Ideas Abound as Students Brainstorm About Campus Intellectual Life

by Sharon Stewart

Sixteen student leaders offered ideas on how to boost the quality of intellectual life at USC during a Nov. 6 brainstorming lunch held with Provost Lloyd Kann and political science professor Mark Kann. The brainstorming session – the first of four such meetings held in November – was a sequel to four faculty and staff meetings held in October on the same subject. Jackson and Kann organized the meeting at the request of Provost Lloyd Armstrong Jr.

THE PROVOST: “I asked Michael and me to figure out ways to bring more energy and intellectual excitement into life beyond the classrooms at USC,” Kann said at the start of the Nov. 6 meeting. “We want to explore how to develop a campus … where the world of ideas is palpable.”

Kann and Jackson – in conjunction with a planning committee – will submit a report and a set of recommendations to the provost sometime next spring, he said.

“We want to know what we can do to make the place more interesting, or whether you already think it is interesting and, if so, in what ways,” Jackson told student leaders. “Are there programs that we should enhance that would stimulate conversations among students and conversations with students and faculty that would define USC as a place where folks are engaged intellectually” (continued on page 7)

Making the Move From Volunteer to Community Leader

by Sharon Stewart

A Desire to Provide a Better Life for Her Children Helped a Once Shy Guadalupe Lopez Blossom Into an Outspoken Advocate for Her Family and Her Community.

“When my oldest child started at the [USC School for Early Childhood Education] Head Start center, I started volunteering, helping the teacher in the classroom,” said the mother of five, who is quick to credit a number of USC educational and outreach programs for her evolution from homemaker to community leader. “I thought I needed to do something to grow out of my shell.”

Lopez, born in Durango, Mexico, and naturalized as a U.S. citizen 10 years ago, said her traditional upbringing didn’t encourage outspokenness in girls. “I was very shy because of the way I was raised, and I didn’t want that to happen to my children,” said Lopez, 39. “After volunteering in the classroom for a while and serving on the preschool’s policy council, I took some general education and child-development classes … to learn how to be helpful to my children in their academic life.”

As her children advanced from grade to grade at 32nd Street/USC Magnet School parents. They are at a training session for parent officers.

From the left, Guadalupe Lopez with Devera Somoza, Martha Alvarez and Sandra Varquez at a meeting of 32nd Street/USC Magnet School parents.

The scientists talk about their personal experiences with the creative process as Apted attempts to capture their voracious curiosity, their altruism and the joy they derive from figuring things out.

“Michael Apted is really an amazing person. He has this keen intuitive way of asking questions to bring people out so that every-
**Special Paid University Holidays for Staff**

In a November letter to staff, President Steven B. Sample designated the four work days between Christmas and New Year’s Eve (Dec. 26 through Dec. 29) as special paid university holidays.

Sample noted “a year of phenomenal success on so many fronts” for the university such as a stellar freshman class, new faculty of world-class stature and a record-breaking Good Neighbors campaign in 1999-2000. “The university is on a dynamic upward trajectory, and it is due in large part to the superb efforts of our staff,” wrote Sample in the letter. “When combined with the two weekends, this one-time bonus will give you 10 continuous days off without having to charge your vacation account. On behalf of our trustees,” said Sample, “please accept my heartfelt thanks for a job well done.”

According to the letter, staff members in areas that must stay open Dec. 26 through 29 will be allowed to take the four special university holidays before Dec. 25, or within six months of that date.

Staff members may not choose to work the special holidays and receive extra pay for working these days. Also, where an employee’s holidays are governed by a collective bargaining agreement, that document will control.

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**Quick Takes**

- Articles in USC Trojan Family Magazine about USC’s Family of Five Schools initiative inspired philanthropists Doris and Nelson T. Bogart to hand President Steven B. Sample a $50,000 check at the USC vs. Stanford pregame party this fall. The gift, along with an earlier $5,000 gift from the Bogarts, will probably be used to benefit Family of Five Schools programs, said Civic and Community Relations assistant vice president Samuel Mark Bogart, a retired Chevron executive, earned a B.S. degree in chemical engineering from USC in 1937. In the past, CCR has received a number of monetary gifts from USC alumni, Mark said. “In most cases donors read A F F S on our Web site or the alumni magazine, and the stories prompt them to make a gift.”

