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SGA Meeting Hosts Provost Connell

MICAH CRONIN

Provost and Dean of the faculty, Jack Connell, addressed the student body at Monday's Student Government Association (SGA) meeting, regarding concerns and questions surrounding Kevin Jackson's sudden dismissal. Jackson was placed on administrative leave which went into effect the Friday before February Break. He will be officially terminated at the end of the semester.

Friesen stated SGA hopes

See **SGA** page 2

President To Teach Fall Course

JORDAN TRAUTWEIN

President of the college, Shirley Mullen, will teach a cross disciplinary humanities class next semester. According to Mullen, her course will fulfill a Humanities 101 requirement, which seeks to foster "critical thinking, character, creativity, communication and citizenship or community building."

With the recent changes to the integrative studies (IS) requirements the introduction of a few new courses to make fulfilling the requirements easier on students, according to Provost Jack Connell. These include new, low credit science courses and three general humanities courses, Connell disclosed at a Student Government (SGA) meeting earlier this month.

Overall, Mullen said she believes the new IS requirements will help Houghton realize its mission statement of academic rigor while making the school welcom-



ANTHONY BURDO

President Shirley Mullen will teach Humanities 101, a cross disciplinary course for first year students. The course is part of new IS requirements which will take effect next year.

ing to transfer students.

Professor of English and Director of IS requirements, Susan Bruxvoort-Lipscomb, said, "[Mullen is] absolutely the best qualified person in the college to teach [Human-

ities 101] because she has two PhDs. She has a PhD in history and in philosophy. Those are two of the disciplines [covered in the course], so she was excited about teaching this course."

Mullen said she hoped "students would come away from the class with a larger understanding of what it

See **MULLEN** page 2

Millions Donated For Indoor Arena

MICAH CRONIN

Last week an anonymous donor committed \$2.4 million toward the equestrian center facilities, according to a statement released by President of the college, Shirley Mullen. "Given the importance of this program for Houghton, both in recruitment and in regional connections, this is a welcome gift," she stated.

According to equestrian program director and professor, Joanne Young, the funds will be put toward a new indoor arena. The current arena, she said, "is booked so fully that it is extremely difficult to find an hour when it would be available for boarders to ride their own horses, for CHA certified current students to book riding lessons to teach, or for professors to school horses to keep their training level tuned and elevated. Having a second, larger arena will solve that scheduling problem."



FACEBOOK.COM/HOUGHTONEQUESTRIANPROGRAM

An initial gift commitment of \$2.4 million from an anonymous donor will be put toward a new indoor arena at the Equestrian Center.

Equestrian student, Savannah Harms '17, concurred. "The new ring is really exciting because it will give the equestrians extra space for riding, which

means more students will be able to spend more time riding and developing their skills." The Equestrian program is growing, she said, so the donation is coming "just

in time."

Young said the arena will be 100 feet wide and 245 feet long, with an attached

See **ARENA** page 3

LGBT Students To Give Faith Journey

MICAH CRONIN

Courtney Walters '17 and Philip Maenza '17 will be giving their faith journeys next week, focusing on their understandings of faith and sexual orientation. Both students identify as gay as well as Christian. Their talks will take place in the Center for the Arts (CFA) recital hall Tuesday, March 28, at 7 p.m.

Psychology professor and former counseling center director Michael Lastoria cooperated with Maenza and Walters to plan the event. According to Maenza, Lastoria "wanted to have the cam-

See **LGBT** page 3

World // Religious Symbols Banned In EU Workplaces



ANTHONY BURDO

DAN BELLEROSE

claimed the decision was made to protect the freedom of businesses to enforce their own dress code, and operate as they feel would best benefit the work environment.

The ruling was made over the cases of two women in France and Belgium who were dismissed for refusing to remove hijabs in the workplace. According to Al Jazeera, because of the circumstances surrounding the ruling, many critics are calling it a “thinly veiled measure targeting Muslims.”

But Muslims aren’t the only group being targeted by the ruling. It would also allow employers to prohibit Jewish kippahs, Sikh turbans, and even Christian jewelry such as crosses or rings. Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis said that “the decision sends a signal to all religious groups in Europe.”

A recent ruling by the European Court of Justice may allow employers to prohibit employees from wearing clothing with “a political, philosophical, or religious sign” according to Al Jazeera. The court

According to The Independent, Rabbis aren’t the only ones speaking out against the ruling, as the United Sikhs advocacy group called the ruling a “disturbing ruling allow[ing] employers to override fundamental human rights.”

While the ruling has garnered considerable backlash, many conservative leaders in the EU find it to be a refreshing step in the right direction. François Fillon, a conservative candidate in the French presidential election, in an article in the Independent, called the ruling an “immense relief” and an aid to “social peace”. He believes the ruling is an essential step toward correctly dealing with the influx of Muslim immigrants into Europe, along with other attempts to ban the burka and hijab in certain public places in France last year.

Aside from the religious

implications of the ban, it has broader implications for the general public. If this ruling is upheld, workplaces will not only be able to ban religious symbols, but philosophical and political symbols as well. This means that any clothing associated with an ideology, be it political, philosophical, or religious could be banned from workplaces.

