A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

After six years of exceptional service to Rice, Gary Wihl resigned as dean of humanities effective June 30, 2009, in the request of Provost Eugene Levy. I agreed to step in for one year while a committee searched for Gary’s replacement. It had been fifteen years since I last did the job, but I discovered that being a dean is rather like riding a bicycle. Once you know how to do it, you can climb back on anytime and just start pedaling.

The year proved to be more than mutually rewarding. For one thing, as in AY 2009, the administration maintained a 3% budget growth in AY 2010. In both years we achieved the cuts mainly by cannibalizing tenure and tenure-track positions. Before the recession began, the School of Humanities had 135 of those lines. Of that total, we had to cut eleven. However necessary the cuts are and unpalatable the current increase in the number of undergraduates, the School can meet modest demand for humanities courses without much difficulty. But our presence in the world of scholarship will be diminished, and some collaborative programs will suffer. President Lehrman is optimistic that the current cycle of budget-cutting is at an end. If so, we can hope for a period of recovery.

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WHO OWNS MUSEUMS - THE PUBLIC OR NATIONS?

Encyclopedic museums – those that collect and exhibit art from across the millennia and around the globe – may be an instrument for peace, the best hope for people from diverse cultures to understand and relate to others.

James Cuno, president of the Art Institute of Chicago, believes that the encyclopedic museum has the matchless ability to draw parallels among art of different civilizations, partly because its vast collection encompasses similar art forms from different eras and comparable art objects fashioned by unrelated cultures.

He presented the fifth annual Campbell Lecture Series, “The Promise of Museums,” at Rice this past October. The lectures were based on his 2008 book, Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle Over Our Cultural Heritage, which has stirred spirited debate around the globe – millennia and cultures.

James Cuno

Cuno’s writings explore “important issues of cultural policy,” said Allen Mitrows, interim dean of humanities, in introducing the series. The speaker offers “a reminder that beauty was present long ago and art is in our care to safeguard for people in the future,” he said.

The dispute that Cuno examines is whether museums should acquire and display ancient art to entertain and educate visitors or whether modern governments have the right to reclaim historic art works from foreign museums.

Cuno believes such governments impose a national culture, but the export of art that reflects that culture and distills the cultural heritage of minorities. He noted that ethnic boundaries cut across political boundaries. “Nations calling for return of artifacts did not exist when the objects were removed; the government of that long-ago time no longer exists,” he said.

Cuno described the history of the encyclopedic museum as a place where “things” are gathered, examined, and organized so that one may compare and contrast them to expand understanding of the world’s cultures.

A 1753 bequest from Hans Sloane, a doctor and collector who had amassed hundreds of “things” in countless categories, left his treasures for inspection by the studious and also by the curious. “His assortment of ‘stuff’ was erratic and widespread, but thoroughly cataloged,” Cuno said. His collection became the first public encyclopedic museum, the British Museum.

Cuno’s second lecture in the three-night series explored museums’ increasing sophistication. Museums no longer merely show objects, but present them in orderly ways and draw attention to each item and how it relates to others. “Each object tells a story,” Cuno said. “It is a curatorial decision as to which story to tell.” For example, should a finest painting be presented with other Impressionists? With objects sharing a theme, such as dreams or gardens? Or with other 19th-century French paintings? All are possible choices.

His third lecture looked at “The Promise of Cosmopolitanism,” a framework for understanding the implication of meaningful relationships among things. “That we are citizens of the world is museums’ greatest promise,” he said. “The display of things from different times and places stimulates us increased caring for the things themselves. Limited space constrains us from telling the stories as thoroughly as we might,” Cuno said. “Travel is an analogy for the way we experience the museum; we want visitors to explore the museum, wander, find their own experiences of discovery.” The Art Institute’s approach is to design exhibits in ways that “encourage visitors to return again and again to see something new.”

“Travel is quite intelligent,” Cuno noted. “They can come up with their own interpretation.” The most profound thing is to make the museum accessible – physically, socially, and intellectually accessible, he said. “Get people in the door. Show respect for their curiosity. Encourage people to feel it’s their museum as much as anyone’s.”

Lively Q&A sessions followed each lecture, and Cuno noted that the questions had provoked new thoughts for an upcoming book. A noted scholar, Cuno has been president of the Art Institute of Chicago since 2004. He was previously professor and director of the Courtauld Institute of Art at the University of London and professor and director of the Harvard University Art Museums.

