Next semester in January, as you attempt to enter the Honors College, you will realize that you must pass through a strange and unfamiliar place. Walking through the glass double doors, you will enter the newly developed and long awaited Honors College Lounge. In front of your very eyes the common room will appear, which in turn is a gateway to the rest of the lounge. This includes, the reception room, computer lab, private study rooms, private soundproof practice rooms, an additional classroom, kitchenette, and various Honors College offices. This lounge finalizes the progression of the Honors Program into the Honors College. The vision of the Honors College is to create a more centralized hub for the community of scholars.

As the Honors College grows in student population, to increase the clerical needs of both the administration and students, a full time reception room has been allocated. Here, any immediate and generalized questions and requests can be answered and dealt with efficiently. This room will also serves as the new entrance to the Honors College administrative offices.

To encompass the large demand of the growing Honors College, the lounge includes a fully equipped computer lab with printers, computers, scanners and a copier. In order to please both sides of the computer spectrum, the computer lab consists of PCs and Macintoshes. The majority opinion of the honors students is that the printers are by far the most essential entity of the computer lab. Benson Joseph, a sophomore, expressed “I am just happy I will be able to take advantage of the free printing privileges.”

In addition to the computer resources, there are three private study rooms to accommodate and encourage study groups. If a student feels the need to study in silence at any particular time of the day, these rooms provide a nurturing environment for absorption of knowledge. Unlike studying in the library where you are forced to leave at some point in the night, here you can stay as long as your heart desires. There is also a new classroom to allow the increase of honors courses and seminars.

On the diametrically opposite side of the college life spectrum, belies the balance. This balance can range from a simple hobby to resting your mind. The lounge will offer the students two professionally soundproofed practice rooms. Whether it is playing an instrument or rehearsing for an audition, these rooms are the perfect spot. Chris Leary, a freshman, stated, “I’m excited about the practice room because they’ll be a great place for me to prepare for my theatre auditions, and I can do it without disturbing anyone.” Aside from the practice rooms, there is the large common area to congregate with fellow honors students. You can have a pleasant conversation at the numerous tables or “chillax” on the pristine sofas and chairs while watching an entertaining show over a cup of java, made in the immaculate kitchenette. Students are really anxious about this portion of the lounge. Freshman, Ankur Patel, conveyed the importance of the lounge as “finally a place to relax…seriously.”

One of the most tantalizing aspects of the lounge is its 24/7 availability. The students will surely be looking forward to the grand opening next semester. The Honors College is truly becoming united with the pursuit of creating a community of academia. The rebirth of the Honors Lounge has not only added more facility but a greater sense of kinship among the honors students. In conjunction with an honors student’s journey through scholarship, the new Honors Lounge will never rest.
HOLIDAY PLANS
by Jennifer Nguyen
For some, this break means chances to travel; for others, a chance to work on a worthwhile cause. Still others are using this vacation as a chance to relax and regroup for the coming spring semester. What are you doing during this year’s winter break? Will you be doing something exciting and new? Do you plan on celebrating the traditional holidays that winter is known for? Or is the winter break just going to be a chance to let your brain rest?

“For the holidays I’m just going to be with my family, in VA. But for New Years Eve I’m going to visit my dad in Brussels, Belgium where he works for the World Customs Organization. We actually have plans to go to Paris for New Years Eve and visit Germany as well to visit my cousins. He moved there a year ago, so I haven’t seen him in a year, so this will be really exciting for me.”

Rebecca Heller
Junior, Mass Communications

“...well my family is Russian so we celebrate a Russian Christmas, which is on January 13th. We also celebrate New Years.”

Olga Kochurova,
Freshman, Biology

“I will be working at my planned internship at Planned Parenthood where we are working on a Lobby Day for January 25th. We will be lobbying our legislatures during general assembly on reproductive issues—focusing mainly on the emergency contraception pill. We’re trying to get our legislatures to support our reproductive rights for choice.”

Leah Fremouw
Junior, Women’s Studies/Psychology

“Even though my family is Buddhist, we still put up a Christmas tree and give out presents.”

