Politics aren’t boring
Students dialogue on political issues

ASL
Insights into deaf culture

What’s compassion got to do with it?
The Cry for Social Justice

And the results are in...
The winners of the Dorm Room Competition

The intersection:
A discussion on faith and art
At the end of each semester, Dr. Clyde Cook would send The Point staff a congratulatory note on the work the class had done in representing the student body. It was always nice to hear what he had to say and an honor to know that he had taken the time to read about his students.

In the weeks wrapping up the production of The Point, we were confronted by the passing of Dr. Cook. On a personal level, I was stunned at this sudden and great loss. I reflected on his remarkable life as a missionary, educator, athlete, administrator, father, and president. As students on a winding road to fulfillment and significance, we are beyond blessed to have such a strong example of faith and dedication in our midst.

I wonder if Dr. Cook ever realized just how great an impact his life would have on people all over the world, not just here at Biola University in La Mirada. I see many similarities in the life Dr. Cook led and the life Biola students want to lead. I am not sure what he would say about this issue but I hope that it would move him as much as it will hopefully move his students.

The effect of Biola students is far-reaching, as you may be aware of, but in many ways, it is not far-reaching enough. Something the class and staff noticed was a sense of apathy amongst students – both in communal and individual ways. We want to encourage our readers to keep inventory of those areas of apathy in your life.

This issue explores just the surface of many profound topics. In going with the theme of addressing apathy, we conducted a dialog between three students to discuss important political issues for this year's election. “Body Language” gives us a glimpse into the vibrancy of deaf culture and the ways in which we can grow in our understanding of this community. We also learn about the steadfast work of the Social Justice Ministry in “The Heartbeat of Change” – and how much further we all have to go.

Unexpectedly, many nights I found myself staying up trying to digest just what our stories were telling. Many of the stories in this issue, to be quite honest, tugged on me emotionally more so than in the past. And with the passing of Dr. Cook, how could we effectively present these heavy stories while still commemorating him?

As a student publication, The Point is a type of messenger to the student body. The class finds stories, report on them and present them to our readers. Essentially, messengers, especially journalistic ones, are meant to be more than merely informative. Their message is unbiased yet skillful enough to be enlightening, to evoke significant thought within the receiver. This particular issue carries many messages – the stories you may not have been aware of, the lesser-addressed aspects of our student body and university and, perhaps, the issues you should probably come to acknowledge and stay informed of.

I don’t know that Dr. Cook would say that Biola has arrived and has conquered all the things that hold room for improvement. I do think he would look at what calls for attention and he would address those things. Through Dr. Cook’s work, Biola students have left their mark on the lives of people in other countries, cities and communities. But there are still many things we need to be aware and conscientious of. I encourage you to read these articles introspectively, reflecting on the people who have been interviewed. And when you put the issue down, look for ways to change things individually and communally.

Thanks for reading,

Elizabeth Choi
Editor in Chief
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the HEART BEAT of change
Forget Facebook groups, this ministry is the real deal.

One Love, One Heart.
Social Justice Ministry Operations Manager, sophomore Matt Gundlach, addresses a classroom full of students saying, “We want to catch people’s attention, so I was thinking…”

“Drop cluster bombs?” one student suggests. The room erupts in laughter. Though mentioned out of jest, the suggestion refers to bombs that are being dropped over innocent civilians – an issue SJM is very interested in.

For a ministry that discusses and acts on issues of great magnitude, the Tuesday night meetings typically attract fewer than 50 students. This evening, 27 students cram into the classroom for the weekly meeting. Four are forced to sit on the floor. Gundlach is impressed that attendance has more than doubled since his first SJM meeting two years ago. Still, social justice issues have been slow in surfacing on many students’ radars.

Though it is difficult to pinpoint exactly why attendance in a social justice-focused ministry is not higher at a Christian campus, Gundlach has some ideas.

“First of all,” he says, “I think that there is a large amount of apathy at Biola. The two primary reasons that I have seen are that Biola isn’t educating its students in social justice, and students’ hearts are apathetic.” Gundlach acknowledges his opinion is “blunt” but feels very strongly about advocating social justice within biblical teaching and academic curriculum, as well as extracurricular activities.

The meeting continues, beginning with introductions round robin style. Within the group, some students have never been involved in any on-campus ministry, while others have been conscious of social justice issues their entire lives.

Among the SJM leaders present are sophomore Erin Arendse, junior Alicia Miller and SJM’s director, Josh Penman. Each has led several projects or campaigns in areas of social justice they are passionate about.

A video plays about the release of cluster munitions on civilians in several impoverished countries. The bombs release many smaller bombs and the effects can be fatal. After the video finishes, Gundlach opens up the floor for discussion.

As a freshman, Gundlach became involved with SJM after assisting fellow SJM member Carrie Allen with Genocide Awareness Week last year. He also worked with Miller to organize World AIDS Day last semester, as well as National Broken Bread Poverty Meal, a chapel service that united students against poverty. Though social justice issues are something Gundlach says he’s always been interested in, it was during high school that he became increasingly aware of social justice issues. Bob Marley was one of his earliest inspirations.
“Most people think Bob Marley is all about sitting back and smoking pot,” Gundlach says, “but he used his music as a means of uplifting people and causing change.”

