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The Promethean: Spring 2013, Issue 1

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David Hoffberg is a very humble man. I noticed this the moment words began to flow from his mouth. And though I was only meeting him for the first time, I felt as if we had spoken before, on some other plane or in another time. Maybe the reason I felt this way was because of the sense he made as we conversed during my interview. Everything we discussed clicked in my head. Professor Hoffberg is also the kind of man you want to listen to, because you know he means everything he says, and in some strange way, even if you have never met him before, the words he speaks will hit home. After we parted ways, I realized why people are making such a big deal out of Professor Hoffberg’s retirement: He is the kind of person who inspires you greatly, and I know that he will be missed dearly here at The College at Brockport.

For those of you who do not know him, David Hoffberg has been teaching at The College at Brockport since the year 2000. He has only taught one class, entitled Honors Professional Ethics, which meets weekly in a seminar setting. Hoffberg started teaching at Brockport after being invited by a former president of the college, Dr. Paul Yu. He had been practicing law for several decades in Rochester before deciding to move on to another adventure. When I asked Hoffberg what the main point of his class is, he summed it up in one word: choices. He wants to “enable his students to understand the ethical position of people they are coming into contact with on a daily basis.” I also asked him if he designed the class with a specific major or study in mind. He told me that there was no specific demographic being targeted, and that anybody could take the class because we all run into ethical issues. His goal was to “create an environment where students could hold a discussion,” and note taking would be held to a minimum, because Hoffberg did not want to preach about what to think, rather, he wanted his students to learn how to think. What Hoffberg envisioned and created was a class where the professor does not stand in front of the room lecturing. The students are the ones talking and directing the discussions onward, which in my opinion, is how a college classroom should function.

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The first Scholars Day event was held on April 24, 1984 during which 66 faculty members presented their research in six poster sessions. No students participated in the first Scholars Day. But since then, the event has steadily grown to become mainly a student event that includes student research, performances, and other creative endeavors.

The College Senate at The College at Brockport ratified a proposal almost 30 years ago to establish Scholars Day with the broad purpose of showcasing the scholarship of students, faculty, and staff on our campus. A related purpose was to share ideas, knowledge, and research with the community in and around our campus. And today, the event has become just that – a well-attended, regional conference exhibiting the outstanding work of mostly students and faculty.

In 2011, The Spectrum, a faculty reviewed electronic journal, was established to publish student work presented at Scholars Day. And 2011 was also the year in which Scholars Day sessions were video archived on the Internet for the first time.

Every year, the Honors Program continues to be well-represented at Scholars Day. Four of the seven or so research articles published in the first issue of The Spectrum belonged to Honors students. This year, Scholars Day is scheduled for April 10, and approximately 107 Honors students are presenting their research and creative activities – comprising almost 27 percent of the total presenters from across campus!

I am also excited to inform everyone that the presentations by Honors Students this year will be held in one location and will be video-streamed live on the Web! To all of you who have submitted work to present this year at Scholars Day, I say: Well done and congratulations!

For more information about Scholars Day, tips on how to present at Scholars Day, or publishing in The Spectrum, feel free to stop by my office for a chat!

Dr. Priya Banerjee, Interim Director of Honors Program

Contribute to The Promethean!
The Honors Program Newsletter is an award-winning publication dedicated to the Honors Program faculty, students, and alumni. Articles are written by Honors students and are designed to provide information to the Honors community. Content will include a variety of topics, including research, Honors program news and events, student and professor spotlights, experiences, and creative work. For submissions or more information, please contact John LaCourt at jla-co1@u.brockport.edu.

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Prometheus sculpture on cover created by Arno Breker.

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One in three people will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their life. Boil that down and you realize that there is not a person in the world who has remained unaffected by cancer in some way.

I am no exception. In 1996, when I was just 3 years old, I lost my grandfather to what started out as prostate cancer and spread to lymphoma. Three years old. I can’t remember his quirks. I can’t remember the joy he spread to those around me. And now, because of cancer, I will never know my mother’s father. I also lost my aunt, my father’s sister, to a bout with breast cancer. I don’t even remember when she died. I don’t even remember meeting her. And now, like my grandfather, I will never know my aunt because of cancer.

