

The Ampersand

UIC Honors College

September 2002

Important Upcoming Dates

Sept. 29	AIDS Walk - uic_nlvs@hotmail.com
Sept. 30	HCAB General Body Meeting
Oct. 1	Golden Key first general meeting
Oct. 3	Society of Future Physicians Induction
Oct. 4	ASB Applications Due
Oct. 14	HCAB General Body Meeting
Oct. 20	CROP Walk - amoads1@uic.edu
Oct. 25	Golden Key Applications due
Oct. 26	Make A Difference Day - jmorga7@uic.edu

President's Welcome

by Jenna Kim

After spending the past few months working, studying, traveling, or just having fun, we return to classes once again for the fall semester. For some (probably those who traveled or who just had fun), summer has passed away too fast. Yet for others (probably people like me who spent the whole summer studying), the fall semester could not have come soon enough. In either case, the fall semester means the fresh start of the school year and I hope that it is starting out well for everyone. For returning students, welcome back! For those students who are new to the Honors College, welcome!

First of all, I'd like to explain what exactly "HCAB" is. The Honors College Advisory Board is the governing board of the Honors College student body. Having been elected last April, the current board is composed of the President (Jenna Kim), Vice-President/Ball-Chair (Kamala Saha), Treasurer (Neil Iyengar), Secretary (Kunjali Padhya), and eleven members-at-large (Shifali Arora, Jenny Baek, Cynthia Kay, Sonia Krishnan, Ada Moadsiri, Joe Morgan, Aparna Vemuri, Daniela Witkowski, Marika Wrzosek, Jeniann Yi, and Charles Yohannan).

In serving the Honors College student body, HCAB engages in and plans many activities to enrich the academic and social experience of the Honors College. We seek your opinions and ideas so that we may represent your thoughts to the administration of the Honors College and also in order to hold events that may be of interest to you and the entire Honors College student body. For example, in the past year, we have expressed thoughts to the administration about the Honors Core classes and held an event to discuss the concept of the community within the Honors College.

Not only do we get down to business, we also know how to have fun! Once or twice a month, HCAB sponsors an Honors College social or activity. Socials are held on Fridays and provide an opportunity for students and faculty to meet each other and converse or engage in a fun activity in a relaxed setting where food and music are usually provided. Activities normally occur on a weekday afternoon or evening. Some outings have included places all over the city, such as The Second City or the Art Institute, where students can take advantage of free or discounted tickets.

The largest event that HCAB puts together during the school year is the Honors College Ball. This is a formal/semi-formal dinner and dance held annually in March at a hotel downtown. It is open to all students, faculty, and alumni of UIC. Last year, it was one of the largest events of this type at UIC with over 250 guests in attendance. In addition, part of the proceeds of the silent auction held during last year's ball benefited UIC's Reach Out and Read program.

If you are interested in learning more about or helping out at any of HCAB's functions, please contact me at jkim110@uic.edu or attend the bimonthly HCAB meetings held on every other Monday in the Honors College. Also feel free to share your ideas and opinions with any member of HCAB so that we can serve you better. Good luck this semester and I hope to see you around Burnham Hall!

Trading Spaces: Creative Entertainment

by Ada Moadsiri

Have you ever been sitting in your room wishing that your neighbor would redecorate it for you without your input? No, neither have I, but on *The Learning Channel*, there is a show that does just that. *Trading Spaces* is the show where two sets of neighbors switch houses for two days and redecorate one room of the neighbor's house. Each have a budget of \$1,000 but don't have any say in what the other neighbor does to their house. Each couple is assigned a professional decorator with whom they are to work. Some shows end in tears, some in smiles.

But are the results the reason people are tuning in? Are the decorating ideas really that good? Perhaps. However, I would venture to speculate that the real reason many people are tuning in is Ty Pennington, one of People's 50 most eligible bachelors and one of the show's carpenters. Maybe people like the idea of being entertained while picking up ideas that they can try themselves. For whatever reason people are tuning in, the fact that they are is making *Trading Spaces* all the rage.

So if you want to check things out, *Trading Spaces* is on TLC every weekday at 4PM as well as 7PM on Saturdays. Like the spawn of the reality shows after *Survivor*, there will be two more new decorating shows to hit TLC this fall, so check your local listings.