In high school, there was no outlet for Gundlach to employ his passion for social justice. He attended a large public high school and remembers being “one of the few people who knew issues about the Darfur genocide … no one had any care about HIV AIDS or anything like that.”

“I was so glad when I came to Biola to take this consciousness that I had and apply it,” he says.

Still, the road to diminishing global injustice has not been easy.

“Last year during Genocide Awareness Week, an older guy called me an idiot for thinking that what happened to Native Americans was genocide,” Gundlach says.

However, comments like these have not deterred the social justice warrior.

“[Jesus] stood up against the status quo, and people hurled stones at him,” Gundlach says.

As an English major, sociology minor and aspiring writer, Gundlach plans on incorporating his passion for social justice with his career. “I know [social justice] is something that is not just a phase I’m going through,” Gundlach states. “[I] will always continue to be a part of it.” In the future, he wants to get involved with a non-profit or activist group.

Erin Arendse then takes the floor in the meeting to inform the students of a pending legislation, which, if passed, will ban the use of cluster munitions. The legislation would make it illegal for the United States to drop cluster bombs near populated areas and...
hopewfully reduce their use altogether.

Arendse coordinates the monthly “Write the Wrong” campaigns. Around the first of each month, students are invited to stop by an SJM table by the Fluor Fountain and write letters to their representatives, lobbying for change in various areas of legislation. On average, Arendse mails 100 hand-written letters each month.

“It’s cool to see how rapidly the idea has caught on,” Arendse says, commenting on Biola’s support of the monthly campaign. Some students even receive letters back from their representatives, thanking them for their political participation and affirming the democratic importance of the letter writing process.

Though numbers and awareness have gone up, it is hard to explain why a student body of more than 5,000 Christians is not more involved with the work of SJM. “The more you learn, the less you can sit around and not do anything,” Arendse says with conviction. “I had to get more involved [in SJM].”

Like Gundlach, Arendse plans on pursuing her passion for social justice after graduation.

“I don’t see myself ever not being involved in some way,” Arendse says. “It would be counterintuitive.”

One of her goals for the future is to work with girls in South East Asia or Western Africa who have been rescued from prostitution. She wants to start a school to provide them with a well-rounded education.

As the meeting comes to a close, Arendse sends the “Write the Wrong” sign up sheet around the circle.

HIV/AIDS and Orphan Care leader Alicia Miller is one of the first to volunteer her time to man the “Write the Wrong” table. Miller has participated in many AIDS awareness campaigns since her freshman year, including the Acting on AIDS club, in which she assisted in organizing the Lives are at Stake event in 2005. She said the club had other plans, but due to lack of support could not go through with them. The club eventually dissolved after her freshman year but in 2007 she got involved with SJM when Gundlach e-mailed her and invited her to partner with SJM.

Miller became interested in HIV ministry in high school through a teacher who had done graduate research work on HIV and taught a course on “Pestilence and Civilization,” looking into how disease affects and shapes societies and history.

On a personal level, Miller’s family gives her another representation of the need to care for people. Having three adopted siblings from Russia has opened her eyes to how real the adoption situation is. Her siblings have experienced many physical and mental struggles, including Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), mental illness, physical disabilities, social skill delays, attachment disorders and learning disabilities. She was 10 years old when her siblings were adopted.

“My heart goes out to those kids who have no one, not even their parents,” Miller says. She goes on to explain that any adoption, domestic or international, has many variables that can determine how ‘successful’ it is.

“These children have the potential to have mild to severe struggles that can impair attachment and developmental growth, but all that is nothing in comparison to what adoption is in itself – a representation of what God has done for us as Christians.”

When asked if she plans on adopting in the future, Miller replies between laughs, “This a hard question … I think I would. If I didn’t adopt, I would want to be working in an orphanage.”

This semester her goals for the Orphan Care team and the HIV/AIDS division of SJM are two-pronged: Orphan Care is in the beginning stages of creating a program that pairs Biola students with foster and adoptive families in the local church. The goal is to build relationships with these families, to come alongside and encourage them.

“Orphans are not only children whose parents have died,” she says. “They may be children who have little or no family support, few solid, lasting relationships with adults, or they may be children who have been adopted, but at heart are emotionally still orphaned because they are unable to attach.”

Miller’s efforts have been effective. Gundlach has been encouraged by the “huge step forward” in the “large response of students getting involved in our slavery & human trafficking and HIV/AIDS teams.”

But Miller’s plans don’t stop there. She wants to see HIV/AIDS and Orphan Care support Open Arms Ukraine, a non-profit organization started by Biola students several years ago that builds relationships with children who have graduated from the Pravda orphanage in Ukraine but have nowhere to go.

“Once you turn 18, you’re kicked out of the orphanage,” she explains, hoping that one day she will be able to guide kids who graduate from the orphanages to lead a fulfilling life.

SJM Director Josh Penman’s curly, blond hair bobs up and down as he excitedly nods in agreement with his peer’s impassioned comments. Penman receives the “Write the Wrong” sign-up sheet and eagerly signs his name.

Penman began attending meetings as a freshman, but he began exercising his voice for social justice long before he enrolled at Biola. Growing up in the Middle East, he lived in Jordan for five years and Dubai for 11. He moved to South Africa after high school for six months where he was involved in a course that focused on discipleship and cross-cultural training but incorporated AIDS, hunger and poverty relief.