Recently, my family and I have been affected by cancer again. In October, 2011, my grandmother was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was very lucky for her and my family that the doctors caught it early and surgery removed the offensive lump.

Coming back to school again this semester, I was most excited for one thing: Brockport’s Relay for Life on April 19. The event is a wonderful twelve hours in which people come together to fight against this horrible disease. The bond that we share against cancer unites people that would otherwise be strangers. We laugh, we hug, we have fun, and we cry. The emotions, the lack of sleep, and the feeling that you made a difference in the world are worth feeling exhausted at the end of the night (though you really do not have to stay the whole time and can come and go as you please).

Despite the fact that it is emotional, the event is fun as well. Music from bands and a shuffled playlist, various games to get the energy up, and fun activities to do while walking help make the night go much faster.

This year, I dedicate my walk to my grandmother. She died in January of other causes, but I take comfort in the fact that she beat cancer.

If you would like to join me in the fight, go to www.relayforlife.org/sunybrockportNY to sign up or donate for the event. Everyone is welcome. If you cannot attend the event please consider donating, because that money could save someone’s life.

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When the weather was unusually warm for January, I walked through the campus and found "letters" hidden in various places. I took photographs and formed the word "BROCKPORT" with letters meaningful to the college. For example, the first "O" is part of the fountain donated by the Soviet Union for hosting the Special Olympics here in 1979. The "C" is a handle to the SERC, the newest addition to our campus.

This project was inspired by an Alpha Photo Essay I created my senior year of high school. The challenge was to change your perspective and find the letters of the entire alphabet formed in your surroundings. You could not use actual lettering, nor could you set up a letter by moving objects. I modified the original task to make the word "BROCKPORT" and found letters around campus. I believe that showing letters through pictures that represent the word puts a lot of meaning behind something so simple.
As a Public Relations (PR) major, I am obsessed with maintaining reputations and fixing crises through sound character and proper performance. And as a McNair scholar, I have the opportunity to combine my love for PR and research to explore the ineffectiveness of PR in recent years. As PR became a tool for marketing and advertising, the age of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) began, and what it meant to be a PR professional changed as well, but not necessarily in a positive way.

My research evaluates the ineffectiveness of PR when integrated in internal politics such as IMC. My theory is that PR professionals solve issues collectively that organizations, or managers within, are unable to solve individually. I believe this goal is hindered when PR is not seen as a management function. I also think that in order for PR to be a successful function, PR professionals must be independent entities who balance individual creativity and organizational constraints. My hypothesis is that when PR is integrated into an organization, the PR professional is more likely to conform to organizational beliefs and politics to avoid ridicule. Forcing a PR professional to be used as a marketing tool negates the purpose of having a PR department or professional and undermines the profession as a whole.

By exploring theories and studies such as Communication as a Balance of Creativity and Constraint and the Asch Experiment, I intend to prove that PR departments are ineffective in managing reputations and handling crises if they are a part of Integrated Marketing Communication. I intend to answer the following questions:

- Are PR departments as effective as PR agencies?
- Does integrating PR as a tool for marketing and advertising compromise the integrity of PR?
- What makes a PR department effective?
- Can the opinion of PR professionals within a department of the organization be trusted?
- Is “spin” and manipulation more prominent amongst PR departments or PR agencies?

By answering these questions, I hope to debunk some of the common myths about PR professionals and discover more effective ways for PR professionals to represent an organization. I will present my findings at the University of Maryland on March 13-17, 2013 and at Niagara University on July 11, 2013.
The structure of Honors Professional Ethics is simple, yet the class entails complex and controversial material. Students write four papers throughout the semester that are concerned with current, ethical issues. Students are first asked to write about their own perspective on a contemporary ethical issue, and this semester, Hoffberg decided to focus on the subject of the shortage of transplantable organs. The other two papers are concerned with the ethical issues raised by pre-implantation genetics and the war in Afghanistan. Student debates and visits from professionals from his former law firm, Nixon Peabody, Strong Memorial Hospital and Gannett, as well as a former executive from Bausch & Lomb, who is now a business coach, are also spread throughout the semester. The class culminates in a final paper where students are asked to write about their five personal ethical principles. The aim of the class is to get students thinking about their own choices and beliefs, and to dig deeper into seemingly ordinary and simple situations. “It is the experience I want my students to remember, not me,” said Hoffberg. And I fully believed him.

