



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

SUMMER 2011

THE COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

How alumni, parents, and friends support the College of the University of Chicago



IN THIS ISSUE: 2 CHICAGO STORIES 4 12+ HOURS OF ART 8 MEET THE PARENTS 10 SHOW OF SUPPORT: KEN MONAHAN

Chicago Stories

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During winter quarter, the 21 students in the course Writing About Chicago fanned out across the city and looked—really looked—at what they found: underground supper clubs, a needle exchange program on the South Side, a fish hatchery/farm in a former meatpacking factory. Then they wrote creative nonfiction about it.

As former editor of the student paper *Chicago Weekly*, Harry Backlund, '11, thought he knew a lot about the city, especially the South Side. But when he took Writing About Chicago, he realized his knowledge was “very fragmented,” he says. For his final article (excerpted at right), he wrote about the Dorchester Projects, an odd new cultural space in Grand Crossing, a mile south of the University.

Michael Lipkin, '11, took the opposite approach, focusing on the United Church of Hyde Park on 53rd Street, one of the oldest churches in the neighborhood. He initially planned to write a short article about the church's weekly pancake breakfast for the homeless. But when he discovered the church's future existence was in doubt, he knew he was on to a story.

Cross-listed in public policy and creative writing, Writing About Chicago was taught by Chad Broughton (senior lecturer of public policy) and Ann Marie Lipinski (vice president of civic engagement and former *Chicago Tribune* editor). The course is part of Chicago Studies, an interdisciplinary “study abroad” type program based in the city.



THE CULTURE PROJECTS: THE ODD HOUSEWARMING PARTIES OF THEASTER GATES

BY HARRY BACKLUND, '11

When Theaster Gates, the potter, city planner, West Side favorite son, and most recently, darling of the contemporary art world, took a job at the University of Chicago, he decided to buy a home in the blighted neighborhood of Grand Crossing and turn it into a very different kind of Projects.

From the outside, the house on the 6900 block of South Dorchester looks much like those around it: it's sort of ugly. But inside, the space feels like a cross between a church kitchen, an art gallery, and a temple. The rooms themselves seem to ask, What is this?

Gates calls his properties the Dorchester Projects, and is designing them to facilitate a new kind of interaction between neighbors, and, just maybe, a new kind of neighborhood. This month an artists residency series began to create some of the first live gatherings around the space....

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To read the full text of both articles, go to college.uchicago.edu.



THE DIVIDED CHURCH OF HYDE PARK

BY MICHAEL LIPKIN, '11

The annual meeting at the United Church of Hyde Park is off to a rocky start. Eating a modest lunch, about 30 active congregants sit at round plastic card tables in the rec room, dressed in their Sunday best. Above their heads are a dozen or so banners with beatitudes in large felt block letters. Bill Bigelow, underneath “Swords to Plowshares,” asks for clarification on voting procedure. The crowd groans—they’ve already answered his question twice in the past few minutes.

The room is tense because up for debate is more than just a committee chairmanship or a report on outreach programs. The church is projected to run a large deficit for the fourth year in a row, a product of all-time low membership. And now there’s a proposal to drastically cut back spending at United—this meeting is the first of several to discuss the church’s strategy for the next decade. What’s at stake is the future of the United Church of Hyde Park....

Chicago Studies

Chicago Studies, an interdisciplinary program, gives College students the chance to study Chicago just like they can study other major cities in the world through study abroad programs.

The program also includes a close collaboration with the University Community Service Center (UCSC) and Career Advising and Planning Services (CAPS) to help students find volunteer and job opportunities in the city.

A short list of Chicago Studies classes:

- 1 Intensive Study of a Culture: Chicago Blues**
- 2 University of Chicago Campus**
- 3 Chicago Film History**
- 4 Feeding the City: The Urban Food Chain**
- 5 Introduction to Black Chicago, 1895 to 2005**
- 6 Child Poverty and Chicago Schools**
- 7 The Chicago School of Philosophy**

➔ The program that works

For information about supporting Chicago Studies, please contact Gwen Jessen at 773.702.7343 or g-jessen@uchicago.edu.



10:24 a.m.



12:35 p.m.



10:30 a.m.



12+ Hours of Art

By Emily Wang, '14

“In a day that features two art museums, one play, one lecture, and a movie, a cup of coffee is probably a necessary companion.”

