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Academic Briefs: News and Notes on Programs, Faculty and Students

Liberty University

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Academic briefs: News and notes on programs, faculty and students

December 01, 2009

NEW ART GALLERY OPENS

Liberty University held its first art show opening in its new gallery on Sept. 24. Students, faculty and community members lined up outside the newly constructed Visual Communication Arts (VCAR) Art Gallery (located in the Student Life and Academic Building) to peruse the works of David Heath, a renowned painter of contemporary American landscapes.

The 30-by-38-foot gallery, featuring 13-foot ceilings, larger track lighting and a professional hanging system, was part of VCAR Department renovations this summer, which also included two new studios for sculpting and ceramics.

The gallery will undoubtedly create a better experience for VCAR students and build the program's reputation as it showcases the artwork of students, regional and national artists for the Liberty community and Central Virginia residents to enjoy.

The VCAR Department was established three years ago with 150 students. The program has expanded to 400 declared VCAR majors, requiring the new gallery and recent renovations.

LIBERTY CELEBRATES NATIONAL CONSTITUTION WEEK

Constitution Day, the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution on Sept. 17, 1787, is reason for a weeklong celebration at schools across the country. Liberty observed National Constitution Week by welcoming three influential political leaders.

Well-known author and evangelical David Barton kicked off the week at the Sept. 14 convocation. Barton is the founder and president of WallBuilders, a national profamily organization that seeks to encourage citizens to become involved with legislation to infuse values into their communities through the government. This year Barton was named by Time magazine as one of America's 25 most influential evangelicals for his involvement with separation between church and state issues as well as his influential books about faith and government.

On Wednesday, Sept. 16, former U.S. Representative Bob McEwen attended a reception at the Helms School of Government and addressed students at convocation. McEwen served as a representative for Ohio in the United States House of Representatives for six terms. He is a leading advocate for pro-family interests and free-market economics, with opportunities to speak to many worldwide.

Wrapping up the week at the Sept. 18 convocation was Herman Cain, executive officer and president of “THE New Voice Inc.,” a business consulting company, and “head coach” of “Herminator’s Intelligent Thinkers Movement” that works to put the American citizens back in control of government policies.

As the recipient of eight honorary doctorates, Cain has been influential in many political and business organizations through his many motivational speeches and radio talk show.

Liberty also hosted a forum following Friday’s convocation to discuss how young people can make an impact in politics and ultimately make America a better place.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY TO PUBLISH PROFESSOR'S BOOK

Dr. Jerry Falwell had a vision for Liberty University to become the Evangelical Christian equivalent to Notre Dame. This vision is quickly becoming a reality, thanks to philosophy professor Dr. David Baggett. Baggett and co-author Dr. Jerry Walls, a senior research fellow at Notre Dame, received news in September that their book, tentatively titled “Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality,” will be published by Oxford University Press.

Being published by Oxford University Press means that the book will be available in every academic library in the world, giving muchneeded credibility to the idea that intelligence and Christianity are not mutually exclusive.

Baggett announced the news in one of his classes, mentioning that he couldn’t wait to tell Liberty University Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr. Unbeknownst to him, a student quickly sent a text message to Falwell’s wife, Becki. The Falwells were working out in the gym at the nearby LaHaye Student Union and, upon receiving the message, decided to surprise Baggett in his class and congratulate him.

“That was a neat surprise. ... That’s one personable chancellor right there,” Baggett said. Baggett said the book, his seventh, is scheduled to be available summer 2011.

LAW SCHOOL ADVANCES, EXPANDS PROGRAMS

The final phase of construction on more than 11,000 square feet at the Liberty University School of Law was complete in October. The new space houses Career Services, Student Affairs, the Student Bar Association, Moot Court, Alternative Dispute Resolution Board, student organizations and more. Students can relax and study in The Commons, a two-story room flooded with natural light that also includes a café. There are also nine new private student rooms and a large conference room.

This year the law school is launching a number of dual degree programs whereby law school students will receive course credit toward a variety of Master level degrees, including the M.B.A., M.A. in Religion, M.Ed., M.A. in Counseling, and others. The law school is also making plans to launch its own M.A. in Public Policy and a Prosecution Clinic.

The school also continues to do well on bar pass rates. The national pass rate in 2007 was 89.1 percent. In 2008, the national pass rate was 92 percent, with 94.4 percent in Virginia. This year the law school achieved a 100 percent bar pass rate in 10 of the 12 jurisdictions in which its students took bar examinations as first-time takers. The law school had less than 100 percent bar pass rates in only two states, bringing its overall 2009 first-time taker bar pass rate to 75 percent. Liberty University School of Law is very proud that its three-year bar passage rates far exceed the American Bar Association's standards and place Liberty Law among the top law schools in the nation for bar passage.

"THE LAST JIHAD" AUTHOR SPEAKS AT CONVOCATION

Liberty University welcomed bestselling author Joel C. Rosenberg to the Sept. 30 convocation. Rosenberg, an evangelical Christian, is the author of the New York Times best-selling novel, "The Last Jihad," which was written nine months before 9/11 but begins with a hijacked jet and a kamikaze attack on an American city, leading to a war with Saddam Hussein over terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

Rosenberg talked about his switch from a career in politics and business, working with influential leaders like Steve Forbes and former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to writing political thrillers.

He spoke about "The Last Jihad" and how, as the eerily-familiar story climbed best-seller lists, he prayed that "the Lord would use this novel somehow to draw people into a conversation about Christ."

Immediately after the book's release in November 2002, he was caught up in a wave of media attention, with interviews on more than 160 radio and television programs in 60 days. Applause erupted when he told the students, "In that 60 days, the Lord gave us an opportunity to talk about our faith in Jesus Christ with more than 20 million people — based on the novel and the events that God had orchestrated to draw attention to it."

Rosenburg emphasized the importance of the spread of the Christian faith in Iraq and throughout the Middle East and the changing hearts of some Muslims toward Christianity. He said the Christian Church should stand beside Israel, and that we should all be individually prepared for the end times.

"This is the moment for the Church," he said. "The people who should go through the fiery furnace with her [Israel] ought to be followers of Christ."

FACS DEPT. ANNOUNCES AWARDS

Matalie Howard, assistant professor in the Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) Department, received the Outstanding Advisor Award this past summer. The award was presented by the American Association of FACS Student Unit at its 100th Annual Conference and Expo in Knoxville, Tenn.

In addition, Howard, who teaches Fashion Merchandising and Interior Design, and Kelly Kingsley, the LU FACS Student Association President, were notified that their grant proposal titled "Timeless, the Cotton Collection" was accepted by Cotton Incorporated. The company's 2010 Cotton Student Sponsorship Program furthers awareness and understanding of cotton fiber and cotton textiles among students preparing for apparel and textile-related careers.

Liberty's FACS Department will use the grant to help with its annual fashion show, scheduled for April, that benefits a local charity.