The Campbell Lectures Series in Literary Studies was made possible by a $1 million gift from alumna T.C. Campbell ’54, whose family members attended this year’s program. The late Campbell’s dream was “to draw attention to the study of literature, and for Rice to be known as a place on the literary map.”
It's fitting that Friday the 13th marked the opening of “The Threepenny Opera,” a revolutionary 18th-century German musical by playwright Bertolt (or, more completely, Bellot) Brecht and composer Kurt Weill. The opera opened on the Rice University campus to sold-out audiences, with enthusiastic responses to the bold, dynamic performance. The production was a collaboration between the Department of German Studies and the Department of Visual and Dramatic Arts, led by Christina Keefe, director of Rice Theatre. The project started more than a year ago, with the support of her colleagues in the arts department and a preshow talk by German Consul General Roland Herrmann and Christian Emadin, associate professor of German studies.

“Working with Leslie has undoubtedly opened my eyes up to a world of theater I didn’t know I could be a part of,” says Charlie McKean, a Martel College senior who stars as the character Macheath. McKean, who has been performing since first grade, faced many challenges preparing for his role as the rapist. He attributes his success to the collaborative nature of the production and the support of his peers. “I have worked with the majority of the cast in college theater productions before, and I never tire of the professional team guiding the cast and crew. It’s becoming a very dynamic classroom,” Buchman said. “I see their eyes opening up to a world of possibility. It’s fantastic.”

McKean said his eyes have been opened to a whole world of theater, which he didn’t realize he could be a part of. He attributes that to the professional team guiding the cast and crew. “Working with Leslie has undoubtedly made a world of difference in my acting. I’ve made significant achievements in my acting abilities that I never thought possible,” he said. “At the same time, I have been more than pleased to see the continuing professional development of my fellow students. I have worked with the majority of the cast in college theater productions before, and I never tire of the dedication, insight, and sheer ability.”

Adding to the collaborative nature of the event, a reception was held on opening night, with a preshow talk by General Roland Herrmann and Christian Emadin, associate professor of German studies.
A new center housed at Rice University will enhance the teaching and study of Spanish language and cultures and provide support for teachers, professionals, and students, both inside and outside the hedges.

President David Leebron signed an agreement with the Spanish Ministry of Education to establish the Spanish Resource Center (SRC) at Rice University. The center will be one of 13 housed in collaboration with the Spanish government at universities across the United States.

“This is a wonderful opportunity for Rice to increase Spanish language and cultural resources here on campus and make those resources available throughout Houston,” said José Aranda, associate professor of English and chair of the Hispanic Studies Department.

Rice’s commitment to the SRC builds on goals laid out in the Vision for the Second Century, which challenges Rice to become a more international university, strengthen its relationships with Latin America, engage the city of Houston, and support K-12 education.

Located on Rayzor Hall’s third floor near the Department of Hispanic Studies, the SRC will feature a multimedia collection with more than 2,500 books and 400 movies related to the teaching and study of Spanish language and culture. Throughout the year, the center will sponsor scholarly speakers and hold conferences on important issues within the Pan-Hispanic world.

The center will facilitate outreach and training by the Spanish government for Houston Independent School District language teachers, who can come to Rice for instruction on pedagogical issues related to their field. "The SRC has the potential to integrate every aspect of our department’s mission to educate Rice students about the Spanish language and literatures in Spanish," Aranda said. "Because the SRC plays a much larger role in our region of Texas, it will also provide outreach opportunities for our faculty and students."

Aranda said the center will also help to reconnect the department with the lecturers who are teaching Spanish in Rice’s Center for the Study of Languages.

“The SRC will represent a new and significant resource for Rice faculty and students and will be an ever-growing one, given that the SRC has its own budget to purchase new resources every year,” said David Vassar, assistant to the president for international collaborations.

The Spanish Research Center has already sponsored several events on campus. Last fall, the center presented La última palabra: poesía de hoy (The Last Word: Today’s Poetry), featuring speakers Dr. Bernardo Pérez (Rice), poet Dr. Ana Merino (University of Iowa), and poet Vicente Mora (Director of the Instituto Cervantes, Albuquerque, New Mexico). The center also presented Reflexiones Sobre el Cine Español Actual (Reflections on the Current Spanish Cinema), featuring speakers Dr. Luis Duno-Gottberg (Rice) and Dr. Beatriz Leal Riesco (University of Salamanca).

In October of 2009, the Spanish Resource Center and Americas Research Center hosted a dinner for participants to the 5th Annual Seminar of International Spanish Academies on October 27, 2009. The International Spanish Academies (ISAs) is part of a non-domestic educational program funded by the Ministry of Education of Spain. These academies support Spanish language instruction in the United States and Canada. Currently, there are approximately 78 schools involved in this program. The academies can be found anywhere from grade school to high school levels. Several such academies are here in the greater Houston area.