After teaching some 27 semesters of Honors Professional Ethics, David Hoffberg has experienced some wonderful moments. I could see the fondness in his eyes as he told me about a former student who recently contacted him. The man told Hoffberg that all he could think about was “care-based thinking,” also known as the golden rule, which is one of the main principles Hoffberg discusses in his class. It had been over two years since this man had sat in Hoffberg’s classroom. He also told me about another student, one who had grown up in a rough neighborhood and came to class every week looking like he had just finished digging ditches. This student also had a great resentment towards his classmates, who, in his opinion, had extremely easy and comfortable lives compared to what he had experienced. But, on the day of this student’s final presentation, an incredible metamorphosis took place. Hoffberg says that his student came into the class wearing a brand new suit, hair cut, clean-shaven, and shoes shined. He told Hoffberg afterwards that he had had an epiphany. A year later, Hoffberg received an email from the student. The message was simple: “Professor Hoffberg, you changed my life.”

One thing Hoffberg conveyed to me during our conversation was that he did not want me to make him sound like a hero. He humbly said, “I am not perfect.” He may not be a hero, but he has certainly played a major role in changing students’ lives and perspectives. I, for one, now regret that I never had the opportunity to take his class, because it sounds as if it would have been an invaluable experience. We are all faced with situations where we need to make an ethical choice. If we never get the chance to think about how we would react to these types of situations, we may make a choice that we will regret in the future. Hoffberg’s class is not only beneficial to the college experience, but is applicable to the rest of our lives. It gives a student the opportunity to think about ethics and form his or her own beliefs about what is right and what is wrong.

Thinking about ethics is important, and everyone should have an opportunity to do so. It is my hope that this class can continue in some form. The lessons that can be learned from a course like this would benefit any college student, and if it did not continue, I think many of our future students would be cheated out of an incredible experience. I know that The College at Brockport will miss David Hoffberg, and he told me that he will also miss teaching here. I wish him the best of luck in his future endeavors, and I hope that if you see him, you will thank him. At the end of the interview, Hoffberg reflected on his time spent here in Brockport. He said, “I am grateful every day for the opportunity that The College at Brockport has given to me. I mean that.”
### Light of Our Final Farewell
By: Linda Webber

I leaned myself against the old tree
and looked at the majestic purple mountains.
I looked up into the sun and smiled in its warmth.
I looked to the left as the breeze picked up.

There in the sky, a light flickered,
and a little rainbow danced over the clouds.

It seemed like a hallucination in my mind,
but the rainbow light consumed my vision.
This moment on the mountain was real;
this moment I let you go. I said goodbye to you... I think.

I stared at that rainbow,
felt the breeze tousle the curly hair you loved,
and I knew you said goodbye to me too.

I knew it was you
contacting me from heaven,
and that thought embraced me as I hugged the tree.

You reassured me that everything was all right,
that you would always look after me,
and that you promised we would see each other again.
I truly believe this.

### I hope you know why
By: Candace Brown

When I reach for your hand
And squeeze it three times

When I look at you and smile
And gaze into your eyes

When I let my breath go
And give a slight sigh

When I linger at the doorway
And don’t want to say goodbye

When I throw my arms around you
And kiss each of your eyes

When I hold your hand to my heart
And feel my soul fly

When I say my prayers nightly
And thank God you’re my guy

I hope you know why
I hope you know why
I hope you know why

### Linocut piece
By: Elise Micale
Home
By: Candace Brown

The warm yellow light glows from within
Starbursts project from the chandelier over the stairs
The familiar crisscross of logs
The tin roof that pings when it rains
The gnarled branches of trees
Weave and wind
And tell a story

Memories in every corner
Faces within
Conversations
Laughter

Smells of homemade meals delight and surround
Everything changes
But everything stays the same

Little trinkets placed with care on windowsill ledges
Price tags everywhere, a classic mark
Everything in multiples, excess
People
Strangers
Inside
Outside

Carefully manicured gardens
Expensive furniture
Fancy cars
A row of furs
Delicate apparel