Thanh-Mai Nguyen
Sophomore, Biology

“Every year, my family goes to my grandparent’s house—they’re in Maryland. We also have this one tradition where we open only one present on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.”

Beth Sandford, Freshman
Forensic Science & Criminal Justice

Congratulations to the new Honors College Idea Exchange officers!

Presidents
Jeremy Epstein
Priyam Vyas
Secretary
Benson Joseph
Treasurer
Aman Sandhu
Membership Chair
Meril George
Service Chair
Sandep Sharma
Social Chair
Mushamisi Kahari
Newsletter Co-Editors
David Hanna
Chelsea Shields

Save the Date!
January 26, 2007
Open House for the New Honors Lounge
Food, Games & Fun!

Our administrations problems can be traced back to the B.C. period.

Wha?

by Mushamisi Kahari
by Chelsea Shields & Audrey Thacker

With first semester rapidly coming to an end, the holidays will be here before we know it. All of the stress of exam time combined with the hustle and bustle of getting ready for the holidays can turn what is supposed to be a very merry season into a swirling jumble of aggravation and stress. It is important, especially at a time like this, to take a break from things for a bit, sit back, relax and enjoy the simple pleasures in life. This will leave you with a clear mind and a good attitude so that you are better able to tackle everything on your plate. Here a few suggestions for fun, festive treats that will give you and your friends a much needed break from the pressures of exam time.

“Holly Jolly Snowmen”

Ingredients:
1 bag of red and green holiday M&M’s
4 DOVE Brand Chocolates
20 cups popped popcorn
1 cup sugar
1 cup light corn syrup
¼ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons butter
4 round chocolate cookies
White icing
Wooden Skewers
2 sheet pans

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 200 degrees. Spread popcorn on a sheet pan and place in oven to keep warm
2. Combine sugar, corn syrup, and salt in a medium sauce pan. Bring mix to a boil over medium heat and cook until sugar is dissolved and mixture becomes thick, about 3-5 minutes. Add butter. Stir until melted. Remove from heat.
3. Transfer popcorn into a very large bowl and toss with sugar mixture until completely coated. Stir in M&M’s leaving a handful aside for decoration.
4. With well-buttered hands, shape the popcorn mixture into 3 different sized balls.
5. Stack popcorn balls in descending sizes, using a wooden skewer for support.
6. Use frosting to attack M&M’s for faces, scarves, buttons, etc. Use the round chocolate cookie and the DOVE brand chocolate to make a hat (attach with frosting).

*Recipe inspired by: www.marsbrightideas.com

Holiday Recipes

Q&A

Q: What is the most important social or political issue in the world today?

Global Warming is probably the most important issue of today. The media blames global warming for odd weather patterns, droughts, and floods. A couple of days ago, U.K. released a report that states global warming is becoming worse. They are now working with former Vice President Al Gore to talk about the issue.

- Priyanka Grover

No, in terms of ecological catastrophes, we have bigger concerns. Since the dawn of humans, 99% of the Earth’s native species have become extinct. This has been due to invasive species, commercial hunting and fishing, deforestation, and other factors. Normal pollution, which one accounts for 5% is overemphasized and is actually not the biggest problem. This king of anthropogenic extinction of organisms leads to dramatic decreases in biodiversity and will lead to the absolute carnage.

-Kai Li

I wouldn’t say global warming is the biggest concern, but it is definitely a concern. Though it has an influence on global warming, I think pollution and exploitation of limited resources is a huge issue. People don’t consider the environmental affects of overusing automobiles, factories etc. are negatively affected but nobody seems to consider these things.

-Farah Haroon

I believe terrorism is the most important issue in the world today because it is a relatively new problem that has an enormous impact on societies, cultures, and economies. This issue will be at the center of the world problems for a while to come because the fight to defeat them is so new and different compared to the wards of our past generations. The war against terror is without a doubt the war of the future as far the technology and strategies goes.