He went to Sudan for a year and a half from September 2004 to March

It is hard to explain why a student body of more than 5,000 Christians is not more involved.
2006 and became the script editor for the National HIV/AIDS Prevention project. Penman contributed to the first HIV/AIDS educational video series and curriculum ever to be distributed nationwide for the Sudanese HIV/AIDS education media campaign. The video is projected to reach around 9 million people. Within two years, at least one million people are forecasted to have used the video to raise awareness.

“I was bawling tears for 15 minutes because all I could think of was everything I had seen in Sudan,” Penman says. “I saw how much good there is to do in the world because of how much bad there is. There’s bad enough in the world for every Christian to have a lifetime amount of good to do.”

Penman’s parents play a large role in fostering his desire to lend a hand to those in need. His father is the pastor of an international church in Dubai.

“Mom said I was always really compassionate about people,” Penman reminisces.

His earliest inspirations came as a young boy after reading books such as The Cross and the Switchblade, which recounts the story of Teen Challenge founder, David Wilkerson, and his desire to share the Gospel with urban youth of New York. Penman was also affected by Chasing the Dragon, a book by Jackie Pullinger who ministered to the hoods of the infamous “Walled City” in Hong Kong, where even the police refused to enter due to heavy crime and gang activity.

The impact of life experiences and autobiographies combined led Penman to campaign for justice, to undo deeds of corruption wherever they may be found.

As a film production major, Penman knows mass media “has the power to reach millions of people” and plans to use media as a tool to launch his social justice crusade across ocean waves and airwaves. He wants to work for media management for missions or political organizations in the future.

Immediately following Tuesday night’s meeting, the “Write the Wrong” sign up sheet was posted on SJM’s BUBBS folder, where
member Carrie Allen volunteered for one of the open timeslots.

Last year, Allen served as the Genocide Awareness Week director and also participated in the ONE campaign. The campaign, according to its web site, seeks to “make poverty history” by raising public awareness about issues of global poverty, hunger and disease.

“One day I watched the movie Hotel Rwanda, and I didn’t think it was real. Then one of my friends said it was a true story,” Allen states. “I was really surprised something like that happened in 1994. I started researching; I watched the Invisible Children documentary. I was heartbroken.”

Allen organized a fundraiser concert for Invisible Children, which raised $2,000, where she met SJM members. In the fall of 2006, she transferred to Biola.

“I wanted to raise awareness on the campus,” Allen states. “I realized that this stuff was going on, and I didn’t want to push it aside because I live in Southern California where most of us don’t worry about whether we are going to eat or not today.”

In addition, she has worked for the Displace Me event as the Advertising Director of Orange County and La Mirada. The event sought to demonstrate the experience of many displaced Ugandan youth through simulation.

Allen hopes to build up younger leaders in SJM. She is figuring out the details for SJM’s Rock for Justice concert on May 2, which benefits Olive Crest, an organization that houses abused teens and children in Southern California.

Many students have also gotten involved in the newest ministry of SJM, the Human Trafficking Team. Freshman Heather Chester recently volunteered to lead this new branch of ministry. Like Gundlach and Arendse, Chester noticed an SJM table outside the Cafe one day and stopped to ask for more details. Gundlach informed her that SJM was in need of a Human Trafficking Team leader.

“I was a little reluctant…but I decided to take an application anyway,” Chester says. “I had passion and a willing heart, and that was all that God asked of me.”

SJM’s most recent endeavor, the Human Trafficking Ministry, will have three distinct teams: Outreach, Awareness/Fundraiser and Intercessory Prayer team. The outreach team will focus on Los Angeles, the city with the third highest amount of trafficked victims within the United States, to serve victims of trafficking.

The awareness/fundraiser team will spread awareness on-campus and fundraise for nonprofits that SJM is partnering with. The prayer team will collaborate with SMU and pray for the trafficked victims.

As a 12-year-old growing up, Chester worked in orpanages in India with her parents, who tried to protect her from being prematurely exposed to grave but real images.

“I don’t think anyone is ever ready to see anything having to do with human trafficking,” she explains. “However, we have the responsibility to educate ourselves, and hopefully this will inspire us to bring about change.”

Junior Richard Freer decided to co-lead the Human Trafficking Team with Chester. He is anxious to partner with an organization that provides training sessions on how to spot and help trafficked individuals.

Through SJM, the leaders of SJM are united in their desire to do many things – give food to the hungry, clothe the homeless, free the enslaved, educate the unaware, relieve the oppressed. They identify the need and address it. Still, there is much to be done and a ministry of 30 people, on a good day, can only do so much.

“The ironic reality,” Gundlach says, “is that we represent one of the most crucial aspects of Biblical teaching, yet we are a small, under-funded group that has risen out of anonymity only in the past year.”

Gundlach believes that change is not necessarily what students can do in the arenas of social justice – it’s also the change that must occur in the heart of students.

“Social justice is huge, and yet Biola students often treat it as if it were dust on the pages of their leather-bound Bibles,” he says.

How does involvement happen? Attend a meeting.

Anyone who comes to meetings can “expect to meet people that can use [your] talents for SJM,” says Penman.

The hope is that students will be attracted to a ministry that partners with them to put their passion to action.

Sometimes it feels as if “no one is really helping us,” Allen says. So the invitation still stands: “Come to meetings Tuesday nights in Sutherland 116 and maybe something will spark your interest.”