This spring brought a reading by Spanish writer Fernando Opere and a scholarly seminar and film series on the Spanish Civil War, featuring Professors Noel Valis (Yale) and Elena Solino (University of Houston).
Summer Plans for Service Learning
Poverty, Justice and Human Capabilities

offers internships to affect change

Like the program itself, the internships aim to enrich students’ understanding of poverty and inequality, so that regardless of their choice of occupation, they will maintain a longstanding commitment to enhancing the well-being of all people.

Helping children was what motivated Christina Reinas to work with Fear Necessity, a pediatric cancer foundation in Chicago. It was there that a routine phone call changed her perspective. She spoke with the mother of a patient who was running the Chicago half marathon on behalf of the organization. The mother began to recount what the family had been through the past year, from her daughter’s diagnosis to her return to the financial hardship posed by cancer treatment.

“I began to realize just how much illness can impair an individual or family’s capabilities,” said Reinas, a Brown College junior. “For this family, both parents worked, and they had a roof over their heads and food to eat. But what about families in Third World countries?”

That kind of thinking is what the PJHC program intended to inspire when creating the internships. Like the program itself, the internships aim to enrich students’ understanding of poverty and inequality, so that regardless of their choice of occupation, they will maintain a longstanding commitment to enhancing the well-being of all people.

“Many concepts of poverty just focus on money and don’t consider that money is just a means to an end,” said Diana Strassmann, director of the PJHC program and founder and editor of Feminist Economics. “The new PJHC minor considers the whole multitude of impediments to human well-being, including discrimination, unequal access to health care and education, lack of political freedoms, and a variety of other factors.”

In the chill of Houston’s surprisingly cold winter this year, it was not surprising to find many students warming themselves by planning how they would spend the sunny months ahead. A select group of students have new opportunities to consider thanks to the new Poverty, Justice and Human Capabilities (PJHC) program, which offers summer service-learning internships that allow the students to help those at the bottom of the economic scale and empower them to use their classroom knowledge to affect change.

Internships were offered in 2009, taking students everywhere from Houston to Atlanta, from New York City to Seattle. For eight weeks over the summer, the interns worked full time for nonprofit organizations and charities in addition to completing a PJHC project.

“My summer at Child Protective Services has given me the opportunity to see how social work can change lives,” said Julia Ager, a Lovett College senior. “After witnessing the adoption of a 4-year-old boy who endured serious abuse as an infant – abuse that led to the death of his baby sister -- I truly began to appreciate the work that CPS does for children who need state protection.”

Ager chose CPS because she was searching for a means to end domestic violence but was skeptical about how much of a difference the organization could make. Skepticism, too, is what fueled Bridgette Bennett, a Lovett College sophomore, to apply for an internship with Saranam, a two-year housing and education program that assists families as they transition out of poverty and homelessness. Bennett had heard that the average age of a homeless person in America is 9.

“I had only seen unhygienic, peddling men downtown and under bridges so it never crossed my mind that 600,000 families with children make up almost 50 percent of the homeless population,” she said.

When she was not working in the Saranam office, she toured and volunteered at various organizations throughout the city to get to know the community better and see firsthand the services offered to those who are homeless. But it was an experience working with a child that really opened her eyes to how dire conditions can be, even for the innocent. “The child had been sexually abused by her mother’s husband. ‘My face paled thinking about what must have happened to such a sweet child, only 8 years old, to make her think she was pregnant,’” Bennett said. “I kept thinking, ‘Why was this allowed to happen? Why didn’t someone alert the authorities?’ Someone had to do something.’ Bennett goes on to say, ‘After planning how they would spend the sunny months ahead, a select group of students have new opportunities to consider thanks to the new Poverty, Justice and Human Capabilities (PJHC) program, which offers summer service-learning internships that allow the students to help those at the bottom of the economic scale and empower them to use their classroom knowledge to affect change.

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**Scholars and practitioners offer talks on role of quilt makers in society**

In a special quilting exhibit produced and curated by Rice University students, the Houston and quilting communities had the chance to see and learn about “Hearts, Hands & Heritage: The Patchwork Soul of Houston” and the Blue Triangle Quilt Guild, the first organized African-American quilt guild in Houston.

During the panel, leading scholars and quilt practitioners discussed a collection of powerful quilted artworks.

“We illustrated a broad range of artistic techniques and inspirations, and sight on the lives and experiences of Houston quilt makers, and examined the role quilt makers have played in the arenas of education, politics, religion, the arts, business, the family, and much more,” said Aundrea Matthews, a curator of the exhibit and doctoral student in Rice’s Religious Studies Department.