- Jack R. Borsting, E. Morgan Stanley Professor of Business Administration and executive director of the Center for Telecommunications Management at the USC Marshall School of Business, has received the Jacinto Steinhardt Memorial Award of the Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences. The award recognizes outstanding contributions to the solution of military problems through the application of operations research techniques.

- He may have joined the Keck School of Medicine of USC faculty only last year, but radiologist Hossein Jadvar is already garnering honors. The Society of Nuclear Medicine honored Jadvar this summer with the M. Arc Tatum Young Investigator Award. “This is a tremendous honor and further strengthens my aspiration for a rewarding career in academic nuclear medicine,” said Jadvar in the September issue of The Journal of Nuclear Medicine.

- Journalism graduate student David Lott garnered a major clip for himself with the Nov. 19 Los Angeles Times magazine publication of his 3,000-word review of a wannabe Los Angeles-based morgue-style rocker. “From the Latino enclaves of Boyle Heights, Alhambra, San Gabriel and Montebello they come to darkened clubs and back alleys at independent record stores such as Covina’s Hot Rocks Records to see M aldonado reenact the voice, mannerisms and awkward dance moves of the moody British singer who continues to be a lifeline for the emotionally sensitive,” Lott wrote of M aldonado, a 31-year-old Los Angeles County lifeguard and TV extra who calls himself the “M exican M orrisey.”

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**Noted L.A. Attorney Crispus Attucks Attacked**

Crispus (Cris) Attucks Wright, a retired Los Angeles civil attorney whose father was born into slavery, has been named an honorary trustee of USC.

Wright has been affiliated with USC for 68 years, since he matriculated as a freshman in 1932. Wright earned both a B.A. in political science (1936) and his L.L.B. (1938) from USC.

“M. Wright’s accomplishments are a lesson in courage and tenacity for all of us,” said President Steven B. Sample. “We honor that he committed himself over the years to USC’s Law School and to advancing civil rights for all Americans. He has been a model for USC law students for years, and has materially advanced the cause of deserving students of every race at USC.”

Named after Crispus Attucks, a free black man who in 1770 was the first casualty of the American Revolution, Wright was imbued with a sense of his African-American heritage by his parents.

Wright’s father — born into slavery in Louisiana and a graduate of LeLand University, an early black college — was a teacher and high school principal who steered to his children the importance of an education.

By 1928, young Crispus Wright’s interest in law and civil rights had become apparent.

While attending M anual Arts High School just south of USC, Wright went to the Los Angeles County Courthouse to observe lawyers arguing cases. He witnessed the work of Willis O. Tyler, then the city’s most prominent black litigator. Family friend Bert McDonald, a 1923 graduate of the USC Law School, further encouraged Wright to study law, which he did at USC.

“My ties to USC run strong and deep, so this honor from my Alma Mater is especially rewarding,” Wright said. “My professors and classmates pushed me to work at my optimum level. Becoming an honorary trustee symbolizes the passing of the torch to the next generation.”

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**Doheny Privileges for Family of 5 Teachers**

**Teachers at USC’s Family of Five Schools who wish to access to a serious library can now become card-carrying members of the University Park campus library system, said Carolyn Ward, client services manager at USC’s Doheny Memorial Library.**

“This is not an open privilege for all Los Angeles Unified School District teachers,” Ward said. “It is for teachers in the Family of Five Schools, who will now have access to approximately two million volumes.”

**Ward Said checkout privileges do not include the den tal, law or medical school libraries. “But we do include access to business, science, cinema, music and other very specialized collections,” she said.**

Opening the library system to Family of Five Schools teachers is part of USC’s outreach program, said Ward, and is an “attempt to give teachers the resources they need to be successful.”