The court ruling did acknowledge that the ban may constitute an “indirect discrimination” if people adhering to a particular belief, such as Muslims, are adversely affected by the ban. But that discrimination, according to an article in the Independent, would be permissible if it was “objectively justified by a legitimate aim.” The difficulty in individual rulings, would be discovering if the aim was legitimate - such as a policy of neutrality - or if it really construes direct discrimination against a people

group.

Many feminist Muslim campaign groups have also spoken out against the decision, saying that it unfairly affects Muslim women, and may serve to push them out of the workforce. As many Muslim women refuse to take off the traditional style of dress, it may prevent them from holding jobs with certain companies, and adversely affect the community as a whole.

The court expressed concerns over the potential outcomes of the ruling, stating that “we fear that employers will treat it as a license to discriminate at the point of hire,” but stood by the ruling despite concerns.★

Dan is a senior international development major with minors in world religion and political science.

SGA from page 1

to serve as a “bridge” to foster “communication between the administration and the student body.” Students were then invited to direct questions to SGA President Joanna Friesen ‘17, who then moderated them to Connell.

Connell noted while the specifics of the situation surrounding Jackson’s firing are confidential, “We were aware of the disruption” Jackson’s termination would cause. However, Connell stated, “we felt the decision needed to be made” regardless. “I’m not surprised to be standing here with you all today,” he said.

“The dynamic of this situation is that a lot of people are saying a lot of things, a lot of which is wildly untrue,” Connell said. He asked participants in the session to avoid asking questions with the purpose of trying to “get at what really happened,” as the college is unable to legally divulge that information.

Tahsha Keith ‘17 asked Connell, “How did you know?” about the potential fallout from the decision to fire Jackson. “What did you look into to understand what the effects would be? How did you approach that? As someone who has experienced a lot of fallout from this, it’s hard for me to under-

stand that specific aspect.”

“We didn’t have a lot of time here,” Connell responded. “But we tried to anticipate” concerns “as best as possible”.

“We didn’t have months to prepare a contingency plan for every scenario,” he stated.

Genesis Allen ‘19, a music industry student, asked Connell to describe the process for firing a professor. Connell stated the process varies and depends on the situation, but noted that except in “egregious” cases, there is a “discovery phase” in which “concerns are investigated.” Connell said these concerns are “communicated with the professor” in question, and “after other efforts toward resolution have failed,” the professor may be terminated.

In regard to terminating a professor mid-semester, Connell said it is within Houghton’s right as an employer to do so because New York State is an “at will state.” This means an employer can terminate an employee at any time, for any reason, without cause or notice. An employee also has the same right to resign without cause or notice. There is “no legal recourse” for an employee dismissed under this law, according to Connell. There are exceptions in the case of tenured professors, though Connell said this was “not relevant in this particular case.”

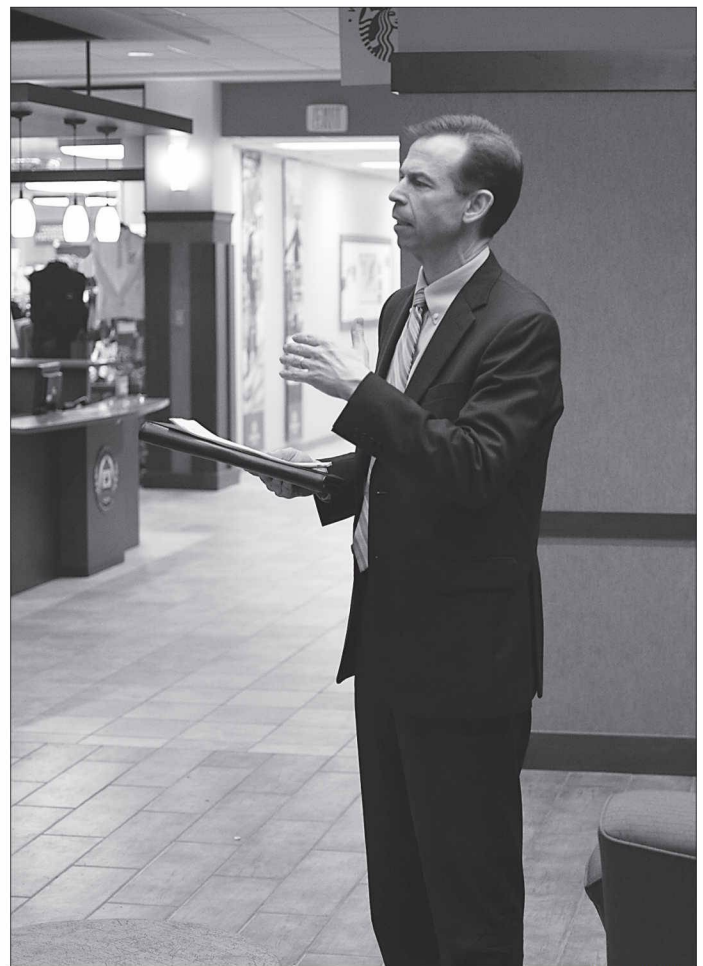
Liv Dobmeier ‘19 noted that while a recent Star article quoted Connell saying the college does not believe

Jackson engaged in any sexual misconduct, this assurance was not included in a campus wide email Connell sent late last week. “That made the rumors that may or may not be happening even stronger, because you did not fully address it,” she said.