Gundlach’s suggestion of getting attention by dropping cluster bombs is extreme – but given the stark contrast between lack of student involvement in social justice issues and the sheer gravity of those issues, the suggestion holds a sense of sad irony.

“Compared to the size of Biola, I think SJM’s efforts are quite small. I look forward to seeing the entire Biola community make a concerted and unified effort, of which SJM will be a part, to address Biola’s Christian response to social justice issues,” Penman says.

Biola students are not an exception to the growing trend of young people dealing with struggles such as depression, suicide, and anxiety. Many students have forsaken isolation and turned to counseling in their search for healing.

by christina hayes
photos by kate shaw
The recent rise of socially isolated teenagers opening gunfire on campuses, in malls, and in other public areas has become more common each year. According to Information Please Database, there have been nine school shootings in the last year, eight of them occurred in the U.S.

Thankfully, Biola has not experienced the pain of piecing together a campus torn by open gunfire. However, this university is no stranger to students dealing with difficult emotional situations. Despite the fact that Biola is a Christian university, Biola students come from a variety of backgrounds and living situations. Each student carries the weight of different types of pressure and each deals with those pressures in different ways.

Danny Paschall, Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Resident Life, interacts with students and faculty to address the ways in which Biola can serve its students. He explains that the reality of Biola students dealing with struggles such as depression, anxiety and suicide is a natural occurrence.

“We definitely deal with it on a regular basis. We are encountering students that are dealing with different levels of depression,” he says. Paschall believes that college students are overly busy and have come to not value rest and reflection.

“College students today haven’t been taught good coping skills. They never learned how to manage stress,” he says.

For many students, the idea of attending a counseling session is daunting. The tendency for students to want to gloss over their inner struggles or “deal with them later” can have future consequences. Many students are able to confide in a close group of friends but sometimes that is not enough to fully address an issue.

Jenny*, a Biola student, opens up about her struggle with depression. Her relationship with her parents began to deteriorate as she felt a lack of attention from them.

“I developed OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) to cope with my home situation. My dad never really paid attention to me and the rest of my family,” she says, “He was a pastor and so he put the church before his family. I remember feeling like I couldn’t trust him. I remember feeling that my mom didn’t pay very much attention to me either and I would pretend to be sick or try to hurt myself so she would pay attention to me.”

She explains how this struggle compounded with the painful diagnosis that her mother had cancer.

“I basically thought my mom was dead,” Jenny says. “I wasn’t even allowed to see her.”

Although her mother recovered, Jenny was still deeply affected by the long time of separation from her mother. In junior high, she coped with depression through music. In high school, her comfort was drinking, cutting and boys.

“I hated my parents; I never even had a relationship with them,” she recalls. “I maybe spoke one or two words to my dad and that was it. My depression went untreated for so long and no one seemed to care.”

When she finally told her parents that she had been cutting herself, they realized she needed help. After taking her to an emergency counseling session, she was immediately taken out of her living situation and put into the psychiatric ward of the hospital.

“The hospital was the first place I was put on medication,” she says, “My mom didn’t want me on it because she knew people that had a bad experience using it, so my parents were really against it. But I was put on anti-depressants and stayed in the hospital for a week. The medication really helped me recover.”

After leaving the hospital she returned to school.

“I remember I did not want to go back to school because a teacher had told about what had happened to me,” she says, “But I went back anyway. I still did well; I even ended up getting an award for the best grade in my Spanish class.”

She becomes more animated as she tells of her recent experiences at Biola.

“One of the reasons I even came to Biola was the counseling center and the on-staff psychiatrist was definitely a plus,” she says. Through the coaxing of Biola psychiatrist, Dr. Philip Lewis, Jenny decided to try the counseling center in her sophomore year.

“My counselor really helped me. She makes my issues her issues. It’s really big that she is so supportive and that she genuinely cares. For once in my life I am able to share my feelings. In my family if someone had a problem, you kept it in; you never voiced your opinion. It’s really nice now to have someone to talk to who isn’t going to interrupt you or yell or judge,” she says.

As she ends her story, a smile spreads across her face.

“Coming to Biola was a real turning point in my life,” she says. “I am in counseling, and I have friends to lean on. I really didn’t have that prior to college.”

Dr. Lewis is Biola’s on-campus psychiatrist at the Student Health Center. He sees students that deal with a wide variety of problems such as depression and other more serious issues like bi-polar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and social phobia.

“We are bio-psycho-social-spiritual creatures,” he says. “Human beings are complex and in some ways that affects our personality. I look at all of these angles, which would be the most appropriate intervention to help them get over their problem. I try to get a complete picture and find out about their lives as a whole.”

Along with an on-staff psychiatrist

* names have been changed to protect identity
Biola students also have access to the Biola Counseling Center (BCC). Dr. Melanie Taylor, director of the BCC, helps many clients through their struggles. She explains that there are many benefits of receiving counseling.

“Students present all types of issues that they would like help with, such as depression, anxiety, adjustment to college, eating disorders, relationship and intimacy struggles and family of origin issues,” she says. Not all students visit for these types of issues.

“Some even come just because they would like to engage in the process of personal growth,” she says.

Dr. Taylor said the BCC helps their clients in the pursuit of dealing with struggles.