The warm yellow light still glows

The faces a little older
Different conversations
Living and loving

I see smiling eyes
I feel open hearts
Yellow glowing light

The writing on the wall
Children’s growth etched into a closet door jamb
Torn down
Fresh wood
New

Childlike scrawling
Replaced with beautiful walls
Everything pristine
Shiny and new

Still the yellow light glows
Evokes warmth
Comfort
Safety
Security
Like a fleece blanket…
A crackling fire….
On a bitter winters day

It is my world, my circle, my home
Yet I am an outsider looking in
An observer watching from afar

I want to stay forever and leave tomorrow
I am a child inside these walls
A woman outside of them

What used to be all of me is now only a part of me
Yet it is everything

Security can confine you
Love can hold you
Beauty can confuse you

What makes my soul smile also squeezes my heart
So with my chin up and my spirit strong
I break free of my circle

And whether I plunge downward or soar to the sky
I will grow and I will learn
And I will become me
The course was designed as a blended experience that included planned video-conference collaborative classes between Brockport and Novgorod, joint online interactions and assignments, and regularly scheduled face-to-face campus classes between each university’s faculty and students.

The synchronous video-conferenced classes added an important human dimension to the course. Course participants were able to see gestures and hear voice and emotional tone, which brought more familiarity and intimacy to the online exchanges. The students reported this as very helpful and identified these face-to-face meetings as one of the variables that they liked most about the course.

Significant to this COIL partnership was its discipline duality where students in Russia were studying English in addition to gender. The linguistic goal and bilingual competency of our Russian partners enabled an English language teaching and learning platform, which opened the door for American students to interact and communicate with Russian students in ways that would not have been possible as part of an ordinary Brockport General Education Women and Gender Studies course. Brockport Honors students gained significantly in areas of cultural sensitivity and cultural competence. Equally noteworthy, many Russian students wrote of their linguistic training goals and their appreciation of the opportunity to practice and perfect their English language speaking and writing skills.

The COIL course concluded with students in each country creating final PSA projects that addressed a variety of research topics as encountered within the course. Students in both countries presented their PSAs in two final video-conference classes dedicated to this effort. These final PSA projects were extraordinary in topic and presentation. This shines back on the merits of the COIL course and the many successes of this semester-long teaching/learning partnership.

Important to the success of the COIL course was my WMS 360 Honors class. My students were amazing! They were smart, flexible, and pioneers in their own right. The class really helped me move around within teaching spaces that were new and unfamiliar and we all found our way together. I was very impressed by students’ thoughtful contributions to our blog and inspired by students’ genuine interest in the course topics and in our Russian partners. I am so grateful for students’ work here and for their spirit of openness and adventure. And yes, I would absolutely teach another WMS 360 COIL course. Despite the extraordinary human capital required in developing and implementing our COIL course, time devoted to instruction was extremely fulfilling. For example, contributions to the course blog were substantive and meaningful, which made time dedicated to online instructor responses so worthwhile. Similarly, students’ final course PSAs were remarkable.

An additional variable unique to this experience was the Women and Gender Studies course topics, which largely facilitated student engagement among COIL participants in each country. This topical appeal is true of Women and Gender Studies as an area of knowledge that intersects the human condition, which offers a wonderful hook to bring diverse student groups into the fold of an international course. Because of its multidisciplinary dimension and its contemporary application, the Women and Gender studies discipline lends itself to studying other cultures, and it provides a strategic backdrop to overlay and link in a COIL partnership.

The face-to-face meetings filled an important real-time instructional need for students and faculty. The real-time meetings were opportunities to further develop topical electronic exchanges and often opened the doors of communication in meaningful ways that might have otherwise gone unspoken. The class discussions on abortion and reproductive freedoms and on maternity capital as understood in both the U.S. and Russia as examples were fruitful dialogues that engaged complex ideas. Learning became organic to discussion and many key questions emerged as a consequence to the video-conferences. The most unique COIL outcome for students was the synchronous video-conferencing when students were able to see and interact with each other face-to-face. Also significant were students’ final PSA projects, where students in each country were able to present their work in a global arena for a global audience.

Please watch for the Honors WMS 360 COIL PSA presentations scheduled for April 10, 2013 Scholars Day.