“I was trying as much as possible to keep the memo general...it wasn’t my intention in that to get into the specifics of the situation,” Connell said. “That quote was in response to a direct question that I was asked, and I felt that it was appropriate to say in the context in which it was asked. I’m not here to say there was some grand strategic reason that wasn’t in the memo, I was just trying to keep the memo a little bit more general.”

Ben Rucquoi ‘20 asked if a statute of limitations on the confidentiality of the situation, and if eventually students would know why Jackson was fired. Connell said, “I’m not a lawyer so I don’t know the answer to that question. I’m not aware of one, there could be one, although I’m not aware of a situation in which after a certain amount of time [confidentiality was lifted]. This is a question in which Dale Wright, the Director of Human Resources, would be helpful.”

Allen asked a question which she said she thought “would be a good final question” for those who attended the meeting in support of the former professor. “After seeing all of the pain and the hurt



LILY BRUNNER

Provost Jack Connell addressed students at Monday’s SGA meeting. Students were invited to ask questions regarding former professor Kevin Jackson’s sudden dismissal last month.

and the destruction to our department and the money lost, and all of the things which all of us students have had to recoup from after this decision was made, going a month in the past, would you make the same decision? Or wait till the end of the semester?”

“I don’t know that I have

a lot more to say [about that]”, Connell said. “We were aware of the fact that a mid semester change like this would be highly disruptive and upsetting, and felt that it was the appropriate decision to make anyway. The facts of the situation haven’t changed.★

ARENA from page 1

barn that will be 30 feet by 245 feet. This will be much larger than the current 60 foot by 145 foot arena. “The size of the new arena will allow full size competition jumping courses to be set, with a warm-up jump area at one end or a full 20m x 60m dressage competition arena. This will make it possible to prepare students and horses

more accurately to train, compete and coach clients,” she stated.

She continued, “With the new indoor arena, we will be able to schedule conferences and clinics without having to worry about how to manage to rearrange regular classes. So we will be able to schedule more events to expand our current students’ equestrian education (which is already ranked nationally as top-notch) that will also draw in more outside spectators, auditors and participants.”

Included in the plans for the arena are solar panels

and the possibly of geothermal heat for both the existing and new arenas, said Young. “That would give us a green footprint on the environment,” she said.

Aside from a new arena, the equestrian center will also add new spectator seating, and student storage areas, Young said. “Currently, there are no such storage spaces. So non-equestrians living near equestrians in the dorms get ‘treated’ to traces of horse-barn odor, even when equestrian students keep their boots and riding pants in plastic tote bins or

bags,” she noted.

Larissa Strappello ‘08, instructor and Equestrian Center Facilities Manager, said, “The new facility will allow us to expand our services to the local Western New York equine community. Through this expansion it will allow our equine students more networking opportunities and give them that much more real life work experience. We are very excited that the Lord is finally bringing the dream of a new indoor arena to life!”

Mullen noted the project will not incur short or long

term debt. “Additionally, the project will include endowment funds to contribute to the long-term sustainability of the entire Equestrian Center. Funds will be committed as they are received. It is our goal to have the project completed prior to the 2018 academic year,” she said.

Vice President for Advancement and External Relations Karl Sisson said, “This is a transformational moment” for the program. “We are highly optimistic that we will receive more donors [following the initial gift], and we already have.”★

MULLEN from page 1

means to be human, both in the sense of being made in the Image of God, and in the sense of being part of a centuries-long global conversation about the meaning and purpose of our lives.”

The course is intended to fulfill general education requirements for first year or transfer students, but can be taken as an elective by upper-level students, Connell said. Mullen stated, “Whatever one decides to major in or work at, a Christian liberal arts education should prepare one to be more fully human, as God intended us to be, in that major or in that occupation. A class in the humanities also helps one to identify those human traits that transcend culture, gender, economic status, etc. and how that ‘humanness’ can then be enriched by an understanding of the rich diversity that exists within the human community.”

Lipscomb said Mullen

was approached about teaching the course partly because “there has been some retirements in the history department and the college has decided to delay for one year hiring in history.” She continued, “There was an opportunity. We needed someone to teach this course and we thought of her as someone who was a great teacher in Westmont and has had a great career in teaching and super qualified to do this. We approached her and asked her if she’d be interested.”

Included already in the course offerings for fall of 2017 are also new science courses that are more conducive to fulfilling general education requirements. Lipscomb described them as “two hour courses” with the accompanying lab “built into the time so you don’t have to go to a separate lab time.” According to the 2017-2018 course catalog, there will be the options of Science as a Human Endeavor: Cosmology and Science and Society: Nuclear Age taught by professors of physics Kurt Aikens and Mark Yuly. ★

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LGBT from page 1

pus be able to hear a different side of the LGBT Christian narrative. Both Courtney and I have been wanting to share our stories in a public capacity. So it just kind of worked out.”

“I’ve always wanted to give my faith journey at Houghton,” Walters said, and noted she was told she would not be allowed to do so in a chapel service. She continued, “So if this the platform that I have to do it, then I’ll do it. And I couldn’t have picked a better person to do it with than Phil.”

“Only one narrative of LGBT Christians is told at Houghton and advocated,” Maenza continued, and “we are hoping for nothing more than to share our stories of

faith, love and friendship while navigating a same-sex sexual orientation” and Christian faith. Walters concurred and stated, “I think that it’s important for Houghton, especially since it’s a conservative Wesleyan institution, for them to see that just because I identify as gay, doesn’t mean that I am any less of a Christian than other people.”