“Our therapists are students at Rosemead School of Psychology and are trained in how to work with various groups of clients, using a number of different therapy modalities and techniques,” she says. “Each client is evaluated as to what type of therapy would be appropriate for them based on that individual and what they present when they come to the counseling center.”

She says the Biola Counseling Center differs from other centers in that “we integrate our faith with our education and understanding of psychology.”

Dr. Taylor strongly believes in the affects of counseling and counseling from the BCC.

“[The] center has a positive impact on Biola and surrounding communities because hurting people need a place to be heard and understood, accepted for who they are, and guidance in understanding themselves and how they relate to those around them,” she says.

Senior Joel Garman came to Biola in the fall of 2005 as a transfer student. He began to struggle with depression and started to lose sleep at night.

“The root of my depression was that my spiritual life wasn’t going anywhere I wanted,” Garman explains. After going to the Biola Counseling Center he learned how to cope with life and diagnose his depression.

“I took a summer school course called the Spiritual Formation Summer Program; it taught me about how we get from being sinners to more like Christ and what that process looks like. Spiritual direction helps me deal with what happens in life on a spiritual level, helping me understand that God is the primary mover in our spiritual lives.” Garman served as an RA and was able to apply what he has learned from his experiences, both the depression and the help from counseling, to minister to the guys on his floor.

More students are starting to understand that counseling is not necessarily for those struggling with “serious” issues. Many students take advantage of the BCC to better understand themselves with the help of a counselor. Kelly Mark, who graduated from Biola this past December, started going to the BCC because she was a psychology major and was interested in seeing what it feels like to be counseled.

“I hope one day to be a clinical [psychologist] or in family and marriage [therapy]. I wanted to take advantage of growing and understanding who you are, which is all a part of our sanctification,” she says. “Counseling has helped me to be more gracious towards other people and to think about my relationships with other people. It helps me to evaluate those relationships, gives me things I can work on to have healthy relationships with other people.”

Along with counseling, Biola is aware of the impact that clinical psychology has made in the area of personal growth. Rosemead
School of Psychology is a testament to the way in which Biola grapples with the integration of psychology and the Bible.

In a letter from the Dean of Rosemead School of Psychology, Patricia Pike writes, “Rosemead seeks to advance a biblically and psychologically integrated understanding of human nature and to apply this integrative understanding to relieve problems of human suffering and reconcile individuals with God, themselves and others.” She goes on to write that the foundation of Rosemead’s commitment is “that God reveals truths about himself and his world, including truths about human nature, through both his written Word (the Bible) and through his creation.”

Rosemead professor Peter Hill says that Christians must consider psychology from an educated and balanced point of view.

“As Christians we have to look at psychology and what it has to offer, but we have to do so with a critical mode — not blindly in light of our Christian beliefs,” he explains. He believes that Christians should be open to revising their understanding of Scripture “in the light of common grace.”

Dr. Erik Thoennes, an associate professor of Biblical Studies and Theology passionately argues for the integration of psychology and Biblical counseling. Numerous times, he returns to the Bible to support his beliefs in Biblical counseling. Numerous times, he returns to the Bible to support his beliefs in Biblical counseling.

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“The psalmist asks God, ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!’” he says, “but there does not seem to be a lot of emphasis in the Bible on figuring out all the experiences and reasons for the grievous ways in me.”

Rather, Dr. Thoennes exhorts students to identify sin and use that as a starting point in figuring things out.

“Sin is always ultimately irrational and rather than primarily trying to figure out the reasons for it, the Bible calls us to acknowledge our sin before God, repent of it and flee to the cross of Christ as our only hope,” he explains, referencing Philippians 3:7-16.

Dr. Thoennes continues, “We never need be defined by our past, our parent’s failures or our own sinful tendencies [references 1 Cor. 10:13]. The power of the Holy Spirit transforms us as the word of God takes root in our lives and brings about Gospel-driven sanctification.”

Lauren, another Biola student, endured several challenges in her life but found the benefits of counseling strengthened her faith.

Sexually molested by her uncle as a young girl, Lauren’s father had an affair, taking everything when he abandoned her family. She and her mother were left homeless. Lauren notes that many people in her family “go crazy.”

“Most of them die before the age of 50 from unnatural causes — things like suicide and drugs,” she says, “My own father died from a bullet shot to the head, and to this day we don’t know if it was suicide or murder.”

When her mother almost died, Lauren says, “I felt like I was doomed.

In order to cope with her environment she explored different lifestyles.

“I’ve gone from alcohol, smoking pot, cocaine – from that type of coping strategy to counseling, from my mom, close friends, and a counselor.”

Still, Lauren believes that despite how difficult it was to go through these trials, God helped her through them.

“I think he puts us through trials to help us grow,” she says. “First Corinthians 10:13 really helped me as I was going through counseling.

Looking back I realize how sovereign God was. Even though I was homeless I had somewhere to sleep. Even though I was hungry, I wasn’t starving.”

The hardships have made her a better person, she believes.

“I try to think of my life if I wouldn’t have gone through all the things I have,” Lauren explains. “I don’t think I’d have the appreciation. God put me through it because He knew I could handle it and could use me to help others.”

Biola’s faculty and staff strive to serve students by being an open and accepting place for students to figure out their struggles in community. With the help of professors, close friends, or a counselor there are many outlets in which students can unload their burdens. Undermining the value of counseling can hinder students from acquiring the help they truly may need, whether it be for “serious” issues or knowing oneself better.

