

UF Voices

Graham Center focuses on civic engagement

In 2008, Florida ranked 34th in voter turnout. Some 70 percent of Floridians report cutting back on civic activities in the past year. Our state faces a civic crisis.

At the Bob Graham Center for Public Service, these statistics caused us to ask what contribution our university is making to prepare students for active citizenship. In addition to the excellent education provided, are we specifically training students to become the citizens our democracy requires, or do we assume that a fine – but general – education is sufficient?

Derek Bok's book, "Our Underachieving Colleges" (2005), makes a compelling case that colleges need to do more. Bok will be at Digital Worlds Institute at 3 p.m. on Feb. 23, to start a dialogue that we hope will result in a more visible focus on civic engagement.

The Bob Graham Center also has received an Americorps grant, "Making Citizens." This will assist in efforts to increase the number of immigrant staff and community members who take and pass the citizenship exam, help new citizens become active community members, and train Americorps members/students to become more engaged citizens.

For more information, visit bobgrahamcenter.ufl.edu.

*Ann Henderson,
Director, Bob Graham Center*



Ann Henderson

'Extreme Makeover' has UF connection

Most college students can't claim to have worked on the set of a national television show.

Ryan McGinn and Aaron Wilbur can. Both students at the University of Florida's College of Design, Construction and Planning volunteered their time as production assistants for "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," during its Gainesville build. McGinn, from Sebastian, Fla., is a master's student studying architecture. Wilbur, from Melbourne, Fla., is a fifth-year senior in landscape architecture.

They assisted with security, beverages and food, and moving television cameras and furniture. As fans of the show, it gave them a chance to see things from the other side.

"There is more to that show than what TV viewers might think actually happens," McGinn said.

According to Wilbur, the house wasn't the only thing they built.

"You're around those people a lot and you develop friendships with them," Wilbur said.

He is already making plans to work with the show again someday.

By Allie Layos



Deborah Hendrix

Students and faculty of SPOHP, (left to right) Daniel Navarette, Candice Ellis, Khambria Clarke, Amanda Noll, Paul Ortiz and Marna Weston, pose in front of a mural outside the B.B. King Museum in Indianola, Miss.

UF helps preserve the voices of history

Students of the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, known as SPOHP, will bring history to life in the Gainesville community during Black History Month.

"A lot of people on campus are pushing for major initiatives for black history," Paul Ortiz, director of SPOHP, said.

University of Florida faculty and students of the SPOHP are working to preserve and promote local history by educating the community on past projects in Mississippi, and by implementing similar initiatives locally.



UF students Khambria Clarke (left) and Amanda Noll (not pictured) interview an Indianola, Miss., resident at the town's Henry M. Seymour Library.

because a white person was walking on the sidewalk," Ortiz said. "Or how it feels to have to explain to your daughter why she can't drink out of the water fountain."

Ortiz led a small group of students on a research trip this past summer to expose them to the prominent black history of Indianola, Miss. For five days, the students recorded personal anecdotes of locals who experienced the civil rights movement.

The public is invited to a multimedia presentation of the Mississippi project from 6 to 8 p.m. on Feb. 17 at Gainesville's Civic Media Center, 433 S. Main St. The presentation will include a question-and-answer session with a panel of SPOHP students.

Currently the project interviews are in the process of being uploaded as part of a digital library. Select narratives will be available through iTunes podcasts.

Candice Ellis, UF senior, conducted about five interviews during the research trip. She said that hearing the stories really brought history to life and changed her perspective.

"You can't compare reading a history book to speaking to these people in person," she said.

Because the oral histories are subjective, they provide deeper insight to history than a text book, Ortiz said.

"They can tell you what it feels like to step into a ditch

By Kristie Andres

Fact

To arrange a local oral-history recording, e-mail Kirsten.wetherbee@gmail.com.

Your campus news source

UF Calendar

Feb. 17

"Florida in World War II," 7 p.m., guest speaker Gary Mormino, Pugh Hall Ocora.

Feb. 18

"Philharmonia of the Nations," Jon Nakamatsu, piano, 7:30 p.m., Phillips Center for the Performing Arts.

Feb. 20

"Beyond the Bog Road," Eileen Ivers, 7:30 p.m., Phillips Center for the Performing Arts.

Feb. 21

"Gone with the Wine," WUFT-FM and WJUF-FM, 1 to 4 p.m., Reitz Student Union.

Feb. 23

Harvard President Emeritus Derek Bok, "Making Citizens," 3 to 4:15 p.m., Digital Worlds Institute.

Feb. 24-25

UF Water Institute Symposium, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., UF Hilton Conference Center.

This is a sampling of events from the electronic UF calendar.

For more event details, or to submit an event to the calendar, click "UF Calendar" at www.insideuf.ufl.edu.

Note This

Seeking Engaged Scholarship nominations

The College of Education at the University of Florida has announced the 8th annual Engaged Scholarship award competition for faculty, graduate students and community members. The awards are presented in the following categories: university, College of Education, graduate student, school district and community.

Nominations are due March 15. For more information, contact Jenny Palgon, jpargon@coe.ufl.edu or 352-273-4135.

Seeking Fellows in Sustainability Prairie Project nominations

As part of a broader, universitywide awakening to environmental and sustainability concerns, the University of Florida Fellows in Sustainability Prairie Project focuses on curricular change to support faculty intellectual development to address such societal issues.

Deans are requested to submit nominations to Whitney Sanford, wsanford@ufl.edu by March 5. For more information, contact Jeff Burkhardt, burk@ufl.edu.

Did you KNOW?

Gainesville's Extreme Makeover filming airs Feb. 21 on ABC.