Maenza and Walters both agreed their time at Houghton has hindered, but also helped, their growth as Christians. Maenza noted, “It hasn’t been easy. People are constantly questioning the genuineness of my faith and/or sexual orientation. People I don’t even know somehow think it is their right to judge or overstep bounds with inappropriate questions. [This] made for a lot of self loathing and self doubt and loneliness.” However, Maenza

feels this pressure “really made [him] focus on God and God alone and [he] learned to not always put [his] faith in the church, which are humans, which make mistakes and misinterpret Scriptures.”

Walters stated, “I think Houghton has helped me because I’ve had to come to my view kind of on my own...I believe it in my core, and I know that it’s not influenced by the community around me but it’s part of who I am. I also think that it’s opened me up to discourse on other topics- I talk to people about race a lot more, and different socioeconomic classes. [My sexual orientation] has pushed me to talk about other minority groups’ topics as well.”

Walters did note a lack of support on campus as “difficult.” She stated, “Just because we have a disagreement on this one theological

topic, does not mean that I am different than them.... I think that if they can see that I still love God and grow, then they’ll understand, ‘hey, homosexuals aren’t evil.’”

Walters also said it is challenging to be unsure of “safe people” to talk to about her faith and sexuality. “It’s hard to know which professors I can go to and talk about this. I wish that was a little different...[I wish Houghton showed us] some professors we can talk to.”

Colleen Shannon ‘17, who also is a gay Christian, said she shared similar struggles. “The most challenging aspect was navigating this challenging aspect of my life without support,” she said. “In my junior year, I had to strip down my faith to bare bones, all I knew was that I believed that God existed. All these voices around me were telling me that I was wrong, that I was

evil....As I sort of rebuilt my faith with voices that told me it was okay to be gay and Christian.” She cited new struggles she has faced this year. She continued, “Going into my senior year, the challenge was finding a place of belonging...the place that Houghton is can’t welcome us on equal terms, and they’ve been working really hard, but ultimately it comes down to your perspective where, if you think that my lifestyle omits me from the kingdom of God, then how can you love me the same?”

The duo’s faith journey’s precede a four person panel discussion on LGBT students at Houghton on the following Saturday night as part of the Student Government Association coffeehouse series. Along with Maenza and Walters, Lily Brunner ‘17 and Micah Cronin ‘17 will participate in the panel.★

Student-Created Organization Encourages Interfaith Collaboration

ABIGAIL TAYLOR

volved in the world. He doesn't just dream about doing things, he does them."

Today, the organization, now officially titled "The Global Symmetry Project," is in the process of becoming an official nonprofit. It has also begun to expand out of Western New York, and into an international project. The central missions of the project are fostering dialogue, catalyzing action, and seeking justice. According to the project's official statement, "We envision a world in which 'Global Symmetry' is possible. We seek to create symmetrical interfaith communities both in the 'developed' and 'developing' world." The project also states, "To do this work, we partner faith communities in well-off areas to those in areas with a need for sanitation, good governance, or simply peace."

According to Bellerose, the growth of the Global Symmetry project out of Houghton and into the international community began after spending four and a half months in Tanzania last spring. He experienced the effects of Christian development organizations, and felt lead to extend the reaches of the organization to interfaith development. He said, "What this basically means is that we work with communities from diverse faith backgrounds to create sustainable, holistic development." The different ways in which this can be achieved are through economic or agricultural devel-

Two years ago, Daniel Bellerose '17 started an interfaith environmental project in Western New York. It was a way to connect faith groups in the area to the local environmental movement. His original intent for the project, he said, was to engage faith groups in the surrounding area, like those of Rochester and Buffalo, where there are diverse faith communities. Bellerose also created the organization as a way to use his major, International Development, and his minors, World Religions and Political Science, in a tangible way.

Sustainability coordinator, Brian Webb, has been a mentor to Bellerose for a few years. "Dan is passionate about creation care, sustainability, cultures, and people in general," he said. "He very clearly sees and understands the dynamic interactions between humans and the environment, and has a sophisticated view about how to address environmental and human challenges together."

Bellerose's wife, Rachel Bellerose '17, said, "Dan is the sort of person who's always coming up with new ideas, new ways to be in-



MICHAEL SIEVERS

Daniel Bellerose '17 has started an interfaith project called "The Global Symmetry Project," which is currently in the process of becoming an official nonprofit organization.

opment projects, and urban or rural sustainability projects.

Rachel Bellerose also went to Tanzania last spring. She said, "While we were in Tanzania, Dan started noticing a dissonance in how development organizations were focusing their contributions. Although Tanzania is a religiously diverse country, there tends to be a lot more aid going out to Christians than to Muslims or traditional religious groups." She said Bellerose saw this as problematic,

because the unequal aid could be a source of competition and ill feeling between religious groups. Thus, the Global Symmetry Project began.

Bellerose is currently in the first phase of organizational development. He said, "I just recently hired on my first round of interns, which includes people from all around the world, we had applicants from Moldova and Brazil." Their website, on track to be up and running by July, is being created by Hough-

ton alum Mason Wilkes '16. The fundraising process is also set to begin in July, which includes raising the necessary funds to become a nonprofit and branding. The goal, according to Bellerose, is to begin development and sustainability projects in five years. These projects will likely take place in the United States and Tanzania.