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**It’s Holiday Time**

This is the final USC Chronicle for the year 2000. We will resume publication after the winter recess with our Jan. 8, 2001 issue. USC News and the Chronicle staff wish all our readers a happy holiday season.

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**Retired civil attorney Crispus Attucks Wright earned his B.A. and L.L.B. from USC. “Becoming an honorary trustee symbolizes the passing of the torch to the next generation.”**

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**University of Southern California Chronicle**

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that many immigrant neighborhoods were not organizing. "People don't want to talk about it," Olah said. "There will be a time when there will be enormous gasoline shortages. I won't be surprised if a barrel of oil will soon be $100. Somebody should worry about what mankind will do."

The November issue of Art in America featured David Bunn's ongoing work - found-object installations and poetic juxtapositions - with 2 million discarded cards from the Los Angeles Central Library's catalog. "Fused with both nostalgia and reverence, Bunn's work is a quiet, potent act of mourning," said the story. "It laments not just the passing of the card catalog, but the spirit and sense of one government focus on finding alternative energy technologies."

A plethora of USC experts weighed in on the presidential race between Al Gore and George W. Bush and the election fallout in Florida:

- Prior to election day, politics expert Sheldon Kamienicki said Gore was considered a master of hardball campaigning (San Diego Union-Tribune, Sept. 12) and Bush's campaign promise to change the ways campaigns were conducted put him in a difficult position if his campaign went negative, campaign finance expert Herbert Alexander said (Associated Press, Sept. 20); the campaigns have become "theatrical," said cultural historian Steven Ross but until it backfires on them, American politicians will turn their campaigns into "the full Monty." At some point, there won't be anything left to reveal (Los Angeles Times, Sept. 29).

- Culture expert Gaspar Rivera-Salgado said that voters in non-swinging states were practically ignored during the campaigns. "The election has become so specialized ... that most people are left feeling left out" (The Stranger, Nov. 9).

- Political scientists Howard Gillman spoke about the "politics of fault" (NPR, Nov. 11). "What I think is increasing people's anxiety in the country is that neither side has agreed right now what the mechanism will be that they agree on," Gillman said. In a story about the U.S. Supreme Court's reputation as being above politics, he said, "In cases of great constitutional moment, when the stakes are very high and the country's paying attention, the court tries to speak with one voice" (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Dec. 3). Statistical Rand Wilcox was struck by the large number of votes Gore picked up in the statewide recount that began the day after the election. "The probability of that many going for Gore is less than one in a trillion. It's very peculiar - it's not random. There's something systematic going on. ... It could be innocent, like the machines are doing something peculiar in a certain direction" (Los Angeles Times, Nov. 11).

- Media expert Bryce Nelson was interviewed by CBS (Nov. 8) about the network's error in coding the race first to Gore and then to Bush. He said the prestige of the Chicago Tribune subsided for decades after its 1948 incorrect pick of T. Roosevelt D. Dewey over Harry Truman and that the political credibility of the networks had similarly declined. On Oct. 30, the Los Angeles Times published an article titled "We've got to break away from traditional silicon technology," he said, "because it's about to price itself out of the market." According to the article, the passing of the card catalog, which has practically ignored during the campaigns. The only time an election in California "place in doubt," in their appeal to the Florida Supreme Court, was a strong argument (Los Angeles Times, Dec. 5). But time is running out. "Both legally and practically, this is very ugly," he said. "Time is on the side of the U.S. Constitution when it said hand-counted ballots could be included in vote totals after the state's deadline (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Nov. 26); the uphill battle Bush's legal team faced in light of the Nov. 30 deadline to certify electors under federal law (Los Angeles Times, Nov. 26); and the Supreme Court's options in handling the Bush motion (New York Times, Nov. 24). In a story on the earlier Florida Supreme Court's ruling, he said he knew the ruling would be subject to immediate attack as being partisan (New York Times, Nov. 22). "Everybody's got a political affiliation," he said, "but I think this was a court trying as hard as it could." An Advocate for the poor and underprivileged, Kevin Starr said, mentioned in a story about the "politics of fault" (NPR, Nov. 11). "I think the court tries to speak with one voice" (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Dec. 3). Statistical Rand Wilcox was struck by the large number of votes Gore picked up in the statewide recount that began the day after the election. "The probability of that many going for Gore is less than one in a trillion. It's very peculiar - it's not random. There's something systematic going on. ... It could be innocent, like the machines are doing something peculiar in a certain direction" (Los Angeles Times, Nov. 11).

