrei on September 1, 2007.
Photos from the Honors Alumni Reception in Buffalo, New York, June 2008.