For more information on the Global Symmetry Project, contact director@globalsymmetryproject.org. ★

Art Exhibition Features Student Work



MICHAEL SIEVERS

Every year, the Ortlip Gallery hosts a juried art exhibition to display the work of student artists.

RACHEL BELLEROSE

The Annual Student Juried Art Exhibition, now on its 28th year, celebrates and showcases the art and talent of students not always seen in the public sphere. The

event celebrates the talent of students from all disciplines, from the visual arts to international development, giving them the opportunity to show their work to the wider college community. "I really love the student show," said Emily Friesen '17. "It's exciting for the

students because you're professionally showing your work to a wider audience." Friesen, who works as a gallery assistant, also stated the show is one of her favorites of the year because so many people attend in support of their friends and family members. "It's lovely

to see the gallery so full," she said.

Assistant professor of art/printmaking and director of exhibitions at the Ortlip Art Gallery, Alicia Taylor, also expressed excitement at the Student Exhibition. She stated that the design stage before the show is one of her favorite parts, and said, "The space with blank white walls at the start of every exhibition design becomes my canvas, and the students' work becomes the language that I'm tasked with bringing together to form visual statements. The goal of the exhibit as a whole is to take these statements and string them together with very intentional methods to create a story that viewers can experience when walking through the space." Taylor has been managing the Ortlip Gallery Exhibitions for the last three years.

The actual selection process of the show is in some ways intensive. A juror is chosen to judge the art, and he or she focuses on the quality, craftsmanship, and concept of the submissions. The process

is impartial, says Taylor, each student's name remaining anonymous as the juror examines the work.

On the part of students accepted to the exhibition, there is a presiding feeling of affirmation of their artistic abilities. Ellen McCutcheon '18 said, "I'm honored to see my art in the show. It's really affirming as an artist to see my work on display." This is McCutcheon's first year in the exhibition, accepted for her submission of a small piece she painted while studying abroad in Tanzania.

Hannah Banks '18, who has submitted work to the show every year, said that her favorite part of the exhibition is, "getting to see my fellow artists' work and seeing it in a gallery setting..."

I think the collective student work compliments each other well." You can see Banks', McCutcheon's, and other students' work tomorrow, March 18, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Many of the pieces are also available for purchase. ★

Professor “Connects Cultures” in Oman



COURTESY OF LAURA ALEXEICHIK

BETHANY KUIKEN

experiential learning experience.

Earlier this semester, Laura Alexeichik, assistant professor of sport, recreation, and wellness, spent three weeks in the Middle East working on a research project through Connecting Cultures. Alexeichik spent her time in Oman, located in the Arabian Peninsula, and bordering Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and United Arab Emirates.

Alexeichik graduated with her Ph.D. two years ago from Indiana University. Her dissertation focused on research she did with Connecting Cultures in Oman. Her trip to Oman this year was an opportunity to continue research looking at the impacts of participation within a culturally focused

According to their official website, Connecting Cultures is a unique educational program that gathers students from countries in Europe and the Arab world to promote intentional, face to face dialogue in short journeys through the desert of Oman. “This program brings youth that are 18-25 years old from all over Europe and the Arab world,” Alexeichik stated. “There are twenty participants: ten from Europe and ten from the Arab world.” She continued, “Connecting Cultures brings them together for a five day desert expedition that focuses on intentional discourse and dialogue towards building respect and mutual understanding.”

The environment the participants endure creates a level playing field. “They’re in the desert,” Alexeichik explained. “They’re hiking. They have no

cell phones. They’re going to the bathroom outside. They are sleeping in tents or under the stars and they come to realize how powerful the environment is while having these conversations. You’re exposed.” She added, “Everyone is tired, hungry, or covered in sand and it neutralizes the participants by creating an uncomfortable environment for everyone. It allows them to have these real and raw conversations.”

The purpose of this program is to expose the stereotypes and assumptions these young people have by bringing them through an intentional curriculum. “One of the major parts of the curriculum is having conversations about what people value,” Alexeichik said. “They come to find that the values of people from the Arab world and from Europe are the same, that we hold the same values and we’re not so different.”

Although Alexeichik was not a participant or a facilitator, as an outsider she was still able to interact with the participants as she completed her research. Her research provides her with a unique perspective that can impact the influence she has in the Houghton community as a professor. Assistant professor of recreation and equestrian studies, Andrea Boon, anticipates the continued impact Alexeichik’s research will have on students. “We are excited about the depth of knowledge and experience Dr. Laura Alexeichik brings to the Sport, Recreation



COURTESY OF LAURA ALEXEICHIK

Houghton professor Laura Alexeichik spent three weeks in Oman with unique educational program “Connecting Cultures.”

and Wellness department,” she said. “Her continued research and intercultural connections opens doors to cross cultural student engagement and encourages continued growth of our student’s worldviews.”

Cross-cultural engagement is necessary for breaking down stereotypes and assumptions, but it often doesn’t come with-

out a cost. “We often have to come to grips with our own ways of thinking about others and be willing to expand our views and opinions about others,” Alexeichik shared. “If we limit the ways in which we think about people different from us we become a part of the problem, rather than the solution.”★

Musical Showcases Campus Talent

KATHRYN MOORE

’18, Lauren Grifoni ’19, and Daniel Bussey ’20.