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Family of Five Kids Take Part in Anti-Graffiti Poster Contest

ENTRIES IN AN ANTI-GRAFFITI POSTER CONTEST - sponsored by the USC Family of Five Schools Safety Task Force, Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum Commission and USC Civic and Community Relations - were judged Nov. 10 by (from left to right) Robert Taylor, deputy chief, USC Department of Public Safety; Peggy Hentschke, executive director, Education Consortium of Central L.A.; Charles Melendez, director of Healthy Start at Foshay Learning Center; and Lt. Nancy Rameriz, Los Angeles Unified School District police.

Samuel Mark, assistant vice president for Civic and Community Relations, said the contest has a positive focus. “We are hoping to channel artistic energy in a positive direction and let kids know that it’s not OK to do graffiti; graffitied neighborhoods are not normal, safe or acceptable.”

Students enrolled in one of the USC Family of Five Schools were eligible to enter, and 175 did just that.

In the 6-12th grade contest, first place went to Joshua Ray 7th grade (below center, the poster shows a youngster caught in the glare of a flashlight beam while contemplating adding graffiti to a wall. The text says, “Before you do it ask yourself, is it worth it?”). Second place went to Nayeli Nava, 8th grade (below, right). This poster pictures a man standing in front of a graffitied wal. He remembers how nice the neighborhood used to be, and children encourage citizens to call the graffiti Hot Line, 1-800-611CITY, to get the wall cleaned up. Third place went to Anita Kang, 6th grade. All are from 32nd Street/USC Magnet.

In the K-5th-grade contest, first place went to Isabella Carrillo, 5th grade, Foshay Learning Center; second place to Max Van Rensselaer, 3rd grade, 32nd Street/USC Magnet; and third place (tie) to Cristina Penate, 5th grade, Norwood Street School, and Brooke Taylor Berry, 5th grade, Foshay Learning Center.

The annual art contest is part of an effort to promote “graffiti-free” schools and neighborhoods and to support a crime-resistant community. Entries were received from 32nd Street/USC Magnet, Foshay Learning Center and Norwood Street School. The awards were presented at the annual USC CCR holiday reception, Thursday, Dec. 7, at USC Town and Gown. ■

What’s My Motivation? Actors Aid Med Students

‘Patients’ - who aren’t really patients - help medical students hone their skills. T he technique, begun at USC, helps to set new teaching standards.

by Alicia Di Rado

A DOCTOR WALKS INTO the consultation room and greets her patient, a homeless man named Jim, who sits on an exam table. “What brings you here?” she asks Jim. He looks at her and says, “I’ve been having some chest pain, which is worrying me.”

T hus began a recent dialogue, not in a doctor’s office, but in a small room in the basement of the Keck Administration Building, on the Health Sciences campus. T he doctor wasn’t really a doctor, either - at least not yet. She was a Keck School of Medicine of USC student learning how to interact with patients. And the homeless man? An actor, carefully coached to play the part. “It is part of the standardized patient program, a component of the medical school’s educational experience,” explained Win May, associate professor in the Division of Medical Education, who directs the effort.

WHO ARE standardized patients? T hey are actors who have been trained to portray all the characteristics of real patients with a specific illness or problem, May said. When students work with a standardized patient in a clinical setting, it gives them a chance to learn and practice interviewing and physical examination skills, and allows faculty to evaluate them more objectively.

PERHAPS FIRST brought to popular awareness in several television series - most recently a 1998 episode of the TV sitcom “Seinfeld” in which Kramer served as a standardized patient with a sexually transmitted disease - the idea is not new. T he use of actors to play patients for medical students started when former professor of neurology Howard S. Barrows developed it at USC in 1963. Stephen Abrahamson, emeritus faculty member and former chair of medical education, spearheaded the effort.

