

UCI IN FOCUS

TEDx speakers talk gloves, war

BY SHERRI CRUZ
ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Have you ever competed to build the tallest structure of mini marshmallows and spaghetti, topped with a jumbo marshmallow – with only one hand? If you answered yes, you probably attended the recent TEDxUCIrvine ideas conference.

UCI professors and students shared their creations, ideas and discoveries at the event, called “Collaborating Forward.” The intermissions were filled with creative “labs,” including the marshmallow spaghetti structure activity. Here is a sampling of the talks given:

‘GLOVERS’ DANCE IN THE DARK

Vincent Xu, a UCI student studying business and economics, discussed Ambience, a university club he founded that has expanded to 15 chapters at schools across the nation.

Ambience is a club for people who want to tell a story and express themselves using lights.

“I grew up with two left feet for my whole life,” Xu said.

He loves melodic trance music, so he decided to become a “glover.” Glovers wear white gloves with lights in the fingertips and perform in the dark. They also use other props with glow-in-the-dark elements.

“Gloves are the paintbrushes; imagination is the canvas,” he said.

Gloving is a subculture that evolved from rave culture, he said. People often illogically equate gloving and drugs, because they connect raves and drugs. Not true, Xu said. He promotes light shows as a drug-free art form.



COURTESY OF JIMMY NEUEN

Vincent Xu, center, poses with Ambience club members at TEDxUCIrvine

FORGIVENESS, NOT REVENGE

Al Valdez, a national expert on gangs, sociology and youth violence and prevention, teaches an introduction to gangs class at UCI. He is a UCI alumnus and chairs Westwood College’s School of Justice in Anaheim.

He spoke about the value and necessity of forgiving others.

Valdez, who has five sons, recalled when he got the call no parent wants: It began with “I regret to inform you,” he said. “You can’t imagine the horror that went through me.”

His son Joshua was shot in the head by a gang member and survived.

“I wanted an eye for an eye. I wanted revenge,” he said. “I had to forgive the 18-year-old boy who hurt my son,” he said.

“I learned a secret – help others. Join a fellowship of service. Align yourself with like-minded people, then you become the agents of change,” he said.

CONSEQUENCES OF WAR IN 1921

Annessa Stagner, a doctoral candidate in the history department, talked about discoveries she made researching her dissertation, “Defining the Soldier’s Wounds: U.S. Shell Shock in International Perspective.”

Stagner, who delved into World War I soldiers’ diaries, said if we mind our history, we can see a pattern. The headlines of war in 1921 are the same as today, she said.

“For many, the first World War was a nightmare that imprinted itself on soldiers in the form of shell shock,” she said.

Doctors thought they could fix soldiers so they no longer had problems. It didn’t work.

Soldier trauma and suicide were a big problem then, and they’re a big problem now.

“War looks different today, but war still produces trauma and our medicine still fails to cure it,” she said. “Science and technology can’t wipe away consequences of war.”

RELIEVING STRESS WITH LIFE 101

Mahtab Jafari, director of UCI’s Pharmaceutical Sciences Undergraduate Program and associate professor, pharmaceutical sciences, spoke at the conference

While not an expert in stress management, Jafari wanted to help her students who were stressed and using various medications to cope, so she created Life 101, a 10-week stress management course at UCI.

Jafari started the class after hearing from a number of students who were using Adderall to stay up and then sleeping medications to catch up with sleep.

When Life 101 was first offered in winter of 2013, 105 students registered. The purpose of the class is to change behavior and promote healthy lifestyles.

These skills are as important – maybe even more important – as physics or calculus, she said.



PHOTOS: UC IRVINE SCHOOL OF LAW

Students from the School of Law’s class of 2013 pose before the start of their graduation ceremony on May 11.

Law school’s second class is first-class, dean says

Eighty-five students graduated from UC Irvine’s School of Law in an outdoor ceremony held on campus in Aldrich Park on May 11.

The class of 2013 was the second class to graduate from one of the newest and most high-profile law schools in the country.

Erwin Chemerinsky, dean of the School of Law, told the audience he was enormously proud of the second graduating class, which he compared to a second child.

“It is very exciting to have graduated our second class,” he said. “It is a terrific group of men and women (who are) truly the equal in ability to any law school graduating class in the country.” Chemerinsky said that



Graduating student Jaclyn Stahl smiles during the procession at the commencement ceremony.

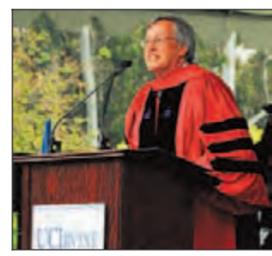
more than 90 percent of the class participated in pro bono services for clients unable to afford legal representation.