“The cast is just fantastic, versatile, and flexible,” Cox said. “I was amazed at how prepared they are, and how willing they are to push boundaries with the characters they are playing.”

This is not Cox’s first directing experience. Previously, she taught lyric theater and directed many shows in community theater as well. “Professor Cox is sweet, brilliant and hilarious,” said Grifoni. “She has given us lots of freedom for deciding aspects of our characters. She is also a really good dance choreographer and has taught me a lot about the tango.”

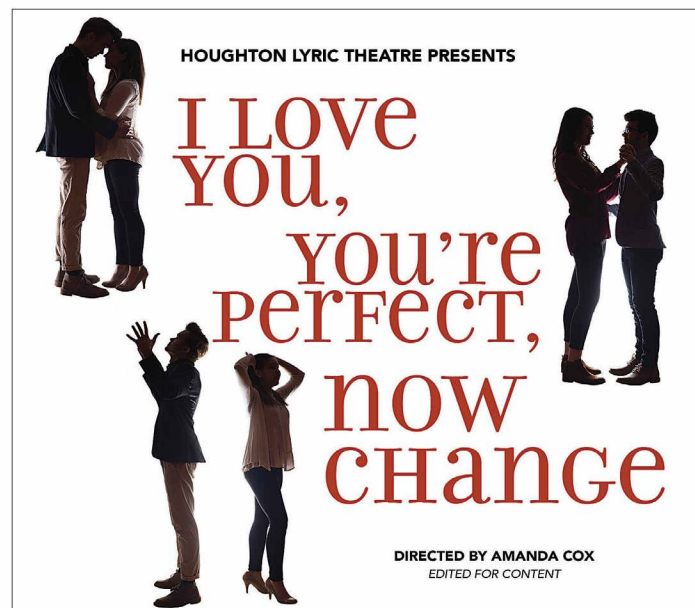
However, theater does not come without obstacle. Cox commented on the costume changes needed to be carefully planned and executed, as there are costume changes for every performer in every scene. Grifoni and Passero talked about the difficulty of portraying different characters, and how that has pushed them as actors. Passero said, “Needing to have different voices, and sometimes different accents, throughout the show can get

pretty challenging.” Grifoni added, “We all play a ton of different characters and it really has tested out acting. I get to play a nine year old girl, an elderly woman, and everyone in between.”

One acting exercise that has helped with this task has had the cast performing a song on stage while Cox held up cards with different emotions written on them. The performer would then have to portray each emotion as it was held up throughout the song. Cox has challenged the students to think of each character as a brand new slate, and not to let any aspect of a different character bleed through between scenes as every scene is different than the last.

The student cast members all say that they have been touched by this show in one way or another. When anyone is performing as a character, they undergo the wonderful possibility of learning something about themselves.

“I find that with any show you will walk away with something you didn’t have before; whether that is a new outlook or knowing that you just spent two hours laughing through an



COURTESY OF AMY TETTA

This year’s musical features four student actors portraying different characters experiencing different stages of relationships.

incredible experience,” Passero explained. Grifoni went further and shared, “What is cool about this show is that it shows that love can be complicated and that is a good thing. There are times when love is great and there are times when love causes you the worst kind of pain, but all of it is so rewarding. The nice thing about the musical is that it treats

all of these concepts lightly and is very satirical. It is relatable to anyone, no matter what age you are.”

I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change will be performed this weekend in the Recital Hall. Cox said, “This is a fantastic show. It is hilarious, touching, and I think that people will have an amazing time.”★

Ignorance and Santa Claus



MICHAEL SIEVERS

JONAN PILET

When I was eight I got into a heated discussion with some friends about the existence of Santa. I was thoroughly convinced. I cited evidence.

“My parents say he’s real. Last year, I found muddy footprints on the kitchen floor.”

“I bet they were your dad’s shoes. Did you check if they matched your dad’s boots?”

“There were half eaten carrots on the roof.”

“Did you ask if your parents threw them up there?”

“The milk we set out was half drunk.”

“M a y b e your dad drank-”

“Ha! He hates milk.”

Despite my friends best efforts, I went on believing in Santa.

When I was asked to write an opinions piece this week, I struggled. When controversial issues arise I often find myself listening and rarely acting. The idea of taking a stance, especially a strong stance

scares me. Frankly, I’m ignorant. I don’t know enough to speak with authority on issues of race or immigration, or any hot topic issue. And even when I’ve done the research and learned about the issue, I find myself reluctant to speak, thinking others know more.

My strongest and most

“Don’t be content with vague ideas and slogans, but educate yourself of the issues you’re passionate about.”

divisive opinions involve comma and semicolon usage.

How can ignorance breed such strong opinions? And how can I have an opinion if I am ignorant?

Often I am lazy and rely on other people to sway my

opinions on issues. I look to parents or friends, and knowing what kind of people they are, I trust that they’re opinions are right without bothering to learn the issues myself. This means choosing a side not based on knowledge but on friend groups, convenience, or how cool a movement’s t-shirt is (I owned an Invisible Children t-shirt for years thinking it was a band).

My challenge for myself and others is threefold. First, be wary of speaking

authoritatively on matters that you don’t have the knowledge.