Since then, the practice has spread not only throughout California but also nationally and internationally, May said.

Unlike real patients … the standardized patient portrays a real case. In Jim’s situation, he was a street person who came to see physicians at USC for chest pain and a cough. H is case now serves as a tool for third-year students refining their physical examination, history-taking and personal skills.

"The diagnosis for Jim was pneumonia,” May said. Having standardized patients for students to work with brings numerous benefits.

T he use of standardized patients in medical education, which started at USC some 37 years ago, has become an established method for the teaching and assessment of clinical skills, worldwide. ■

M edical students interview a standardized patient (seated in dark jacket) who is portraying a 16-year-old patient on his first visit to a physician.
A Fable-Maker Joins the Animation Faculty

Ishu Patel discusses the mythical and musical inspirations for his films.

by Inga Kiderra

Even the titles of Ishu Patel's short animated films - "Divine Fate," "Paradise," "Top Priority" and "Afterlife" - make it clear that he is not, in his own words, "typical of the industry style."

"I'm not a cartoon person," said the newest member of the USC School of Cinema-Television's Division of Animation and Digital Arts. "I'm interested in supernatural matters, in deeper questions and in subtle, socially relevant messages. I have a philosophical approach, and I like experimenting with technique."

PATEL JOINED USC after 25 years as an experimental director/producer at the National Film Board of Canada, itself renowned for innovation. The NFB, Patel explained, was started 60 years ago "to offset Hollywood bombast and to keep 'Canadianess' going. It is a film department much like the State Department: artists are hired and all the facilities provided."

Though during his tenure at the NFB he traveled worldwide to teach, Patel is new to his profession at a university. Why enter academia? "In filmmaking, it still makes sense to have a practitioner teaching," Patel said. "The students must make films. It's not just talking. It's about making.

"And exchange between generations is important. It's a good way to pass on what you know. What I like in particular are the young people and their attitudes on subjects - I'm more informed now through the students than I would be working somewhere on my own."

Patel first came to USC's cinema-television school as an adjunct faculty member in 1998. He returned as a visiting professor in 1999. He joined the ranks of tenured faculty in the fall of 2000. He points to the intimacy of the graduate program as a big plus: The faculty is a tight-knit team, he said, and only about 15 to 20 students are admitted each year. "In professional situations, there's no time to interact with people," Patel said. "In the department, I know all the students personally and can spend hours with them. It's a small family, really, which is what I like."

"Often in a big film school, the small departments get brushed off, but here the dean is offering animation great support."

DEAN ELIZABETH DALEY offers praise as well. "We are absolutely delighted to have had Ishu join us," Daley said. "He brings enormous experience and a very fine aesthetic perspective as well as technical excellence. And he's a terrific teacher."

"Ishu Patel brings enormous experience and a very fine aesthetic perspective as well as technical excellence [to the school]. And he is a terrific teacher."

- ELIZABETH DALEY

on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, Patel stresses the importance of the entire filmmaking process. "My interest is in the total," he said. "Animation is just a part of that: Making the horse jump over the fence doesn't interest me."

Neither is method or technology important, he said. "Everything starts from a drawing - by hand - and only then gets translated into a sophisticated medium."

PATEL TEACHES STUDENTS to find their own visions and what they term "the art of the moment." His own moments, as often as not, start with music. "I see film as a purely visual medium," he said. "I use very few words. Music carries my images. Single-instrument classical or folk, which fit well with mythological subjects, will often give me the structure, speed, momentum, mood that I want."

Patel, who finds Los Angeles exhilarating and intimidating at once - "It's a big city. It has everything, both good and bad." maintains residency in Montreal, returning in December and during the summer. "I don't want to give up the social services and the civilization," he laughed.

Patel's daughter is studying photography at Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara. His wife, an artist and writer and frequent partner on his projects, works with industrial and individual sponsors, chair the scholar selection committees and determine policy and direction. Touch, who has been at ISI since 1992, is a project leader and research assistant professor of computer science. He has also worked at Bellcore, GTE Labs and SEI. His research interests include virtual networks, network architecture, optical networks and protocol performance.