Some Decorating Tips for Your Room:

-When decorating your walls, the important thing is to not ruin the paint. So, when putting up posters try using double-sided tape squares (poster squares) from 3-M™ instead of pushpins, which leave holes, or tacky which don't hold very well. (\$3.00 for 24 squares)

-When putting up clocks, mirrors, or other similar objects, try using removable hooks by 3-M™, which come in many sizes. (\$3 for 6 small, or 2 large)

-When lighting your room(s) halogen lamps can add a lot of light without compromising space. (\$10-\$20 per lamp)

-If you are looking for posters, sometimes local theatres give away their unused ones. (You can put them up with your poster squares.)

Washington DC: A blend of Politics and Business

by Saba Nasser

Following two hours of travel from Chicago on June 1st, I finally arrived in the nation's capital to begin my journey to experience a different lifestyle in Washington for the next seven weeks, interning at the National US-Arab Chamber of Commerce. Washington, D.C. is a city that presents one with an entire blend of diverse cultures, history, sightseeing, shopping, music, arts, and exquisite cuisine's. Besides being home to the nation's capital, where a majority of the activities are political, the city is always buzzing and offers opportunities in abundance. The city's historical monuments, diversity, and beauty made me feel at home immediately and I adapted to the new atmosphere quite nicely. I was a

cont. on page 3...



Upcoming Scholarship Deadlines!

The Truman Scholarship provides \$30,000 to junior or senior students planning to go to graduate school in preparation for careers in government or public service. \$3,000 is awarded for senior year. Applicants should have an extensive record of public service and a demonstrated commitment to a career in public service. To be eligible, applicants must be sophomores, juniors or seniors (depending on graduation date) in the upper 1/3 of their class, and a US citizen or national. UIC may nominate only 4 candidates per year. Students must submit materials for the UIC selection process by October 7, 2002. Visit www.truman.gov

The Goldwater Scholarship provides up to \$7,500 for undergraduates studying and planning a research career in math, science or engineering. Applicants must be sophomores or juniors and should have a 4.7 gpa and research experience. Candidates must be US citizens or permanent residents, and must apply through the Office of Special Scholarship Programs. UIC may nominate only 4 candidates per year. Students must submit materials for the UIC selection process by November 4, 2002. Visit www.act.org/goldwater for more information.

The Jack Kent Cooke undergraduate scholarship provides up to \$30,000 per year to fund tuition and fees. Scholars are eligible to receive funding throughout the remainder of their undergraduate career. Applicants must have sophomore or junior status and have high academic achievement, leadership and campus/community involvement. UIC is limited to one nominee per year. Students must submit materials for the UIC selection process by November 15, 2002. Visit www.jackkentcookefoundation.org for more information.

For more information on any of the scholarships listed above, please contact the Office of Special Scholarship Programs at (312) 355-2477 or in 120A SEO.

part of the Engalitcheff Institute on Comparative Economic Systems (ICPES) program at Georgetown University, which allowed me to take “Economic and Political Systems” as well as “Transformation of American Politics” along with 150 other students from all over the country.

My internship with the National Arab U.S Chamber of Commerce had indeed been exciting and a great learning experience. Growing up in Dubai, United Arab Emirates myself, the Middle East had always been a part of my memories and I felt at home as soon as I walked in. One of the main goals of the organization is to improve foreign trade and business relations in all means between the United States and the Gulf countries. In other words, the organization also helps these countries harness their vast resources of oil and energy in a productive way that can be an advantage to others as well. My job as an intern included researching the different business transactions that took place as well as looking for different business opportunities that may interest foreign investors to invest in the Middle East and North Africa. One of the events the Chamber organized in conjunction with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce was that of the visit of the Minister of Energy from Qatar. The roundtable discussion we took part in was very interesting, where the minister spoke about the vast potential of energy investing in Qatar. Another event sponsored by the Chamber that I really enjoyed was a talk given by the Egyptian Ambassador to the United States who spoke about the immense growth and potential of the IT sector in Egypt as well as the small start-up firms that are looking for new foreign environment to boost their products. Like the previous event, there were eminent representatives from different IT firms and it was very interesting to observe each one’s interaction and style of doing business. Throughout the process of researching and writing up news briefs, I was able to learn about the scope of business in the Middle East. This gave me a different perspective on matters and has helped me perceive business situations better.