Last year, the standard UChicago student ID was transformed. True, the cards look exactly the same. But now they open doors at arts organizations all over the city. When UChicago students show their “Arts Pass,” they receive free or discounted admission to the Art Institute, Museum of Contemporary Art, Goodman Theatre, Lyric Opera, Joffrey Ballet, Chicago Symphony, Blue Man Group, and more.

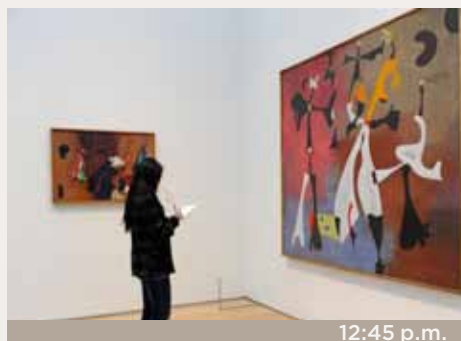
Over spring break, *College Newsletter* challenged Emily Wang, '14, to see how much free or cheap art she could pack into a single day. Wang took the dare, and her Arts Pass; here's what she did during her exhausting, inspiring 12 hours of art.



10:40 a.m.



10:25 a.m.



12:45 p.m.



12:30 p.m.

9:47 a.m.
**Union Station in
 Downtown Chicago**

I arrive at the station, with no caffeine coursing through my veins. This might be a mistake. In a day that features two art museums, one play, one lecture, and a movie, a cup of coffee is probably a necessary companion. But I resist—if I can make it through two quarters at UChicago sans coffee (I know, it's nothing short of a miracle), I can make it through one day.

10:00 a.m.
On the 151 bus

First destination: Museum of Contemporary Art. I've been to the MCA several times, once over winter break and a few times over the summer (it's free on Tuesdays, and for budget-challenged college students, it's a fantastic option). The best thing about the MCA, though, is that it's always changing. New exhibits arrive frequently, and they are never boring.

10:24 a.m.
**The Museum of
 Contemporary Art**

I show my UCID and admission is free—and it's not even Tuesday.

As I expected, nothing I've seen before remains within these walls. I let out a gasp when I enter one of the large galleries on the first floor. There's a miniature playhouse... and I can even go in. With a level of excitement slightly inappropriate for my age, I fling off my shoes and climb in. But I realize it's not quite the playhouse I initially perceived but rather a cellular compartment, a functional and space-efficient mode of housing. I stop to ponder whether or not I could live in such a space and whether such compartmentalizing is the future for our ever-growing population.

10:32 a.m.

In the same room a giant clamshell beckons. I climb into this as well. Now I know what it feels like to be a pearl.

10:40 a.m.

I head to the second floor where there's an exhibit on urban China. There's no "artwork" on display but information arranged on the walls and questions along the lines of "What are some of the effects of rapid growth?" with answers museum visitors have provided. I scrawl my own response and tack it to the wall.

11:45 a.m.
**In transit to the Art Institute
 of Chicago**

I get a quick bite to eat and hurry over to the Art Institute. Now here's a place I feel almost at home. The first exhibit I want to see is Marc Chagall's *America Windows*. We briefly studied various works at the Art Institute in the fall quarter of my humanities class, and these windows were one of the visual texts we took time to interpret. I recall being floored by the work's raw, ethereal beauty.



6:00 p.m.

**12:10 p.m.****Art Institute**

I don't think it would be right to visit the Art Institute now without stopping at the Modern Wing. The beautifully clean, minimalist architecture cleanses my visual palette before witnessing the experimental chaos of the surrealism exhibit. Magritte, Miró, and Dalí watch me from their canvases as I make my way through the corridors.

12:36 p.m.

The famous works at the Art Institute are always incredible to view in person, often because their true scale is so far removed from what you imagined. Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*, for one, is much larger than what you'd expect from the closed intimacy exuded by the scene depicted in the painting. El Greco's *Assumption of the Virgin*, with its elongated forms and dramatic splashes of color, is about 13 feet long and 7 feet wide.

1:00 p.m.

Before I leave I pay a visit to my favorite painting in the entire museum—a painting I first discovered as a junior in high school—a work by the little-known Italian portrait painter Antonio Mancini, *Resting*. A young woman lies in her bed, with a casual yet captivating expression that exudes a raw intensity I've rarely encountered in portraiture.

1:30 p.m.**CTA Red Line**

The red line takes me to Fullerton, where I get off and walk over to the Victory Gardens Theater. I purchase a ticket for \$15, which I discover is the student rush price. Tickets are normally \$35–50, \$20 for students (nonrush price) so it's an even better deal than I imagined.