Seventeen students were honored with gold stoles as part of their regalia attire, representing completion of at least 200 hours of pro bono work over three years. Another 17 students wore gold cords to represent at

least 120 hours of pro bono service.

The ceremony included remarks from UC Irvine Chancellor Michael V. Drake and student speaker David Pierucci, who gave a humorous account of what his plans had been for law school and encouraged his fellow graduates to remain humble.

The commencement address was given by Califor-



Dean Erwin Chemerinsky speaks to the graduates.

nia Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye, who spoke on the importance of representing the poor with legal services. Cantil-Sakauye is the first Asian-Filipina American and the second woman to serve as California chief justice.

Cantil-Sakauye offered her wisdom and advice to the class of 2013.

“Treat others like you would like to be treated (by) acting with integrity,” she said.

ARTS

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Liberal arts programs aim to teach students interpretive, cultural, language and research skills, which employers clearly want, Van Den Abbeele said.

Ask any chief executive or business owner; they bemoan about the lack of skills that are critical in the workplace, Van Den Abbeele said.

Businesses can simply train their employees on proprietary systems. What’s hard to find are people who can communicate well, do research, think critically and don’t need hand-holding, he said.

“Strong writing and verbal skills, coupled with the ability to pick up the technical knowledge, are exactly what the world’s top firms are looking for,” said Katherine Reedy, spokeswoman for Orange County Business Council.

Students who graduate today aren’t likely to have a single job for life or even a single career, like many people did in the past.

Jobs tend to disappear in five to 10 years, and people go back for more education or another degree, Van Den Abbeele said.

Liberal arts majors are better equipped to be flexible, he said.

One of the most in-demand skills is foreign languages. “Students these

days are aware of the global environment,” he said.

Foreign language knowledge benefits many professionals – and not just for work abroad. “Our own communities are so diverse now,” he said.

Van Den Abbeele, who personally knows seven languages, would like to get creative about the way foreign languages are taught.

There is extensive research on teaching foreign languages, he said.

“One of the things that’s quite striking is that learning languages in chunks, a few minutes to several times a day, is better than one 50 minute slot.”

It’s also possible to create an environment for students to learn languages outside of the classroom, such as language-based residence halls, where students would only use one language while they’re there.

Native or fluent speakers could be mixed with those who want to learn the language.

It would be a great way to help students from abroad, who may feel isolated by language, to become language mentors to all of the students in the residence hall, he said.

“One thing they would have in common would be this language – it would be like multiplying the instructor force by 10 people.”

Another fast-growing field for humanities students is cultural and historic tourism, Van Den Ab-



MINDY SCHAUER, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Georges Van Den Abbeele

Wife: Beryl Schlossman, poet and UCI professor of literature

Born: Antwerp, Belgium

Raised: Alberta, Canada; later moved to Colorado. His father designed oil refineries.

Languages: Speaks and reads French, English, Italian, Dutch, German, Portuguese and Spanish. He also reads Latin and knows a smattering of Chinese and Vietnamese.

Career: Came to UCI from Northeastern University in Boston, where he was founding dean of the College of Social Sciences & Humanities.

Education: Ph.D. in romance studies from Cornell University in New York

Major research: Guided the Angel Island Oral History Project at UC Davis. Many people entered the U.S. through the Angel Island immigration station in San Francisco Bay from 1910 to 1940. Getting their stories was a challenge. Many of the immigrants were 100 years old and spoke in a variety of languages and dialects.

Advice to faculty: Never dismiss a student as unworthy of time and attention. He learned this as an undergrad at Reed College. “I just knew this guy named Steve,” he said. “There was no obvious signs he was going to be smarter than anyone else.” It was Steve Jobs, founder of Apple Inc.

beele said. These professionals must go far beyond what a typical tour guide offers and need to be knowl-

edgeable in history and have strong research and communication skills, he said.

UC Irvine School of Humanities

Students: 2,800, including about 400 graduate students

Faculty: 160

Departments: 14, including Art History, Classics, Women’s Studies, Spanish and Portuguese, African

American Studies and East Asian Languages and Literatures

Degree programs: Undergraduate: 23; Graduate: 10; Ph.D.: 10

Interdisciplinary programs: Global Cultures,

Humanities and Law, Religious Studies, Culture and Theory, Visual Studies

Centers: Center for Asian Studies; Critical Theory Institute; Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture; Humanities

Collective; International Center for Writing and Translation; Thesaurus Linguae Graecae

Dean: Georges Van Den Abbeele

Website: www.humanities.uci.edu/SOH