It is often said that theory and practical experience both play an important role in education, and that they share a symbiotic relationship with one another. After getting my first taste of interning and settling down into my new environment, the coursework was equally exciting and took time to sink in. The “Economics and Political Systems” course was fascinating and can be applied to the many day-to-day facets of our economy. Learning the material has enabled me to apply some of those concepts in the real world. The most exciting aspect offered by the ICPES program has been the innumerable events, lectures, and site briefings. The site briefing I enjoyed the most, was the visit to the Old Executive Building, adjacent to the White House. I was delighted to listen to the administrative staff share their views on the work they do and how comfortable they felt working with the president. This was probably one of the better events; we heard insider facts from staffers about the pros and cons of working with the president. Besides the site briefings and lectures, the program had an excellent way of exposing us to different career paths by holding small group meetings with people in specific fields in which we have a potential interest. The small group meeting I benefited from most was a lunch we had with a CIA agent. The agent was an alum of the program and gave us insight on a lot of issues facing the nation as well as how to pursue different career paths for a government job.

My summer in Washington D.C., has presented me with some of the most diverse and unique experiences ever. Because of my internship with the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce, I have broadened my horizons and also realized the immense potential and growth of different sectors in the Middle East. This experience has been very exciting and left me with many more career paths to pursue. The classes at Georgetown were highly intriguing and the professors never ceased to make the classes lively and full of zest. I came into the program expecting it to be just another summer, with classes and specific events to attend. However, during the course of the program, almost every student had some funny or interesting story to share about his or her experiences. This program is a big eye-opener and presents one with a world of insight on the various different issues surrounding us. The site briefings and all the excursions are lessons to learn from, about how organizations function and the many work environments that exist within them.

I would definitely recommend the ICPES program to anyone who is in the transitory phase of deciding where their career is headed irrespective of the major one may have chosen, be it Business, Science, Humanities or Engineering. It is also for those who need more of a sense of direction to guide them towards a more stable career. I lived in the nations capital, gained valuable work experience, were enrolled in classes that were challenging, and enjoyed the summer with newfound friends. In a nutshell, the program was excellent and I would recommend it to any student from any major. More information can be obtained at www.dcinternships.org or at www.tfas.org



Honors College Social

by Deivya Bansal

Art comes in many different forms and shapes: paintings, sculptures, and portraits to name a few. At the Honors College on September 13, murals and mosaic art were the themes. Renowned artist and social worker Ferdinand Pleinas led participants at the Honors College social in a large-scale art project. The result will be a large mosaic-like mural that will eventually be on display at the Honors College.

Participants were given a template for the piece of the mosaic they were to create. They were also given a rectangular sheet upon which their creative juices were to flow. The objective was to make a copy of the given template by tearing out bits and pieces of National Geographic magazines and pasting them onto the rectangular sheet. Each participant added their own personality to the mosaic through the pictures they used and how they arranged the pieces on the page.

Personally, I loved it. I felt such satisfaction when, after scouring through several magazines, I finally find that one color that I needed to complete the piece. Many of the other students and faculty members present seemed to be enjoying themselves too. The best part of the experience was when we all found out what part of the mural our individual piece was. For example, some of us had parts of basketball players or Chinese letters that were a part of the overall background.

All in all, it was a great experience and a palpable success. Keep an eye and an ear open for the chance to participate again next semester; Ferdinand Pleinas may be visiting us again!



Give Back to Your Community

by Sonia Krishnan

OK, so you're filling out a survey about why you chose to come to UIC – the benefits, the disadvantages, the whole schabang. A couple of years ago, I might have said the location of the university is both its best and worst feature. Why? Well, it's hard to find yourself bored in one of the biggest cities in America, where all the action is either within walking distance from campus or a mere train ride away. The phrase "big city" connotes more, however, than just bright lights and huge parties. Living in Chicago means being exposed to crime, poverty, pollution, and a whole slew of other problems that warrants, but often fails to hold, our attention.

That was how I felt a couple of years ago. Now, you may be surprised if you heard me say today that as UIC students, we should feel lucky to be exposed to all aspects of our city, both the good and the bad. But guess what? That *is* what I would say today. More exposure to the city's problems leads to more awareness, and subsequently, more opportunities for us to lend a helping hand. How can we help? VOLUNTEERING! You guessed it, and we're fortunate enough to be attending a university with plenty of diverse service-oriented organizations.

One of the organizations is the New Life Volunteering Society. I've been a member of New Life Volunteering Society since my freshman year, and it's one of the many clubs that allows us as students to help out around the Chicago land area. NLVS works with the homeless, hungry, underprivileged children, the elderly, as well as many other worthy causes. The organization sponsors both weekend and weekday events to cater to both commuters and campus residents. All events are accessible through the El Train; thus, with the U-Pass, transportation is free.