“The root of depression is unexpressed feelings,” Paschall says. “Find places where you can really talk about what’s going on inside of you. Verbalizing that, expressing that, makes all the difference.”
MALIBU CANYON
55 Miles

Malibu Canyon offers hiking trails, a stream with small falls and other gorgeous creation. It’s a great place to go with friends or to spend some time in nature-filled solitude.

FULLERTON ARBORETUM
14 Miles
So, this may not qualify as “out of the city,” but the Fullerton Arboretum definitely makes you think you are. Located on the northeast corner of Cal State Fullerton’s campus, enjoy the Arboretum’s peaceful garden settings while you experience the unique types of flora showcased in each region: Mediterranean, Cultivated, Desert or Woodlands.

TABLE ROCK BEACH
38 Miles
A local favorite, Table Rock is Laguna Beach’s best-kept secret, so you can expect to enjoy the scenery in privacy. Head down Pacific Coast Highway to Laguna Beach. Once there, walk down the many steps to reach the beach, where you can escape from noise, read a book, and soak up the sun.
Santa Monica has it all: the vintage carousel, Playland Arcade, Pier aquarium, and even an amusement park right on the pier. If you’re going on a college dime, “people watch” at the beachfront for free! Just a tip: we hear Mariasol’s Authentic Mexican restaurant is delicious.

Located at the tip of the Balboa Peninsula overlooking Catalina Island, the jetty’s unusual rock formations combined with the crashing waves make an awesome view. Sit at the picnic tables with a sack lunch or try your luck at fishing. Take some time to peruse Balboa Pier for shops and restaurants.

If you’re looking for a weekend camping trip be sure to check out Joshua Tree National Park. With the Mojave Desert on the park’s west end, and the Colorado Desert on the east, be sure to take advantage of the numerous backpacking, biking and rock-climbing opportunities. If you do plan on camping, 6 of the 9 sites are available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Looking for a unique place to visit? Salvation Mountain, located slightly east the Salton Sea, is a fantastic display of folk art you won’t want to miss. Make sure to stop and chat with Leonard, the site’s founder and permanent resident.

The stars are bright at Griffith Observatory, where you can see past the LA smog with the Observatory’s Zeiss telescope. The Observatory’s telescopes, planetarium, exhibits are open every day except Monday.

You can’t possibly get bored in this 477-acre park that boasts tolling hills practically made for Ultimate Frisbee. Try the aquacycles at the lagoon or visit Orange County Zoo’s own black bears, Nacho and Yoyo. There’s more: don’t miss the bike rentals, horse trails, playgrounds, softball fields and volleyball courts are also available. Parking is $3 on weekdays and $5 on weekends.
Sandon Larson, a deaf professor of American Sign Language in Biola’s Foreign Language department, remembers the first time he realized he was grooving to a different beat.

“I was in high school, and you know how kids are when they’re in high school — always trying to impress people,” he says. “Well, as a guy, I really wanted to impress this girl that I liked.”

Larson was driving his car toward the edge of the school parking lot one day after school when she pulled up next to him.

“It was a good day; I was feeling pretty cool,” Larson says, so he proceeded to roll down his window to get her attention.

The girl appeared to be feeling the vibe, so he decided to crank up the radio a bit more, nodding his head in sync with the music. Larson smiled, thinking he looked pretty cool, when all of a sudden the girl looked confused — and when the light turned green, she veered right as he turned left. A buddy of Larson’s who happened to be driving right behind him followed him to the next stop.

“What was that you were listening to back there?” he asked.

Larson shrugged and signed, “I don’t know — some music on the radio.” His friend shook his head, saying, “Man, you were listening to a Spanish talk radio station!”

Larson decided that in the future, he would stick to playing CDs in his car.

**DEAF JUST CAN’T HEAR**

“The only thing a deaf person can’t do is hear,” says Larson, who believes that many hearing people have false presuppositions about the deaf community. For instance, when someone notices Larson is deaf and asks, “Can you read Braille?” Larson smiles and says, “I’m deaf, not blind!” Larson still loves listening to music and enjoys watching TV and movies.

The deaf can even do some things hearers can’t, Larson says. At concerts people will say, “You’re going too close up to the speakers; you’re going to blow out your eardrums!” Larson’s simple response: “No worries — they’re already blown out anyway!”

But Larson cautions that that doesn’t mean all deaf people are the same. In fact, one of Larson’s greatest pet peeves is when people assume all deaf people have everything in common. He wants to be given the same opportunity to be as unique as a hearing person.

“That’s why I love the first semester [of teaching sign language],” he says. “The first semester I break all those stereotypes that you ever had about a deaf person.”

Lack of patience is another pet peeve. When a hearing person brushes off a deaf person by saying “nevermind,” instead of fully explaining himself or herself, it is frustrating. Larson feels he demonstrates a great amount of patience with people who expect him to be able to read lips at warp-speed – all he asks for is the same consideration. When he is merely and quickly dismissed due to misunderstanding, it communicates to him that he is not worth the trouble of an explanation. Staying connected with people by hearing even the unimportant parts of conversations is a luxury that “hearers” can take for granted.

**DEAF CULTURE**

“Deaf culture is very friendly,” says Christie Epley, “and if you are deaf and another person [is] deaf, they can immediately strike up a conversation if they both sign.”