I have yet to go to a single play this year, an embarrassing fact to admit. I'm seeing *Circle Mirror Transformation*, which from the description on the website follows "a flirty former actress, a pouty 16-year-old, a hippie husband, and a divorced carpenter" in a six-week community acting class. Sounds hokey? A little, but I go in with no expectations and hope for the best.

1:55 p.m.**Victory Gardens Theater**

As everyone streams in, I have a number of surprising realizations:

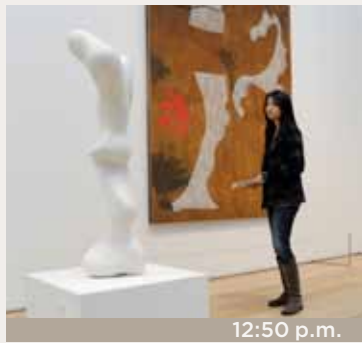
- 1 There is virtually no division between the stage and the seating area, with only four condensed rows. It's incredibly intimate.
- 2 I am one of two, maybe three, younger viewers. Apparently many other students are just as guilty as I am in my lack of theatergoing experience.
- 3 Flipping through my playbill, I discover that the girl playing the "pouty 16-year-old" is Rae Gray, a freshman at—you guessed it—the University of Chicago.

2:48 p.m.**Victory Gardens**

As the play goes on, the absurdity of my one-out-of-three-college-students status grows. The play is fresh, lively, and really, really funny, in an entirely unpretentious and honest way. Exploring the ordinary lives of these seemingly ordinary people becomes an uncommonly absorbing experience.



7:35 p.m.



12:50 p.m.



1:00 p.m.



1:55 p.m.



6:10 p.m.



1:55 p.m.

4:00 p.m.

In transit

A woman stops me outside the theater and asks, “Excuse me, miss, do you know what that play’s about? I have no idea what happened. It just sort of ended, with no resolution at all.”

I mumble a response about listening to and seeing the subtle dynamics in our everyday relationships and contemporary no-ending endings, before she interrupts with a warm chuckle, “I think I’ve just been around too long. Thank you, young lady!”

6:00 p.m.

Art Institute

After a long break for dinner, I find myself back on the steps of the Art Institute, vaguely feeling the effects of my marathon day, but ready to listen to a lecture by French industrial designer Matali Crasset.

6:10 P.M.

Art Institute lecture hall

Matali, with her signature bowl haircut and sporting a bright turquoise tunic, explains the unique vision she brings to her projects. One project, done for a high school in France, involves installing “cushion” trees in the surrounding green area. The life-size bright-yellow square cushions have tails that hook on to the branches. Students can simply pluck a cushion from the tree to sit and chat with their friends.

7:25 p.m.

Running to the Siskel

I exit five minutes early to catch the final destination on my excursion, the satirical documentary *Rabbit à la Berlin* at the Gene Siskel Film Center, with a \$7 student ticket in my pocket.

8:50 p.m.

Leaving the Siskel

The film is witty and short, just what I needed at the end of this decidedly hectic, but illuminating, day. Shockingly, I visited two museums and two theaters without wandering off course.

9:00 p.m.

On the streets of Chicago

Walking back to the train station, I remember a line from *Circle Mirror Transformation* that the acting instructor, Marty, says to her class: “I hope that you all feel safe here, and open, and willing to go for it.”

The Arts Pass gives us an extraordinary gift, the gift of seeing Chicago as this same sort of space for openness and pushing boundaries—we just have to be willing to go for it.



Ars longa, vita brevis

The UChicago Arts Pass is made possible with the support of Robert Feitler, X’50, and Joan Feitler, AM’55, other alumni and friends, and partnering cultural institutions.

For more information, or to contribute to the Arts Pass program, please contact Gwen Jessen at 773.702.7343 or g-jessen@uchicago.edu.



Alise O'Brien

“Studying and living
in Paris at age 20—what
could be better?”

Meet the Parents

UChicago’s parent leaders combine active support for
the College with a hands-off approach to their students.



Rick Giusto

“Every time we talk
to him he’s somewhere
in the city.”

“We were the least likely people to get involved with a parents’ committee at the University of Chicago,” says Rick Giusto. He and his wife Sherrie, parents of a third-year student, serve as vice chairs of the Parent and Family Leadership Council. They will become chairs of the council next year. “Our goal for our son and our other kids has always been to stay out of their way and let them have their own experience.”

