President’s Message: Dr. Rajen Vurdien

Earlier this month, the Fullerton College community welcomed the spring semester with a Convocation event focused on *What We Do Well*. During the event, faculty and staff took to the stage and shared with the audience why they chose to work at the college. Throughout the day and the following week, I couldn’t help but think of the journey that eventually led me to a career in higher education.

In sixth grade, my teacher motivated and pushed me to work hard to get a scholarship to go to seventh grade. When I was growing up on the island of Mauritius, education was free only through elementary school so a scholarship was my only option.

Years later, my graduate advisor at Temple University took a chance and gave me a teaching assistantship – which eventually inspired me to pursue a Ph.D. in Psychological Studies in Education. He gave me the job even though I had been in the country for only 10 days and had never taught reading before. Both of these teachers took what they may have thought was a small chance on me, yet made a major impact on my life.

As we embark on another semester, it is often easy to forget that we as educators have an enormous gift to give – the gift of directly affecting the lives of our students and preparing them for the future. Let us not take that gift for granted.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rajen Vurdien

Last semester, the Cadena Cultural Center and the Art Department hosted the Third Annual Sidewalk Art Festival, in support of California Arts Day. Participants were asked to create chalk art throughout the campus Quad, which remained on display for the week. Even the children enrolled in the college’s Child Development Center got in on the act! California Arts Day was created by the California Arts Council and established by Proclamation of the Governor in recognition of National Arts & Humanities Month. The purpose of Arts Day is to demonstrate the role and value of arts and culture throughout California.
Fullerton College donates nearly 200 computers to struggling Haiti Technical College

It was just over two years ago that a catastrophic, 7.0 magnitude earthquake nearly leveled Haiti’s capital city of Port-au-Prince. While international aid poured into the island, the small nation is still in poor shape. Families continue to live in makeshift shelters, adults scramble to find work, and students struggle to attend school. The Chronicle of Higher Education (October 2010) estimates that the earthquake killed more than 4,000 teachers and students alone.

Haiti Tec, a private trade school built by a partnership between Florida and Haiti businesspeople, was founded in 2000 to provide the country with a skilled workforce. The concept of a technical college was foreign to Haiti as most students who manage to graduate from secondary school are unable to afford a college education of any kind. Those who are able typically leave the country to attend prestigious universities in the United States or Europe.

With the help of scholarships and grants, the college flourished in its early years, providing training and jobs to many of the country’s residents. Unfortunately, everything changed when the earthquake hit. Much of the Haiti Tec campus was leveled and equipment destroyed. Without classrooms and equipment, students were unable to return to school, leaving them with few prospects. Michaelle Saint-Natus, Haiti Tec Technical Advisor, was undeterred and worked hard to rebuild the school from the ground-up.

At a recent conference, Saint-Natus was introduced to Fullerton College President Dr. Rajen Vurdien, himself a native of Mauritius, another small, impoverished island nation. The two struck up a conversation about the hardships facing Haiti and its burgeoning higher education system. When Dr. Vurdien returned to Fullerton, he couldn’t stop thinking of ways to help the small college. “I was moved by Haiti Tec’s story,” he says, “and knew there had to be some way Fullerton could make a difference.”

With the help of Fullerton’s Instructional Technology Manager Bob Morison, Dr. Vurdien developed a plan to donate several of the college’s computers to Haiti. “Like many colleges, Fullerton has a computer replacement plan which ensures our students have access to the latest technology,” says Morison. “We phase out the older computers and send them to surplus.”

Morison and his staff worked diligently to reimagede and install Windows XP and Microsoft Office 2003 on several of the college’s surplused computers. In November, Fullerton College delivered 160 desktop units and 30 laptops to Water & Education International, a local charity who offered to send the computers to Florida. Upon arrival in Florida, the computers made the short trip to Haiti, in the care of Food for the Poor. “We truly appreciate Fullerton College’s computer donation,” says Saint-Natus. “We are launching a distance education program and need more labs to support the program. These computers will come in very handy!”

On Friday, January 27, Dr. Vurdien and North Orange County (continued on page 4)
Fullerton College student veterans send a piece of home to comrades abroad

Each year, thousands of troops are sent to serve in the Armed Forces overseas, missing out on the usual comforts and traditions of home during the holiday season. Fullerton College student veteran Jason Hill is lucky enough to be home this year, but can’t help thinking of his friends and comrades still serving in Afghanistan. Determined to make a difference, he sat down at his computer, drafted a flyer, joined forces with his fellow student veterans, and did something about it.