At present, Epley is Biola’s only deaf student. She is currently working toward her
Master's degree in intercultural studies and hopes to graduate next May.

“Hearing culture is used to having everyone [be able to] hear, so having a common language isn't that big of a deal,” she says.

Epley says that being Biola’s only deaf student makes it very difficult to make friends. Growing up, she remembers, fewer guys than girls bothered to learn the alphabet in sign language in order to communicate with her.

“The girls almost all knew the alphabet, but boys showed no interest,” she says.

Epley attributes this lack of interest to an observation she made: “Guys are more stiff and girls are more intuitive.”

She demonstrates how guys may use short, quick or jerky signs. Even if they are awkward, she appreciates when guys try to sign.

Epley also clarifies that English is not necessarily the first language of a person who is deaf. Other countries Epley has ministered in, like Nepal and India, have their own sign languages. English was Epley’s first language, even though she grew up in Japan, because she learned SEE (Signed Exact English) with her parents. But ASL is a different language from English, complete with its own grammar structure, rules and movements equivalent to prefixes. ASL loses words like “and” or “or” but never forgoes meaning. Larson and Epley both agree: sometimes people who are deaf will feel more comfortable expressing themselves in sign than in English, even if they can speak or write English fluently.

IN VolvEMENT W ITH DA EF CULTURE

Biola alumna Heather Hurtado has been working as an ASL interpreter for 12 years. She started interpreting while still in high school and continued doing so through her years at Biola. Hurtado received her Bachelor’s degree in intercultural studies, and sees the deaf community as slightly isolated from the hearing community, despite their similarities.

Now Hurtado interprets professionally for Fullerton College as the Interpreter Coordinator. Hurtado’s heart is for people who have been neglected from learning about who Jesus is because they are deaf. It concerns her that other religious groups such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Latter Day Saints have been very attentive to the needs of the deaf community, while others, specifically evangelical Christians, are lacking.

“As far as ministering to the deaf culture, other religious groups have made a point to really get the deaf involved as leaders in their churches, and so the deaf are becoming leaders in these other religions and bringing in even more people as a result,” Hurtado says.

Hurtado observes that some deaf individuals identify better with other minority groups, like homosexuals, because they understand the feeling of being isolated, overlooked or misunderstood.

“But of course it’s more complex than that,” she adds, “and the last thing the deaf community needs [is] people learning to sign out of pity. People should learn ASL because it’s a beautiful and expressive language, belonging to a unique people group.”

For those who haven’t had the chance to learn or observe ASL, Hurtado describes her experience with the language.

“ASL is so beautiful: the hand structure and the movements,” Hurtado says. “It’s absolutely gorgeous. In fact, the most heartfelt worship I’ve ever done is through sign language.”

WHERE BIOLA GETS IT RIGHT

In Hurtado’s opinion, hiring Larson is one of the best things Biola has done to help integrate the hearing community into the deaf culture. Taking an ASL class at Biola gives students the opportunity to be introduced to deaf culture by a young professor who loves
going to rock concerts and snowboarding in his free time. At Biola’s 100th Birthday celebration, even Larson was rocking out to Switchfoot alongside his students.

STUDENTS GETTING INVOLVED

For the hearing community, the question, “What made you come to Biola?” might get a response similar to that of Tiffany Tomlinson and Kate West. Both communications disorders majors, Tomlinson and West agree that in their cases, Biola provided a “strong sense of community” and had a “relational focus.”

“Biola just had everything I was looking for except a deaf studies major,” Tomlinson remarks.

But she decided she could stay involved with the deaf culture while studying a slightly different major. Tomlinson says ASL opens up a whole new world to her in which she can get to know more people. Like West, she uses the language as another branch of her focus on relationships.

West remarks that she knows it can be intimidating for a hearing person to get involved at first, but it’s not as difficult as some may think.

“I’m a visual learner for sure,” says West. This makes learning sign language very different from learning Spanish or another foreign language.

But Tomlinson is careful to add, “Spanish is very important too; ASL is just like any other language.”

SHOWING RESPECT

West thinks everyone should get involved with ASL. How? She suggests taking a class. ASL counts toward graduation credits, fulfilling the class requirement for foreign language.

Sign language at Biola, however, encompasses much more than just learning the language. It also addresses the cultural barrier between hearers and the deaf community, Hurtado says. Tomlinson believes that one of the worst things a hearing person can do is talk loudly to a deaf person, assuming that will enable him or her to “hear” better. The other assumption is that deaf people can read lips.

“It’s just rude,” she says, in regard to these assumptions. “Sign language is just like any other language,” she says.

Speaking louder in English never helped anyone understand anything better.

“I hate it when someone pretends to understand or thinks that I’ll hear them if they yell,” Larson says from experience.

Epley has to deal with the frustration of being refused an interpreter for counseling because Biola will not allow it.

“They wouldn’t give me one because it’s not required for my academic stuff,” she says. “That is actually kind of illegal under the Americans with Disabilities Act.”

The ADA stipulates that school services available to hearers should also be available to deaf students.

ASL IN MANY CONTEXTS

Everyone uses ASL in different ways. For instance, sometimes it is difficult for Hurtado to relay information or opinions that she strongly disagrees with, such as the perspectives presented in a human sexuality course at Fullerton College. As an interpreter she is obligated to represent the English words accurately and without comment in ASL.

