What it means to be an honors student: A student’s perspective

Cristian Cortez (pictured left), a second year double major in Psychology and Criminology, spoke to the 204 entering CHP freshmen at Orientation in the fall. Below is an excerpt from his speech.

This summer, I was sitting in the middle of the desert with one of my closest friends, thinking about life, our purpose in it, looking into the stars, and, at one point, thinking about what I would say here today. There is a lot I could talk about, as last year was my first year at UCI. It left me with moments of joy, sorrow, exuberance, anger, regret, pride, and confidence. Just one short year ago, I think the only true emotion I beheld was utter confusion. My parents did not go to school, I have no older siblings, and I have been independent since I graduated. This said, University was, and continues to be, an experiment for me.... There have been several moments in which I have contemplated whether or not UCI is the right fit for me. Beneath the stars, perched on a rock in the middle of the Mojave, I thought it over and was reminded of two things: as a CHP student, I have a community, and I have a reputation.

The honors community that we have been invited into is geared toward enabling our academic success.... We belong to a community that expects integrity, respect, responsibility, and professionalism. These qualities are the hallmark of honors students.... As we begin this new and exciting chapter of our lives, we will explore and build upon ourselves with confidence. We all have much to learn, and a long way to go, but we have earned this much.
Alumni Spotlight – Faye Cheng (’13)

Coding is not just a man’s game. CHP alumna Faye Cheng (’13) is combining her burgeoning skills in programming and her love of mentorship to empower girls to get involved in technology from a young age.

A student in the Mills College Computer Science Graduate Program, Faye was nominated by the Anita Borg Institute to attend the Qualcomm EmpowHERment Summit in July 2015. This Summit is dedicated to encouraging women to pursue careers in science, technology and engineering, and help them feel comfortable about that choice. Faye describes the summit as “a unique experience where students from all over the U.S. are invited to attend professional workshops, network with fellow STEM students, and participate in a 24-hour hackathon to come up with technical solutions for six non-profit organizations.”

Faye’s team of four was assigned to the non-profit PinkThink for the summit hackathon. PinkThink’s goal is to create relevant games and products that engage girls in STEM education. The organization challenged the team to utilize a programmable LED bracelet to create a platform for girls to “share their code and connect with one another,” said Faye. “We incorporated ‘Coding Stories’ that let elementary school girls follow lovable characters through block coding challenges ….” In Hershe’s Superpower Bracelet, for example, girls help Hershe the cat by learning how to code patterns and colors onto their bracelets, with the bracelets flashing when Hershe’s superpowers are activated. To expand the age range and usability of the project, Faye’s team “created a Mentorship Program where experienced coders could mentor younger girls and have the opportunity to utilize their creativity to create their own Code Stories.” The team won both the “Best PinkThink Project” and “Judge’s Favorite.” For more information on resulting cStyle Bracelets project, visit http://cyao42.github.io/pinkthinkhack/index.html.

So what is next for the team? Featured in an article on the website Devpost.com, Faye’s team talks about the future, stating, “Currently, we have a mock up on our mentorship page. In the future, we envision older and more experienced coders using the platform to create and share their own coded stories with their peers. We would also love to extend this platform by increasing the story interactivity, the number of stories, and following through on our initial implementation of the user profile.”

Faye created a blog post about her conference experience, which is available to read on the Anita Borg Institute "Best of Systers" blog: http://anitaborg.org/news/blog/my-first-hackathon-and-i-was-a-winner/

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Event Photos

Michelle Tsai

CHP Alumni joined forces as the “Green Flash” & took 1st place at Pub Trivia Night.

Karissa Perez/CHP

The September CHP Alumni Coffee Hour in Los Angeles proved an excellent way to start off the day for this bunch of alumni.
**CHP alumni updates**

**Rachel Arrieta** ('13) enjoys passing on her love of snowboarding as a snowboard instructor in Big Bear.

**Fady Barsoum** ('14) works in the Specialty R&D department of Applied Medical Resources.

**Aurora Bedford** ('09) has been working as a User Experience Specialist for Nielsen Norman Group for over two years.

**Jessica Bogdanoff** ('14) recently became a Community Advocate at a local non-profit called CAPC, Inc. where she works with people with disabilities to maximize the quality of their lives.