The Postel Center for Experimental Networking was established in 1999 to commemorate Jon Postel's pioneering contributions to the development of the Internet. Postel, who died in 1998, was the director of ISI's computer networks division and created the Internet's address system. For three decades he played a pivotal role in the technical management and administration of the Internet as director of the Assigned Numbers Authority. The center has been endowed by Cisco Systems, Centergate and Sun Microsystems, as well as a number of private individuals. Its mission is to promote Postel's tradition of applied research in support of the Internet community, including providing facilities, funding and support for distinguished visiting scholars and graduate fellows to collaborate with ISI researchers.
Calendar for Dec. 11 to Jan. 8
For a full listing of events, visit http://www.usc.edu/calendar

La Vida Latina
J ust across the street from the University Park campus, alongside fossils and plaster casts of dinosaurs (including Sue, the best-preserved and most complete T. rex ever found) are 120 picture-stories of a diverse group of living, breathing human beings - "Americanos: Latino Life in the United States."

The new photographic exhibit, now at the Natural History M useum, features the contemporary U.S. Latino experience through the eyes of award-winning photographers and the words of prominent Latino writers.

Created by actor, director and activist Edward James Olmos, photojournalist M anuel M onterrey and sociologist L eona Ybarra, this exhibit is the centerpiece of a multimedia program that includes a color book, an HBO documentary and a music CD.

Selected by a distinguished jury of photojournalists from more than 50,000 submissions, the show's photos span life's spectrum, from religious and cultural ceremonies to show-biz glamour, from street "punks" to Ivy League college-bound students.

"One of the most important goals of this project was to show the diversity of the Hispanic or Latino community in America," Ybarra said. "I think many people, including those in the Latino community, may not know the Hispanic community includes Caucasian, African and Asian peoples, as well. What unites us is a common language, as well as a desire to make a better life for ourselves, our families and our communities."

The show continues through Feb. 25. The Natural History M useum is at 900 Exposition Blvd., E xposition Park. Call 213-763-3466 or visit www.nhm.org for more.

SPECIAL EVENTS
Tuesday, Dec. 12, noon: University M useum of Geology: "La Vida Latina" opening reception. Call 213-740-4155 to respond for dinner only. 213-740-3837

WORKSHOPS
Wednesday, Dec. 13, noon: McCosh Union Group Meeting. Faculty, staff and students are welcome. Bring formatted Zip disk. Led by L en Wines, E mentor Center, L eyley L. I rby, Learning R oom B F. Free. 323-937-4082

LECTURES & SEMINARS
Saturday, Dec. 16, 2 p.m: Natural History M useum Lecture: "The Parrot's Lament and Other True Tales of Animal Innuendo, Intelligence and Ingenuity," by award-winning writer E ugene L inden. N atural History M useum, 900 Exposition Blvd., E xposition Park. $7 general, $5 museum members and students. 213-763-3534

Monday, Jan. 8, 5:30 p.m: Department of Art History Lecture. "For the Sake of the Impalpable: Joseph Cornell's Autobiographical D oesies," by Joanne Roche, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Watt H. R m. 1 F. Free. 213-740-4552

EXHIBITS
Tuesday, Dec. 19, noon: T hrough Feb. 13: A. A. Sigg: Recent Work. T hru her American tour of work by Swiss artist A. A. Sigg features recent paintings, sculptures and collages. The exhibition and catalog are sponsored by a grant from Pro-Helvetia of Zurich, the Arts Council of Switzerland. USC Fisher Gallery, H arris H all. Free. 213-740-5537

Software Cost Estimation With COCOMO II
by Barry W. Boehm, et al.
Prentice Hall, $48.95

Books in Print
Books which appear in Chronicle's Books in Print column, or are featured in this issue's articles, may be purchased at a 20 percent discount at USC's Pershatai Bookstore, effective until next month's column. Be sure to ask for your discount.