Panelists included Michelle Barnes, executive director of the Community Artists’ Collective; Bob Ruggiero, director of publications and public information for the International Quilt Festival; Tracy Vaughn, distinguished senior lecturer and assistant director of graduate studies for African-American studies at Northwestern University; Anais Ward, quilt practitioner and member of the Blue Triangle Quilt Guild, and Jerome Williams, founder and president of the Blue Triangle Quilt Guild.

The panel was possible through the Houston Enriches Rice Education (HERE) program and the Department of Visual and Dramatic Arts.

Since its founding in 2007, the HERE Project’s mission has been to advance Rice University’s relationship with the larger Houston community and to enhance faculty research in both undergraduate and graduate education. HERE aims to work within President Leebron’s A Vision for Rice University’s Second Century, which states, “We must fully engage with the city of Houston — learning from it and contributing to it — as a successful partnership with our home city is an essential part of our future.”

For more information on HERE, visit www.here.rice.edu. For more information on the Department of Visual and Dramatic Arts, visit www.arts.rice.edu.

**For more information on the Blue Triangle Quilt Guild, visit the-bluetriangle.org**
Thanks to the Humanities Research Center (HRC), Rice University students get a taste of the pioneering humanities research being conducted at universities across the country without ever having to leave Houston. Each year, the HRC brings in forward-thinking, external faculty fellows to teach courses affiliated with a humanities department, present research at special symposiums and conferences, and contribute to the intellectual life of the center.

This year, an international pool of more than 80 faculty members applied for the honor, and four were chosen for their innovative approach to current and future topics for the humanities that bridge disciplines such as finance and literature, and politics and cinema.

The scholars selected by the HRC faculty advisory panel for the 2010-11 academic year are Mary Poovey, the Samuel Fulero University Professor in the Humanities at New York University, for her project, “A Model of the Future: The History of American Finance Capitalism”; Sahir Handel, professor of German Literature and Culture at the University of Texas at Austin, for “Political Affects: The Fascist Imaginary in Postfascist Germany”; Despina Stratigakos, assistant professor in the Department of Architecture at the University of Buffalo, The State University of New York, for “Hitler at the University of New York: From the History of the Future to the Future of the History of the Future”; and Hermann Herlinghaus, professor in the Department of Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh, for “Hitler at the University of New York: From the History of the Future to the Future of the History of the Future”.

The program aims to give Rice faculty and students significant exposure to eminent scholars from around the world.

The HRC mission is to offer these fellowships and allow Rice faculty and students significant exposure to eminent scholars from around the world.

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ALEXANDER X. BYRD’S BOOK WINS WESLEY-LOGAN BOOK PRIZE

In his book Captives and Voyagers: Alexander Byrd 50, associate professor of History at Rice, tells the story of British colonists by examining the colonial world’s intersection with the African diaspora. When others tell the story of the book, they tend another plot point to add. It was awarded the 2009 American Historical Association (AHA) Wesley-Logan Book Prize.

The prize is sponsored by the AHA and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History to honor the memory of two early pioneers in the field, Charles Wesley and Rayford Logan. Since 1993, the award has been given for outstanding work that scholarship and literary merit that details some aspect of the history of the dispersion, settlement and adjustment, and return of peoples formerly held in slavery.

“It is an honor because it celebrates a whole generation of Africana historians who really put the story of us, our ancestors the slave, to research. The award also honors the people who studied for an outstanding book with high scholarly and literary merit that details some aspect of the history of the dispersion, settlement and adjustment, and return of peoples formerly held in slavery,” Byrd said. “It can be addressed without a clear understanding of the intersection with the African diaspora.

The first encounters between Americans and Arabs were disastrous, but they led eventually to a mutually beneficial outcome. That historian Usama Makdisi’s chronicle of those encounters, Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East, received the John Hope Franklin Publication Prize from the American Studies Association in 2009.

“I’m really pleased and honored to have the book receive this award,” said Makdisi, now the Arab-American Educational Foundation Professor of History. “I think it illuminates an interesting era of history that also has implications for today.”

Makdisi was already the recipient of the 2008 American Historical Association Book Award from the Middle Eastern Studies Association for Artillery of Heaven. The book was also the co-winner of the 2010 British-Kuwait Friendship Society Book Prize presented by the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies.

Makdisi said he relied on a wide variety of sources to research his book. “I think it illuminates an interesting era of history that also has implications for today,” Makdisi said.