“College is a time to grow in independence,” says Alise O’Brien, head of the Parent and Family Partners and also the parent of a third-year student. “When they go to school, they need to take total ownership of their academic life.”

But a hands-off approach doesn’t mean these parents aren’t watching their students’ experiences and cheering them on from afar. And it didn’t take them long to think of five things their kids are enjoying at Chicago that they wish they’d experienced in college.

FIVE REASONS FOR PARENTS TO ENVY COLLEGE STUDENTS



1

The Core curriculum provides “a strong base of learning and a way of thinking that students don’t always have when they come in,” says Giusto. “It can build intellectual confidence.”



2

Ten weeks in Paris. “Studying and living in Paris at age 20—what could be better?” says O’Brien, whose daughter went to Paris last fall.



3

A big-city experience. “Every time we talk to him he’s somewhere in the city,” says Giusto of his son, who attends sporting events and concerts around Chicago and interned at Pitchfork Media and Second City. “He’s taking full advantage of everything the school has to offer.”



4

House and home. Her daughter lives off campus with five friends from Burton-Judson, says O’Brien, and is still involved with Vincent House, where she lived for her first two years. “The House system breaks down a large university into a small, diverse, and inclusive living group. It’s such a great way to live.”



5

Scav Hunt. As first-year participants in the annual College tradition, “my daughter and her friend had to crash a high-school prom, be crowned king and queen, and come back with a picture as proof,” says O’Brien. “How zany is that?”

Join the club

Members of the Parent and Family Leadership Council (PFLC) support the Parents Fund with annual unrestricted gifts of \$5,000 or more. The committee is an advisory, development, and outreach committee that meets twice a year on campus.

Members of Parent and Family Partners (PFP) support the Fund with gifts of \$1,000 or more. Members make welcome calls to new families, solicit parents for the Parents Fund, and host regional events.

Both volunteer committees are offering a gift match to the Parents Fund for Housing Activities. Members will match dollar-for-dollar any gift of \$1,000 or more, up to the first \$100,000. The match is good until June 30.

For more information, please contact Ann Hubbard at 773.702.2459 or hubbarda@uchicago.edu.



Show of Support: Ken Monahan, AB'95

“You have to understand, I intensely love the University of Chicago,” says Ken Monahan, AB'95. “Intensely.” Monahan’s gifts to the College include endowing a Foreign Language Acquisition Grant (FLAG) for the study of Arabic and a pledge to the Odyssey Scholarship Challenge.

An economics major at Chicago, Monahan began his career in derivatives trading: “My career was beaten to within an inch of its life several times,” he says. During his 12 years at Deutsche Bank, he helped to set up the first all-electronic options exchange in the United States; to establish a stock exchange in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; and to legalize foreign investment in Saudi Arabia. In 2010 he founded his own advisory company, Vizier Ltd., in New York.

Monahan spoke with the *College Newsletter* about philanthropy, anonymity, ethnomusicology, and more.

Who were your most memorable professors at Chicago?

My favorite class was Econ 271, Introduction to International Finance, with Mike Woodford [AB'77]. It used to take me 40 hours a week to do his problem sets. Just the homework for this class was a full-time job. I loved the guy. I worshipped him.

A friend of mine, Mark, and I sat in the very front row. We were in the coffee shop in the Social Science Research Building one day, arguing over a Woodford problem set, and Robert Lucas [AB'59, PhD'64] walks by and says, “Oh look, it’s the Woodford protégés.” We all knew he was going to win the Nobel Prize someday—of course he did. We were like, wow. Not only does he know who we are, he knows what we’re doing!



“After I read *Titan* I thought, Rockefeller gave a fixed percentage to charity every year—I respect that, I should do that.”

Any particularly memorable Core classes?

I took Western Civ from Karl Weintraub [AB’49, AM’52, PhD’57]. One day we were talking about the Reformation and predestination. I said, “Predestination? That doesn’t make any sense. How could anyone believe in that?”

And Karl Weintraub says, “*Mister... Monahan... how dare you try to read the mind of God? Just shows how presumptuous you are.*”

When I was walking out of Rockefeller Chapel after graduating, I remember thinking to myself, I will never work this hard again.

Has that been true?