Visit the bookstore's Chronicle Spectrum table.

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University of Southern California Chronicle
December 11, 2000

Mother and daughter, South Dade, Florida, by Nuri Valibona. The photograph is one of 120 on exhibit at the Natural History Museum in “Americanos: Latino Life in the United States.”
**Ideas Abound**

continued from page 1

- both inside and outside the classroom?

Increased communication between faculty and students is the key, according to the student leaders.

"During freshman orientation, it would be nice to meet more faculty and to sit down and maybe have a discussion during break," said Sarah M. set, a senior in public relations. Better yet, said Anusha Ramanathan, a senior majoring in history and biology, professors should make a concerted effort to promote and attend activities sponsored by student organizations.

"If professors take an interest in the external intellectual activities of students, it creates a link between what happens inside and outside of the classroom."

- ANUSHA RAMANATHAN

"If professors take an interest in the external intellectual activities of students, it creates a link between what happens inside and outside of the classroom."

- ANUSHA RAMANATHAN

"Right now I take between 16 and 18 units, but I would love to be able to take other classes," Evdokimoff said. "I can't because that would require extra money."

In thanking the student leaders for their input at the end of the luncheon, Kann said, "You should know that your ideas are different and better than most of the ones we got from the faculty - but that was to be expected."
Legal scholar Ariela J. Gross sometimes wept while reviewing age-yellowed documents that detailed the slave-related courtroom battles waged by white antebellum defendants and plaintiffs in the Deep South. “Sometimes I would sit there alone in some little room in an Alabama or Mississippi courthouse, in tears regarding this horrible story of how a slave was beaten,” said Gross, an associate professor in the USC Law School. “There are so many of these little stories, so long forgotten and so heart-rending. I found it always to be both very emotional and very humbling to read these stories of people who survived things that I couldn’t imagine living through.”

“T here are so many of these stories, so long forgotten and so heart-rending.”  
—Ariela Gross

Maja Mataric continued from page 1

one in the film appears very accessible,” said Mataric, who was interviewed by Apted and his crew in May ’98 and Feb. ’99. In the film, Mataric talks about her work in artificial intelligence, exploring how humans and machines learn. Her research involves creating and understanding systems that integrate perception, learning and action. It encompasses robotics and machine learning and draws from the cognitive sciences.

Instead of just observing the interaction of the brain and body and how intelligence works, she says in the movie, “There’s something incredibly creative about building it yourself.”

Other scientists in the film are Gertrude Elion, a pharmaceutical chemist and Nobel laureate; Ashok Gadgil, an Indian environmental physicalist; Michel Kaku, a theoretical physicist and founder of string theory; Steven Pinker, director of MIT’s McDonnell-Pew Center for Cognitive Neurosciences; Karol Sikora, a professor of cancer medicine who heads the World Health Organization’s Cancer Programme; and Patricia Wright, an anthropologist.

“Just being involved in a project with these people was incredibly humbling,” said Mataric. “It was also very inspirational because these are people who are making a difference in the world.”

MATARIC NOTED that Elion, who died shortly after the movie was made, created new drugs used to treat acute leukemia and has saved thousands of lives. Gadgil devised a cheap, simple method for purifying water that is widely used in Third World countries.

“Patricia Wright took money from her MacArthur ‘genius grant’ and used it to save monkeys in Madagascar because it’s a branch of evolution that could be lost forever,” said Mataric. “It makes me think about what kind of permanent difference I am making. There is a larger purpose than the outcome of a project.”

The British-born Apted has directed many well-known films, including “Gorky Park,” “Gorillas in the Mist” and “Coal Miner’s Daughter,” which received seven Academy Award nominations. He is also noted for his documentaries, which include “Incident at Oglala,” the British “Seven Up” series and “Inspirations,” a look at the creative process of artists and a companion piece to “Me & Isaac Newton.”

“I was initially surprised that the same doctor who treated the white plantation owner and his family also treated his slaves,” she said. “Much of their medical practice was either in the slave marketplace in the shadow of the courthouse, certifying a slave as fit, or in the courtroom, testifying about a post-mortem of a slave whose owner was seeking compensation for her death.”