Alternative Spring Break is another volunteer-based organization, with a different style of delivery. Students spend one week during either winter or spring vacation in another state, dealing with various issues, such as low-income housing, nature conservancy, children, poverty, HIV/AIDS, the elderly, etc. It's also a great way to bond with other UIC students of diverse interests and backgrounds.

If you are interested in volunteering as a member of an honors society, Golden Key International Honor Society or National Society of Collegiate Scholars could be right for you. Both organizations offer a wide range of service-related activities along with the benefits of being part of an honors society.

So, what exactly am I getting at? At UIC, there are a TON of volunteering opportunities – more than I mentioned, and more than I can even count. This is your chance to get involved and give back to the Chicago community, so get out there and take that chance.

Reflections on Arusha, Tanzania

by Rena Patel

Immediately following Truman Scholars Leadership Week 2002, I left for Arusha, Tanzania to carry out a HIV/AIDS prevention education program through a San Francisco-based NGO named Global Service Corps (GSC).

The program lasted for eight weeks from May until July. A total of twelve college students participated in the same group as I was in, though, over the span of the summer, a total of 45 volunteers worked with GSC. The organization itself conducts two programs:

sustainable agriculture and HIV/AIDS prevention. In fact, GSC is so small and flexible that you can do almost anything as long as it fits in with its mission and you pay the program fees.

My stay in Arusha town was divided in two segments, the first being called "medical opportunities," and the second being the prevention camp at a secondary school. Medical opportunities basically entailed shadowing medical professionals- physicians, nurses, surgeons, medical officers, pharmacists, lab technicians, etc.- at various types of hospitals, from rural to private to government hospitals. Each group carried out a three-week day camp at secondary schools integrating information regarding not just HIV but also about gender, relationships, social change, and many others that I label as peripheral issues to HIV/AIDS, and various sports, crafts,



My host family's children and Alvin, another volunteer. From left, Happiness, Charles, Kenny, and Reagan.

arts, and other activities. Several groups of people facilitated cultural learning for me. GSC placed all of its participants in home-stays in neighboring enclaves to the town itself. I lived with Mama Happy and Baba Happy along with three of their own children and two of Baba Happy's brother's children. Frequently, Baba Happy's brother and grandmother and Mama Happy's sister visited and stayed at the house. Living with this Chaga family provided tremendous cultural exposure for me in terms of language, food, religion, clothing, way of living, and values. Alongside, I also gained exposure through interacting frequently with a group of male street vendors in the town itself. These guys spoke English well, due to their souvenirs businesses, and were very open about their life. I had many discussions regarding HIV, sexuality, gender, decisions, and poverty with a number of these guys.



Two GSC volunteers demonstrate how to use a female condom to Tanzanian students.

continued on page 8

Words of Wisdom from the Seasoned Student

by Marika Wrzosek with contributions from Aparna Vemuri

Disclaimer: I am just a student, and most of these pieces of advice come from what people told me in my first year. However, I did not believe what they said until it was my own neck on the line. Take what you will of this, and remember that while experience is the best teacher, someone else's experiences can work just as well.

- The day has only 24 hours long... That's right, folks... and only so much of the day can be devoted to sleep. While the three-hours-outside-of-class-per-credit-hour rule does not always hold true, it is well worth the effort to plan study time in real time, not ideal time. Don't forget other obligations, which may include jobs (plan work hours realistically), and numerous clubs and organizations. And don't forget to plan some "me time." No matter what you've been told in the past, you are not Superman, you're only human.
- No chores... This one is simple: after the pesky requirements, do what you like. This includes majoring in whatever your heart desires as well as joining the organizations you like. Nothing you do should be a chore. Don't forget that, should you ever apply to some sort of graduate school or job, your love of what you did will shine through; if an activity is forced, the admissions/interviewing committee would be incompetent if they did not see right through you. Your passion will speak for itself, so enjoy what you do, and do it well.
- Run the marathon... In most classes, you will be given a syllabus the first week of classes. All your exams are listed there. The lesson here is to plan ahead. When the syllabus lists a certain chapter to read, do just that: read it. However, keep in mind the college definition of read: learn what you read, don't just skim it. More importantly, don't leave the reading off until the last minute. A few chapters per week look deceptively easy to catch up; keep in mind that on top of those there will be other obligations, and unless you stay on top of the readings, you will fall behind. It is infinitely easier to keep up than it is to catch up.
- Think ahead... measure twice, cut once... Make a four-year plan, but leave it flexible enough to accommodate new interests, which you will surely find. The point here is not to set in stone what you will take. Instead, the point here is to look ahead enough to ensure you have enough time to do all the things you want to. Changing your major? No biggie... you're one of many. Study abroad? Research? Underwater basket-weaving? Sure, they're all possibilities; just keep them in mind.
- My what big teeth you have... So they have a PhD... that does not mean they bite! This piece of advice has immediate as well as future benefits. Your professors are there to teach you. That means they are to be in their office hour when they say they will. They are to be willing to explain concepts until they turn blue in the face, if that is how long it takes the info to click to you. You are paying tuition, so you can expect them to meet you halfway. Just don't come unprepared... if you do visit the profs (the same applies for TA's) come prepared; a little bit of preparation on your part shows initiative, which most profs will be willing to match. Aside from the obvious benefit of understanding class material well before the exam, soon you'll discover that professors have other lives outside of the classes they teach. Soon you'll learn of side projects or research opportunities. Viola! You're on the way to establishing a relationship with a professor. That can only work to your benefit.