The Franklin Prize is awarded every year for the best published book in American Studies. Makhdisi said the award recognizes the work of his research project exploring U.S.-Arab relations during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Makdisi is a professor of History at the University of Maryland, College Park. He holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago, and has also taught at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the American University of Beirut.

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ART HISTORY

Marcia G. Brennan, associate professor, received the Faculty Initiatives Fund Award from the Office Of Research at Rice University and the 2009 George R. Brown Award for Superior Teaching.

ENGLISH

Jane Chance, Andrew W. Mellon Distinguished Chair of English and Director of the Medieval Studies Program, was appointed to Chair of the MLA Committee for the Ruth Bock Prize for Best Translation, and Member of the Advisory Board for Publications of the Modern Language Association, 2009-2012. She also joined the Editorial Board of postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies.

Thad Logan, lecturer, was awarded a Fellowship in Pre-Raphaelite Studies sponsored by the University of Delaware and the Delaware Museum of Art.

Colleen Lamos, associate professor, was appointed to the editorial board of the quarterly, Thieves.

HUMANITIES IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Susan Wood, Gladys Louise Fox Professor of English, was awarded the James Dickey Prize in Poetry from Five Points: A Journal of Literature and the Arts.

FRENCH STUDIES

Deborah Harter, associate professor, received the Award for Extraordinary Service as Speaker of the Rice Faculty Senate.

HISTORY

John R. Bolte, William H. Hobby Professor of History, received the recipient of a George R. Brown Award for Superior Teaching in 2009.

Uwenna Madubuike, Arab-American Educational Foundation Professor of Arabic Studies and Professor of History, was the recipient of the John Hope Franklin Publication Prize from the American Studies Association, the recipient of a George R. Brown Award for Superior Teaching in 2009, and co-winner of the 2009 British Kuwait Friendship Society Book Prize by the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies.


With an exciting lecture series and five new interdisciplinary courses, the Jewish studies program at Rice University is on full swing. Spread across the humanities and social sciences, Jewish studies broadly examines topics including the Hebrew Bible and its history of interpretation, the nature of Jewish identities in religious and secular contexts, aesthetic representation of the Jewish past, and the relations of history and memory, religion and art, and philosophical discussions of God. The interdisciplinary program at Rice encompasses the texts, history, languages, philosophy, and culture of Jews and Judaism as they have endured over three millennia and throughout the world.

Visit http://jewishstudies.rice.edu for more information.

IN MEMORIUM

WALTER W. ISLE

Walter W Isle, Professor Emeritus and former Vice Provost of Academic Affairs and Clarence L. Carter Distinguished Service Professor and Professor of English and Environmental Studies died on January 14. Isle joined Rice in 1961 after receiving his Ph.D. in English from Stanford University. Before his retirement in 2007, he served in a multitude of leadership roles including nine years as Mater of Jones College. Isle served as Chair of the English Department, Speaker of the Faculty Council, and gave extraordinary service to the university chairing and serving on various university-wide committees affecting every area from curriculum review to food services to promotion and tenure. As an educator, Isle twice received the George R. Brown Award for Superior Teaching. He was the founding co-director of the Center for the Study of Environment and Society. Nationally, Isle served as President of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE).

After his retirement at Rice, Isle continued scholarly work in environmental literature and history, Native American literature and history, and literature of the American West. He also served as a faculty member in the Master of Liberal Studies program in the Glasscock School of Continuing Studies.

Diane Berry Caves

Dr. Thomas Frieden, director of the CDC, said Caves died in Haiti while doing public health service. Caves was on a three-week assignment in Haiti to improve Haitian HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention programs.

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Visit http://jewishstudies.rice.edu for more information.

IN MEMORIUM

WALTER W. ISLE

Walter W Isle, Professor Emeritus and former Vice Provost of Academic Affairs and Clarence L. Carter Distinguished Service Professor and Professor of English and Environmental Studies died on January 14. Isle joined Rice in 1961 after receiving his Ph.D. in English from Stanford University. Before his retirement in 2007, he served in a multitude of leadership roles including nine years as Mater of Jones College. Isle served as Chair of the English Department, Speaker of the Faculty Council, and gave extraordinary service to the university chairing and serving on various university-wide committees affecting every area from curriculum review to food services to promotion and tenure. As an educator, Isle twice received the George R. Brown Award for Superior Teaching. He was the founding co-director of the Center for the Study of Environment and Society. Nationally, Isle served as President of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE).

After his retirement at Rice, Isle continued scholarly work in environmental literature and history, Native American literature and history, and literature of the American West. He also served as a faculty member in the Master of Liberal Studies program in the Glasscock School of Continuing Studies.

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