With the help of Veterans Club Advisor Paul McKinley, the students started a grassroots effort to send care packages to the Middle East. “We got together and started listing our friends who were still serving,” says Hill. “Then it quickly grew into friends of friends, extended family members, and others. We even received the names of some soldiers who have never received a package during their tour.”

Within a month, the students received the donations needed to make 75 care packages, enough to fill a 20 x 20 cubic, floor to ceiling. Each of the boxes contain items ranging from socks and toothpaste to books, DVDs, and snacks. “As a veteran, I know what it is like to be the receiver of a package,” says Roger Castaneda. “It shows them that someone is thinking about them and appreciates what they are doing for us.”

Unfortunately, as the students were ready to ship the care packages to Afghanistan, funding for the postage fell through. The Fullerton College community quickly rose to the occasion – raising enough money to send the packages and purchase an additional 20. “The response from our faculty, staff, and students was overwhelming. It is this sense of community that makes this college unique,” says Fullerton College President Dr. Rajen Vurdien. “We did our part to lift the spirits of the men and women serving on our country’s behalf and give them a piece of home during the holidays.”

Former baseball coach Mike Sgobba passes away

Former Fullerton College Head Baseball Coach Mike Sgobba passed away in early January. He was 81. Sgobba began his coaching career at the college in 1961, retired from coaching in 1985, and continued to teach classes until 1988. During his career with the Hornets, he compiled a record of 487-325-7 and won two South Coast Conference titles. In his 24 years at Fullerton, Sgobba coached 120 players who went on to sign professional baseball contracts.

After leaving Fullerton, Sgobba served as a professional baseball scout for both the Oakland Athletics and Arizona Diamondbacks. In 2007, he was inducted into the Fullerton College Athletics Hall of Fame.

The Baseball Team has established a scholarship in his honor, to be awarded annually to a graduating Hornet Baseball player. Donations are tax deductible. Checks made out to Fullerton College Foundation may be mailed to: Fullerton College Foundation, P.O Box 431, Fullerton, CA 92836.
Vive le cinéma! Fullerton College French Film Festival arrives on campus this February

Fullerton College, in collaboration with the French American Cultural Exchange Council (F.A.C.E.) is pleased to announce the return of The Tournees Festival. Throughout February and March, five award-winning, contemporary French films will be screened on campus.

This year’s selections include dramas, romance, and comedies. All screenings will be in French with English subtitles.

- **Friday, February 24** - UN PROPHÈTE / A PROPHET
- **Saturday, February 25** - JOUEUSE / QUEEN TO PLAY
- **Wednesday, February 29** - CLIENTE / A FRENCH GIGOLO
- **Thursday, March 1** - ROMAN DE GARE
- **Tuesday, March 6** - UN BAISER, S’IL VOUS PLAÎT / SHALL WE KISS?

All movies will be shown in French with English subtitles. Screenings will take place at 7:30 pm in Fullerton College’s Wilshire Auditorium, across from the main campus. Admission is $6.50, and tickets will be available at the door; advance tickets may be purchased from the Campus Box Office. For additional information, call (714) 992-7349 or visit [http://foreign.fullcoll.edu](http://foreign.fullcoll.edu).

Haiti computer donation (continued from page 2)

Community College District (NOCCCD) Chancellor Dr. Ned Doffoney flew to Port-au-Prince to participate in the unveiling of the computers and a master planning session. Saint-Natus opened the day with the comment, “Today, we have not a promise, not a pledge, but 190 computers from Fullerton College.”

The majority of the computers are currently being installed in labs at HaitiTec, while others are being distributed across the country to the Teachers’ Training College, National University of Haiti, Food for the Poor, The Salvation Army, and various government ministries. During their visit, Dr. Vurdien and Dr. Doffoney also had the opportunity to meet with many of the students enrolled at the college and hear their stories of suffering, loss, and overwhelming hopefulness.

“As I left Haiti and returned home, I was struck by the magnitude of what I saw,” says Dr. Vurdien. “So many of Haiti’s citizens are pinning their hopes for the future on Haiti Tec and Fullerton College’s donation will help them realize their dreams.”

Spring 2012: Cabaret!

This spring, the Fine Arts Division is presenting the Tony-award winning musical Cabaret. Set in the city of Berlin just before Hitler’s rise to power, Cabaret is the story of Sally Bowles, a cabaret performer, and her affair with Cliff, an American writer, who takes her in after she is fired from the Kit Kat Club. Sally and Cliff fall deeply in love, but outside forces jeopardize their relationship.

Performances begin on Thursday, March 8 in the Campus Theatre and continue through Thursday, March 15. Tickets are available through the Box Office ([http://boxoffice.fullcoll.edu](http://boxoffice.fullcoll.edu))