GROSS, WHO HAS been at USC since 1996, has also written numerous articles, including “Beyond Black and White: Cultural Approaches to Race and Slavery,” which will be published in Columbia Law Review this April. She has a Ph.D. in history along with a law degree, both from Stanford University.

In “Double Character,” she concludes that slavery was central to Southern society, affecting whites as well as blacks. In researching and writing the book, Gross married her love of history with teaching law.

“Historians and legal scholars need to recognize the richness and importance of the law in everyday life,” she said. “This study is an example of how the law is lived by ordinary people. It shows that laws aren’t just hand-ed down by the Supreme Court and the legislature, but are tests-ments to what people make them.”

Looking at a Shameful Era in Legal History

Ariela Gross delves into the antebellum South’s legacy of legal disputes concerning human chattel.

by Sharon Stewart

Legal scholar Ariela J. Gross sometimes wept while reviewing age-yellowed documents that detailed the slave-related courtroom battles waged by white antebellum defendants and plaintiffs in the Deep South. “Sometimes I would sit there alone in some little room in an Alabama or Mississippi courthouse, in tears regarding this horrible story of how a slave was beaten,” said Gross, an associate professor in the USC Law School. "There are so many of these little stories, so long forgotten and so heart-rending. I found it always to be both very emotional and very humbling to read these stories of people who survived things that I couldn’t imagine living through.”

"T here are so many of these stories, so long forgotten and so heart-rending.”  
—Ariela Gross

In the process of researching and writing the book, Gross learned as much about the European-American buyers and sellers as she did about the Africans who were regarded as slaves for life. "I spent weeks and months looking at records that hadn’t been touched in 150 years," said Gross, who grew up in Princeton, N.J. "I was struck that the courtrooms were the fora not only for battles over a slave’s character, but for battles over the character of his master. It was like being presented with a window that you don’t get to open often.”

For instance, legal disputes that hinged on whether a slave owner sold someone who was a known risk for running away called into question the honesty of the seller. Or the honor of a landowner was challenged in lawsuits where plaintiffs sought damages from defendants who had killed or maimed a slave owned by the plaintiff. Maintaining honor was crucial to Southern ideology, for it allowed a class-stratified society, according to Gross. "It is very ordinary as a black person to be in, but on another level in everyday life, they quite unconsciously dealt with them on a very individual basis as people - not necessarily more respectful or kindly - just more human.

In addition, courtroom contests gave slaves a humanity they weren’t supposed to have. According to Gross, plaintiffs seeking civil damages for a slave injured by a defendant were often forced to contradict the stereotype of blacks as lazy, childlike and stupid when they described their human property as industrious, intelligent and trustworthy. And blacks, although barred from testifying in court, asserted their humanness when white witnesses repeated slaves’ second-hand testimony to back up owners’ claims of ill treatment at the hands of a white defendant.

"T he book is about this double character of white racial ideology," Gross explained. "On one level, whites believed that slavery was the best condition for black people to be in, but on another level in everyday life, they quite unconsciously dealt with them on a very individual basis as people - not necessarily more respectful or kindly - just more human."

Ariela Gross, author of a groundbreaking study of the day-to-day law and culture of slavery, addresses students in her first-year contract law class.

Gross discovered the extent to which a Southern lawyer’s practice was based on civil lawsuits arising out of slavery.

"This was the day-to-day business of the fanciest lawyer in town down to the apprentice," she said. "It was their daily bread. They had no compunction about representing slave traders." In South Carolina, for example, court-supervised slave sales constituted at least one-third of all such sales, she said.

Doctors, too, were deeply involved in legitimizing the institution.

"I was initially surprised that the same doctor who treated the white plantation owner and his family also treated his slaves," she said. "Much of their medical practice was either in the slave marketplace in the shadow of the courthouse, certifying a slave as fit, or in the courtroom, testifying about a post-mortem of a slave whose owner was seeking compensation for her death.”

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