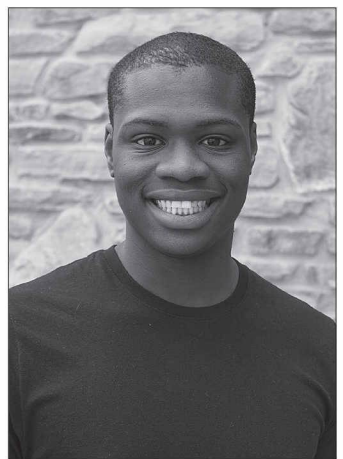
Second, if something matters to you, pursue knowledge of it relentlessly. Learn all that there is to learn. Don’t be content with vague ideas and slogans, but educate

yourself of the issues you’re passionate about. Third, do not consider neutrality a weak stance. It takes great humility and strength to say, “I don’t know.” Listen and learn, and a time will come when you’ll be able to speak.

Years later (far later than I want to admit) I stopped believing Santa was real. I felt childish and foolish that it took me so long to realize, not because I believed in flying reindeer, but because I believed something without examinations. I never pursued the truth for myself. Don’t be eight-year-old Jonan. Check to see if your dad’s boots match Santa’s footprints.★

Jonan is a senior writing major.

Less Talk, More Action



MICHAEL SIEVERS

TRAVIS TROTMAN

As a native to the island of Barbados, there are many differences between the atmospheres of my homeland and Houghton. I come from a nation which speaks up and acts on the issues and the difficulties that are built into our schools, workplaces and across the country. At Houghton, I have found the process to be a bit different. We discuss, we listen, and we move on. This passive way of dealing with situations has never satisfied me because the majority of the time, the crucial step of acting is left out. I find, as it relates to our minority students, the “action” step is never an option.

When I chose to attend Houghton, I was excited and ready to explore, engage, and learn alongside other God-loving students. Houghton has been my home for the last four years. It has been a place where I have grown in my Christian faith, a place where I have had many opportunities to broaden my work experience, a place I met many cool people that I

now call friends, and this list goes on and on. However, Houghton has failed to fulfill some crucial things for me and for the wider community of minorities on campus, and the lack of those things have been keenly felt. As a senior, I have decided to share my story as a minority international black student before I leave.

My story begins my freshman year when I lived in Roth on 4th West. It was clear to see that I was the only minority student on my floor, so I knew from the beginning if any racial slurs or incidents occurred, I would either have to go straight to my RA for help or deal with the issue myself. Sadly, the lack of my RA’s presence on my floor led to me doing the latter in all incidents.

Whenever I reached out to my RA, he was always busy or was just not around.

The first incident was probably the hardest and longest I had to deal with. There was a transfer student on my floor who frequently occupied the lounge playing video games. He constantly used disgusting language. In spite of this, I was determined to not let his words affect my dorm experience. However, one day he blurted out the N-word. I wondered who he was talking to. I jumped out of my room and went to the lounge to see who he was addressing. However, much to my surprise, there was no one there, so I went back to my room.

Over the next couple of weeks, he continuously played video games with friends in the lounge and he kept blurting out the N-word. After a while, I reported it to my RA and told him

that, firstly, a white man should not be using this word, and that second, as a black male I do not use this word in my vocabulary. It is degrading and should not be the part of anyone’s vocabulary. My RA spoke to him, but nothing changed. He began using the word more and more, and it frustrated me. After a few weeks I’d had enough. I marched into the lounge and shouted at him. It was a good five minute rant about the origin of that word, and why he or anyone on my floor shouldn’t use it. By the end of this rant my RA was behind me. All he muttered was, “Yes, what Travis said.” After that I went back to my room and balled my eyes out. I couldn’t believe that

“We have always been told to “dream big” and to “think big,” but there was never any action to go along with those dreams.”

I had to deal with such an issue by myself. Furthermore, my RA never came around and spoke with me to see how I was doing. After this incident I never heard the word again on my floor, for that semester, anyway. However, he continued saying it, and I had to continually get up and silence him.

I share this story to say that I do not believe any freshman, or student, should have to resolve an issue like this on their own. It should be up to the RA or the RD to do so. Whenever I think back on this incident, I always remember asking myself if I made the right decision by coming to Houghton. This incident will forever be in my memory, and I believe Houghton needs to increase RA

training as it relates to diversity and conflicts management.

During the spring of my freshman year, Black Heritage Club put up a display of black students in the basement of the Campus Center during the month of February. The project was entitled “Shades of Black,” and included the story of many of the black students on campus. It was displayed for other students to read and to learn more about the black and African American students on campus. However, an alum of the college saw it differently and decided to create paper chains to hang over the display and also to put the word “light” over “black”, basically degrading our hard work. He said that he was trying to make a joke at the newly released book “50 Shades of Grey”. He later confessed he could see how the paper chains could be seen as

reminiscent of slavery, but went through with it anyways. This incident on campus sparked a lot of conversations and arguments, and many promises were made by the administration to do more for minorities on campus. Sadly, most of those promises have not been kept. We have always been told to “dream big” and to “think big,” but there was never any action to go along with those dreams. At the time, I expected for the college to shut down all classes and hold an immediate chapel about the incident. However, I am from a different culture and my expectations might seem a bit far off. The administration moved too slow, and essentially made myself and most of the black students on

campus feel unwelcome. This incident, as well as the others I have mentioned, truly took a toll on me as a student. I do not think the campus truly did justice to the matter. In addition, I hope that the college leaders will take my story into consideration in hope of not seeing a repeat of the incidents I was faced with during my time here.