Often the professor in class is much different from the person in the office... get to know that person, since he has a wealth of information available to you. All you have to do is make the trip to the office and introduce yourself.
- That's one hard wall... Inevitably, you will fail a quiz or test at some point in your college career. That does not mean you will fail out of school and be left out in the cold. Whatever the reasons for this blip (unfair professor, lack of studying, the nerdy curve-wreckers, etc.), see what it was and fix it for the future. And if you fail again, learn from your mistakes a second time. When you do crash into that wall of failure, pick yourself up and keep going. You may be sore and bruised, but you sure won't be broken.
- Tip of the iceberg... You're just starting your college career. Make the most of it by observing the world around you and actively engaging in the plethora of opportunities awaiting you. College is the time where you find out about yourself... so keep an open mind, be ready for the road ahead, and most of all, enjoy all the happenings around you. There's a lot to learn, and these few years are just the start of the rest of your life!

One Year Later

by Kunjali Padhya

One year ago this September, UIC students were really getting into the swing of things. School had started a few weeks earlier. We had finished the two-week period of frantic adding and dropping, going to three different chemistry discussions to find a good TA, and pleading with professors to get into classes. Then, as we have heard so many times, on the morning of September 11, everything changed.

As usual, my roommate and I had dragged our bleary-eyed selves to 8 AM chemistry lecture. As we were walking out around 9:15, a friend stopped to say hi and said, "Did you hear what happened in New York?" I'm sure that phrase was heard by millions of people that morning as word spread. At first, it was only bits and pieces that stuck out. "Planes, the World Trade Center, flew into the building." My roommate and I, still unaware of the severity of the situation, continued on to breakfast. We wondered about the details and made some guesses as to whom or what could have caused it to happen. Perhaps it was an accident, but we had heard the word "terrorist" mentioned a few times as well.

I had then made my way over to the west side of campus for Reach Out and Read volunteering. I was surprised to find the clinic empty except for the staff. I heard someone on the phone saying all non-emergency appointments were canceled. For the next hour, I sat with a group of doctors and nurses and watched the Twin Towers crumble to the ground.

On east campus, the atmosphere had completely changed from when I had left only a short while ago. Campus was deserted and there were

cont. on page 7...

One Year cont. from page 6...

police cars stationed all around. In the dorms, rooms with TVs were crowded full of people. Some of us expressed relief at papers that didn't have to be turned in or postponed quizzes caused by cancelled classes. The rumors continued to circulate. One of the planes was supposedly headed to Chicago, and one was aimed at the White House. Was the Sears Tower the next target? Living only a few blocks away from the country's tallest building was now no longer a source of pride, but one of worry. As the news continued, those with relatives and friends in New York began to make phone calls. In fact, I remember almost everyone I know calling a relative, just to say, "I'm alright, I love you." By now the TV was going non-stop. Every new tidbit of information sparked a heated discussion. Many began to argue about politics, warfare and terrorism, while others were simply too confused and upset about the situation to share their opinions.

The most positive event of the next few days was the memorial that was held that Friday in the Illinois Room. It was uplifting to see the room packed to capacity. We also realized how lucky we were to be able to have that memorial. Our urban university campus could have easily been affected had a similar event occurred in Chicago. So we took a moment to reflect on our good fortune, and to say a prayer for those whose lives had been touched by the tragedy.

As things returned to "normal", we tried to put the tragedy out of our minds. We got used to longer lines at the airport and concrete barriers around skyscrapers. Does that mean we have forgotten the horror of that day? Not at all. As I have written my own memory of the event, the memories of others will make up a part of our nation's history that will be remembered indefinitely.