Hell yes. Keep in mind, from 2004 to 2008, I boarded an international flight every four and a half days. And I’ve never come close to working as hard as I did as an undergraduate at the University of Chicago.

When did you make your first gift?

I made my first real gift in 2000, when I was the five-year reunion chair. I had recently read the book *Titan*, about John D. Rockefeller. Rockefeller gave a fixed percentage of his income to charity every year, even when he was a 14-year-old grocery store clerk making 13 cents an hour. His commitment to philanthropy was lifelong.

He was also unbelievably ruthless. He was simultaneously a sincerely devoted Baptist and an unbelievably ruthless killer—commercially I mean. Though if you’re related to anyone in the coal miners’ union, you might look at things more literally. I actually am related to coal miners, and my dad told me they would have thought I totally deserved to go to the University of Chicago. It evened the score a little.

After I read that book I thought, Rockefeller gave a fixed percentage to charity every year—I respect that, I should do that.

Why give to your alma mater?

I consider a large portion of the person I am to have been manufactured at the University of

Chicago, according to the University of Chicago ethos. I have an intense level of loyalty to Chicago.

When I make fundraising calls for the University, I’m terrible at it. The University of Chicago had such a powerful influence on me, I assume it was the same for everyone.

So when I call someone, and they don’t want to give, I’m just bewildered. Then I find myself making ridiculous arguments like, “Look, you’re going to spend some extra money today. You’re going to take a cab instead of the subway. You’re going to supersize it. You could afford to give the University of Chicago five dollars.”

The main thing is not the amount, it’s that you give at all—participation is really important for university rankings. I’d even encourage an alum who hates the University to give a penny. They’d feel good because it costs more than that to process it. I’d feel good because they’d still be contributing to the participation numbers.

Why did you make your early gifts anonymously?

I’m just not about flash. To give in my own name felt like trying to attract attention. Outward appearances have never been important to me.

When I was the co-head of US equity derivatives trading at Deutsche Bank, my boss, this European guy, very polished, calls me in to his office. He says, “Ken, would you do me a favor? Would you stand up? What’s at the bottom of your pants there?” My cuffs had basically completely come apart and were just strings hanging down. He says, “You’re coming in every day looking like you’re down on your luck. I know you’re running a successful business, but no one else can tell. You represent me, and I can’t have that.”

I had never cared about how things looked, but there comes a time when it does matter. So I started wearing a suit to work.

In the same way I used to be super-private about my philanthropy. I had no need to show other people what I was doing. I stopped giving anonymously because someone pointed out to

me that if I let other people know, it might encourage them to give also.

Why did you decide to sponsor a FLAG grant?

Before I went to the Arab world, I had a lot of strong opinions about it, as many Americans do. I was a huge supporter of the Iraq war. Then I got to the Arab world and I thought, what were we thinking? The kinds of problems that we had in Iraq were totally knowable, but apparently, not enough people knew them.

The American understanding of the Arab world leaves a lot to be desired—and it’s a tragedy for both us and them. I wanted to do something, in my small way, to bridge this gap that I see as huge and yawning.

I didn’t want to put my name on the grant, so I named it after Ibn Rushd, an Arab scholar who translated Plato and wrote a bunch of treatises on his work.

Have you met any of the grant recipients?

A couple of years ago I had a milkshake on Shake Day with two of them. One had gone to Damascus. She found out that in the 1950s the United States sent a bunch of jazz musicians to Syria for a cultural exchange. So since the 1950s there has been an underground jazz scene in Syria. She actually changed her whole degree around to study the ethnomusicology of Syrian jazz. Then she won a Fulbright to study it some more.

That is what I’m trying to do here. And I learned something. I’ve never even been to Syria. Syrian jazz—who knew? And ethnomusicology—I had never even heard that word before I met her.

➔ Supersize it!

To contribute to the Ibn Rushd Fund, which supports the study of Arabic, contact Gwen Jessen at 773.702.7343 or g-jessen@uchicago.edu.



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Photography: Dan Dry and Chris Kirzeder

Harper Library: Then and now

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Two years ago, renovations began on Harper Memorial Library, now a 24-hour study space.

Simple changes opened up the floor of the main reading room, and the circulation desk is now a coffee shop. The College seeks naming-level gifts to restore the reading rooms in Harper and Stuart to showcase their original grandeur, while upgrading them to function for students in the 21st century.

What hasn't changed since 1945? The workload.



Archival photo (1945) and 2009 photo merged by Avi Schwab, AB'03.