-Riche Boe

Holiday Haystacks

Ingredients:
Butterscotch Morsels
Chow Mein Noodles
Peanuts
Double Broiler
Wax Paper

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 200 degrees. Spread chow mein on a sheet pan and place in oven to keep warm
2. Combine sugar, corn syrup, and salt in a medium sauce pan. Bring mix to a boil over medium heat and cook until sugar is dissolved and mixture becomes thick, about 3-5 minutes. Add butter. Stir until melted. Remove from heat.
3. Transfer popcorn into a very large bowl and toss with sugar mixture until completely coated. Stir in M&M’s leaving a handful aside for decoration.
4. With well-buttered hands, shape the popcorn mixture into 3 different sized balls.
5. Stack popcorn balls in descending sizes, using a wooden skewer for support.
6. Use frosting to attack M&M’s for faces, scarves, buttons, etc. Use the round chocolate cookie and the DOVE brand chocolate to make a hat (attach with frosting).

*Recipe inspired by Audrey Thacker.
Name: Carmen Wong  
Major: Biology and International Studies  
Year: Class of 2009

Describe your research experience at VCU. Research at VCU has been an intellectually challenging experience that continues to provide me with new insights regarding the field of cancer research. Through my research experiences, I have learned that the process of scientific research is a collaborative effort, and that not every procedure or experiment will go as planned. Moreover, my research experience at VCU continues to give me invaluable skills I may utilize in my future as a professional student and beyond.

How did you first get started in research?  
Upon entering VCU as a freshman in August 2005, I was a participant in the Freshmen Summer Research Institute, a program sponsored by the VCU Honors College. This one-week experience provided me a glimpse of research in all fields of study, including art, criminal justice, and the sciences. Additionally, in June 2006, I participated in the Honors Summer Undergraduate Research Program, which is a more vigorous and narrow research experience that pairs researchers with undergraduate students in a mentor-student relationship.

Have you participated in any research/scale fairs? If so, in what science fairs have you competed (name of convention and city located)?  
No, I have not participated in any research conferences, yet. I am planning on submitting an application to attend a research conference by the end of spring semester 2007.

What type of research did you do?  
I was conducting research on the mechanisms of breast cancer cells, focusing on the DNA-damage response and the protein TRF2, which is found to be abundant in breast cancer cells and is attached to the telomeres at the ends of chromosomes. The focus of the lab is to find the answers to the “Why?” questions. In addition, I conducted research on breast cancer cells that behave like stem-cells and their role in reoccurrence of breast cancer; mainly for this, I focused on using cell-surface proteins, such as CD44, to try to mark these cancerous stem cells.

Comments on my research experience:  
It was a challenging experience, but it was well worth my summer. I learned skills and techniques that I would never have learned in a classroom setting. In addition, researching this summer has helped me develop a close relationship with not only my mentor, but with the other graduate students and pathologists within the lab.

Seven years from now do you see yourself in a research-based field? If so, what type?  
I can foresee myself in a research-based field, mainly because research is the basis for the knowledge we have in the world; I see myself conducting research in the scientific field, whether be research involving pathology, genetics, or any other biological field of study.

Do you have any comments concerning research which you would like to share with others?  
The stereotype for a researcher – the lonesome person in a lab coat looking into a microscope all day – is a common misconception. Furthermore, there are other aspects of research besides scientific research, such as research in the social sciences and humanities – and no field of research takes priority over another.

Who were you paired with?  
I worked with Dr. Lynne Elmore in the Department of Pathology during the summer.

Tips for Identifying Faculty Mentors and Research Projects  
By Dr. Jacqueline Smith-Mason

1. Talk with faculty with whom you have taken courses and whose work has inspired your intellectual curiosity. Don’t be afraid to ask for their advice.
2. Attend the Berglund Honors Seminar Series and other campus lectures to learn about faculty research interests and current events.
3. Consider the interdisciplinary aspects of your research interests and identify relevant departments that may have faculty who share those interests.
4. Check departmental websites for information on faculty research interests and publications.
5. Look at undergraduate and graduate course listings to find out what faculty are teaching.
6. Talk with your academic advisor, faculty in your major department, and fellow students to identify faculty who specialize in research areas of interest to you.
7. Read the honors weekly listserv for undergraduate research announcements.