**David Cao** ('14) is attending UCSB where he is pursuing his Ph.D. in Chemistry and was awarded the UCSB Regents’ Fellowship in Chemistry and Biochemistry.

**Kelsey Changsing** ('14) commissioned into the Air Force as a 2nd Lieutenant and is now providing nuclear deterrence for our country in North Dakota. She is also engaged to UCI alum, Craig Pitcher.

**Elena Clemencin-Charles** ('14) is pursuing a Masters of Environmental Management with a concentration in Energy and the Environment at Duke University.

**Jill (Olson)** ('05) and **David Donald** ('05) welcomed their third baby, Andrew, last February.

**Stacy Gohman** ('01) and her husband Daniel welcomed their son Nathan in January. Stacy also recently received her Ph.D. in Education from Capella University.

**Phillip Johnson** ('15) is now an Engineering Technician for Linscott, Law and Greenspan in San Diego.

**Amber (Lakhani) Lorentzen** ('04) started working at ServiceTitan as a Project Coordinator this past July.

**Michelle Maasz** ('14) was recently engaged to Drew Brouwer (pictured below).

**Ashley Martin** ('15) is pursuing an MFA in Theatre, Stage Management at UCSD.

**Jon Masukawa** ('11) completed an M.S. in Computer Science at UCI in '13 and has been a software engineer at Google since then.

**Melissa McDonald** ('15) was recently married to Bryce Platz (pictured below) and is working as a Registered Nurse for Children’s Hospital Orange County.

**Carolyn Hua** ('15) has begun pursuing a PharmD at the UCSF School of Pharmacy.

**Hailley Hukill** ('14) is working on obtaining a Masters in Social Work from USC and is interning at a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program.

**Lori Kepner** ('00) has been working with Cru, a Christian ministry, for 10 years as a campus minister and staff attorney.

**Jason Knapp** ('92) is part of EvoNexus Irvine, a pro bono tech startup incubator at UCI. His team is currently hosting a group of Informatics students doing their senior capstone project with Viant.
Angele (Theriault) McQuade ('92) is the author of young adult novels and two non-fiction books about investing. She is also a columnist for Better Investing magazine.

Yoselinda Mendoza ('14) is currently the Data Coordinator for the Migrant Education Program Comprehensive Needs Assessment at CSU Fullerton.

Preet Sahota ('15) is pursuing a Master of Science in Biomedical and Translational Science through the UCI School of Medicine.

Shoshana Seid-Green ('09) has been working as a music director and accompanist in New York. Her gigs have led her to all 50 states!

Tyler Speier ('12) won the Audience Choice Award at the Santa Barbara Social Venture Partner’s Fast Pitch Competition, raising funds and awareness for the Isla Vista Youth Projects (pictured below).

Barbara Spyrou ('15) started grad school this fall at UCLA for a Masters of Public Policy. She has also begun an internship at the Avasant Foundation.

Josh Valdez ('13) is in the second year of a PharmD program at UCSD Skaggs School of Pharmacy.

CHP Dinner for “12” Anteaters

CHP alumni Kimberly ('95) and Michael Ong ('93) graciously hosted a group of 20 CHP students and four CHP alumni at the YardHouse at Fashion Island this November. The Ongs were joined by CHP alumni Sara Robinson ('02), David Cuccia ('02), Emily (Yee) Fulkerson ('07), and Jeff Fulkerson ('07).

The original goal was to host 12 students, in the tradition of the Dinner for 12 Anteaters event hosted by the Student Alumni Association. However, our alumni hosts generously offered to host 20 students.

The diverse group of CHP students in attendance enjoyed a delicious dinner and walked away with valuable networking experience. The alumni present were able to connect with our current students and share their experiences as alumni of the CHP.

We would like to extend our most heartfelt thanks to the Ong family for providing this opportunity to CHP students and alumni.

Jasmin Van Malderen ('15) is now working as a Quality Engineer for Branchpoint Technologies.

Adrian Vidauri ('14) has begun pursuing his J.D. at Stanford Law.
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