Find Your Niche

by Shifali Arora

It's that time of year again, the beginning of another school year. You've all seen the commercials...an elated father throwing school supplies into a shopping cart as his children look on in dismay. Beyond the school supplies though, there is a lot to think about and get used to within the first few weeks before we hit midterm season...yes it's actually a season (well, I like to call it that).

Outside of classes, labs, homework, meeting new people, and hitting up some parties (wow, you're busy!), you should find some time for clubs and activities. It's a great way to meet new people, have some fun and learn something new or help others in the process. Not to mention that graduate schools love the well-rounded student.

During the first few weeks of school all of the organizations at UIC have their first meetings and events. This is the perfect time to explore your options.

Each organization offers something unique and one (or multiple) is bound to fit you. For example, if you love to volunteer, there are several clubs, sororities, fraternities, and associations just for you. You can join groups such as Alternative Spring Break, New Life Volunteering Society, Delta Sigma Theta, or Illstate Academic Network, just to name a few. If you would like to get a jump-start on your future career, there is a preprofessional club out there. If you are planning to go into medicine, teaching, architecture, business or even engineering, there is a club at UIC that is calling your name. Outside of these two areas, there are also groups devoted to the arts, government, ethnicity and culture, religion, the military, literary arts, (tired yet? Well, there's more!) politics, Greek societies, sports, and even honorary societies. With all of these possibilities, there is definitely an organization out there waiting for you.

Since you took the time to read this article, you owe it to yourself to look through the list of student organizations, which can be conveniently found on page 12 of your UIC Daily, and attend a few meetings. Get involved!





Students at Edmund Rice Sinon School play the human knot.

Lastly, the students themselves facilitated much of the cultural learning for me. They were so eager to take us to their homes and other places and tell us about their histories and their dreams. I also had incredible exposure to the “Asian” culture in East Africa, belonging to a group that Americans generally call “South Asians.” It turned out that I had three uncles in Arusha town and so I had the opportunity to visit their homes frequently and catch

glimpses of their lives and culture.

Along with working for GSC, I was able to carry out some other activities while there as well. I regularly volunteered at an African NGO called Children for Children’s Future (CCF), which sponsored a housing complex where street children were brought, feed, housed and counseled to return to their family homes over a period of three months. My experience working there was very unique because I did not know enough Kiswahili to carry out meaningful conversations with the

young children and they did not know enough English. However, to my surprise, the children knew Hindi film songs, and over time the



Some of the older girls at CCF, who sung Hindi film songs to me.

our language of conversation as we laughed and danced to various songs. I also had the opportunity to work at an orphanage, which was situated adjacent to a hospital, both sponsored by a foreign church fund. Many children, particularly girls, were abandoned upon birth at the hospital and brought over to the orphanage. A good number of the children were motherless and HIV positive.

I also managed to do some of the more typical tourist-type activities. I went on two safaris to the Ngorongoro Crater, Lake Manyara, and Tarangere National Park. I also took a hiking trip to the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro and saw breathtaking waterfalls. And, last but definitely not the least, I did souvenir shopping.

Lessons learned from Arusha:

1. My life in the States is too full of activities, like clubs, committees, volunteering, etc. Being in Arusha surrounded by and seeking out people constantly made me realize how little I interact with friends, family, and other people in my life here. People’s presence makes life meaningful, worth living for. And, I feel, in this craze to change so much and accomplish so much, I tend to prioritize my struggles and fights over people in my life.
2. Conducting research, especially social science research, requires patience and flexibility. Things do not carry out as you had expected it to, especially when the genesis of the project occurred halfway around the world. Secondly, one has to be flexible in the actual research in modifying one or two aspects of the research, especially in field study and research.
3. Knowing the language of the area is of utmost importance if you wish to understand the culture. I felt handicapped without knowing Kiswahili when I first got to Arusha, and even after learning enough colloquial skills, I still felt my experience could have been enhanced if I knew more. The same applies to knowing more history, anthropology and sociology of the region before embarking on the journey.
4. Teaching and being a vehicle of information and knowledge empowers me. Being in front of the classroom or having private conversations with some of the students and knowing that our interaction is aiding them in making life-changing decisions is very powerful. This realization, in one sense, makes me question why I am not becoming a teacher but, in another, affirms my reasons to obtain a degree in public health. It also further crystallizes this vision I have of teaching public health, public policy, health education or medicine at a university late in my life.



I found myself tremendously drawn to giraffes. They seem to be very peaceful animals.