Therefore, I must say that this campus is in great need for a Diversity Coordinator. This position should probably be held by someone who is a minority, someone who has felt into or has personally lived the pain of most minority students. This person would be the facilitator and the bridge between students and the administration. This position will allow for such a person to act on the many things this campus needs if they want to keep diversity on this campus. The Diversity Coordinator would be a safe person for minority students and other students as well to go to and vent about their problems when they feel they are being treated or threatened unjustly. This coordinator will be an asset to Houghton and this position needs to be made. Over my four years here at Houghton, one curve ball that has always been thrown at us students is that our budget is tight. But I strongly believe that if we cannot make room or find money for a Diversity Coordinator, we must be spending and budgeting our money in the wrong way. Therefore, I hope that the College will hear my words and story, and take the time to listen to the minority, without waiting for the majority to act.★

Travis is a senior communication major with a minor in voice performance.

Nuance Over Nonsense



MICHAEL SIEVERS

AVA BERGEN

Confrontation and concentrated frustration appeared to be what my Dad dealt with on a daily basis. He was able to tell me very little about these situations due to confidentiality, and mostly unable to answer my probing questions (which of course only served to further my curiosity), like “Wait, what did you say about what? Why do you have to meet with her parents?” He would just say, “I’m sorry, but I am legally obligated not to tell you.” And I had to be content with not knowing. It was my Dad who first taught me to consider that I might be wrong, that no issue or disagreement is ever simple, and that it’s possible to be blinded by the belief in one’s own rightness.

This background perhaps explains my persistent skepticism at any group, or person, who claims to advocate for “the moral truth” and leaves no room for nuanced dissent. Even within (or maybe I should say, especially within) Christianity, disagreements over the definition of truth arise frequently, and are the source of traumatic schisms in the church. It seems almost too obvious to write down, but as Christians we are called to love one another, not just those who agree with our perspectives. Of

course, now is the time when the definition of what “love” actually looks like can be disputed.

In the case of the “Choose Morals Over Money” protest, I have been frustrated not only by the absolute moral certainty expressed by those involved, (either in person or on Facebook), but also by their vocal dismissal and blind distrust of the administration. I want to make a distinction between

making the decision in response to undeniable evidence.

I understand there is tremendous pain involved, and for this I am truly sorry.

I am sorry for the students who have lost a beloved professor, I can only imagine the frustration this precipitates. I admire the students who peacefully protested, and commend their persistence and passion. However, part of me is indignant that this is what students

“I am also troubled by the apparent inability to entertain nuance when no one is in possession of all the facts.”

blind trust and blind distrust: I am not supporting either. One of the reasons this group gives for Jackson’s termination is that Houghton fired him to save money. Hence the tagline “Morals Over Money.” This reasoning simply makes no sense to me, as Houghton is most likely losing money from this decision. Replacing Jackson will be costly and time-consuming; terminating someone so integral to a new and exciting major means tremendous potential to lose revenue from prospective and current students. I can’t imagine the administration was happy to make this decision; in fact I’m sure they agonized over it, only

have chosen to publicly unite over, as opposed to the racially charged hate note a student recently received. I am also troubled

by the apparent inability to entertain nuance when no one is in possession of all the facts. I ask that we as a community consider perspectives beyond our own, especially as Dean Connell has expressed in a compassionate and kind email, “I do want to encourage you to be cautious about assuming that you know why this decision was made. As I have talked with many of you over the last few days, it’s clear that a lot of misinformation and speculation is making the rounds. Events have been misinterpreted or over-simplified.... I regret that I cannot simply clear up the confusion by sharing the specifics of the situation; all I

can do is ask you to be careful about accepting narratives or coming to judgments that do not reflect the full picture.” There are absolutely legal constraints on the administration right now. Those who have complained that Houghton has not been honest with us should be aware that this confidentiality is in place to protect not only the students involved but also Jackson’s privacy. Additionally, the administration could be sued for any breach in confidence.

I am not claiming to know the whole story. I am not even claiming to know half of the story. Yet I do know that the answers are not simple. It is not a case of “We are right, the administration is wrong” or even, “The administration is right, and the protesters are wrong.” This sort of simplicity grates on my conscience. When we allow rigid black and white thinking to dominate our perspective, we only serve to dehumanize each other. I ask that we treat those who disagree with us with compassion, and seek to listen and consider before demonizing the actions of others.★

Ava is a senior majoring in English and communication.



The mission of the Houghton Star is to preserve and promote the values of dialogue, transparency and integrity that have characterized Houghton College since its inception. This will be done by serving as a medium for the expression of student thought and as a quality publication of significant campus news, Houghton area news, and events.

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Artist of the Week

Jill Magara

//senior studio art major



MICHAEL SIEVERS



Titles & Media

clockwise descending, all digital photography

Untitled, *porcelain and stoneware screen printed mugs*

I Am Who I'm Made to Be: Kayla, *digital print*

Reflections, *thrown and altered porcelain*

I Am Who I'm Made to Be: Melissa, *digital print*

Milo Shoot, *screenprint*



“ Art washes away from the soul
the dust of daily life. ”
- Pablo Picasso