Larson, who will receive his Master’s degree in ASL in October, wants to dispel the myths surrounding people who use interpreters. As a child, peers would often assume that it was the interpreter speaking for him and he was not actually thinking of intelligent comments on his own. Larson wants hearers to treat deaf people as the intelligent people they are.

Similarly, Tomlinson believes that hearers can gain insight into deaf culture by using ASL for themselves. She specifically appreciates the tradition of greeting or saying goodbye to each person individually.

Likewise, West loves the opportunity that ASL gives her to meet new people who she wouldn’t meet otherwise. Even though professors, students and professionals use ASL in different contexts, they all share one context in common: the Block.

THE BLOCK

The Block at Orange is more than an outdoor mall for members of the deaf community. The Starbucks at the Block hosts an evening on the second Friday of every month in which deaf people are invited to come and fellowship with other deaf individuals, and hearers are encouraged to come mingle with the close-knit community. Potter says members of the deaf community will sit and talk with each other for hours on end — that’s just typical deaf culture. In contrast, he says, “hearing [people] talk for 30 minutes and then leave.”

The event at the Block allows the two cultures to meet and mix. For those interested in expanding their understanding of deaf culture, the Block provides a great intersection where people come together to learn, practice and get to know each other through ASL.

Though deaf culture still remains a mystery to an overwhelming amount of people, small steps are the inroads into this community. And perhaps, in time, members of all communities will understand that communication is so much more than simply noise.
Six Biola students came for this story to offer their voices, expressing and addressing key issues concerning art and religion and the prominence of the arts here at Biola. Seasoned art major, senior Jenny Gerberding, offered connections between religion and art history while Michael Drake, a junior worship major, spoke of art in relation to worship and music. Junior Lauren Heurkens and freshman Veronica Burris, both art majors, considered the obvious and subtle outlets in which art students must implement their artistic and religious judgment. Juniors Mitch Ajimatanrareje, an art major, and Marshall Bang, an ICS major, expressed their frustrations in understanding the intersection of art and faith at Biola and within themselves. What transpired is a representation of what Biola students involved with the arts consider as they sharpen their craft, and on a larger scale, a mirror of the global dialogue artists and religious leaders everywhere are talking about.

THE POINT: WHAT DOES RELIGION IN ART LOOK LIKE?

**Ajimatanrareje:** Sometimes it can be as simple as a painting that holds an image of a crucifixion. There are many paintings based upon that subject alone and when someone thinks of religion in art, they instinctively think of crucifixion, the Last Supper...all these different images that pertain to Christianity.

**Gerberding:** We have changed much since the Renaissance so that the role of religion and art today has changed significantly, and often times it is not blatant historical or biblical narratives but more subtle ideas or conversations that are brought up through whatever the image might be.

**Drake:** I think there is a difference between art with a Gospel message and religious art. Being a musician, art with a Gospel message is music that is specifically intended to share something about Christ ... to evangelize in some way. My idea of religion in art is anything that is glorifying to God. That is as generic as religious art gets and there is a distinct line between evangelistic art and just religious art. They differ in style and in intention and in delivery.
**IF AN ART FORM IS NOT BLATANTLY RELIGIOUS, WOULD YOU STILL CONSIDER THAT AN EXPRESSION OF FAITH IF DONE WITH A HEART OF WORSHIP? WHAT IF IT DOESN’T EVOKE A RELIGIOUS RESPONSE?**

**Burris:** Something that I have been thinking about a lot in regards to having art become a vocation later on reminds me of what C.S. Lewis said: “We don’t need more Christian writers writing about Christian things, we need more Christian writers writing about many things.” I want to be an artist that perhaps does or could create something that has some religious symbolism for me, or something that is reflective of faith to me yet doesn’t have to blatantly state that… I don’t think I need to put a lot of religious criteria into my work that validates my coworkers’ or peers’ understanding. It could even be an expression of love or something that Christ has inspired in me.

**Gerberding:** The art department here encourages that though what you are creating may not be directly religiously themed, because you are a follower of Christ, [this] dictates everything that you do. Though my photos may not necessarily be a depiction of a crucifixion, because I am a Christian, my ideas about faith, this world, people and society and the brokenness of people will come out in my work. Themes will come out because they are inherent in your work, because of who Christ is in you. Your light is going to shine through whether you want it to or not.

**Drake:** Making music with the intent or recognition [that] it doesn’t glorify God [is not] necessarily a bad thing, because we are all sinners and walk a broken life. Often, but not always, that kind of music [should] be released for other people to hear. I don’t think it follows what Ephesians 4 says about not letting any unwholesome words come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for the building up of others. That is a personal conviction to me. If I am not writing edifying, encouraging music to build up other believers then I have an obligation not to share that.

**Bang:** I believe, though, that at the same time, people need to hear about fellow brothers and sisters’ brokenness and inner pain in which people can relate and they can see, or even other people, that we are all human and Christians aren’t on a pedestal and we can have a crappy day.
Drake: Still glorify God though...

Bang: Yes, and they can relate to that and even non-Christians can relate to that. This is why it is so real and so raw. At the same time, who are we to judge and say that it is not glorifying to God? It can offend one person while at the same time be able to speak to another person. God can use whatever and anything.

Heurkins: There is something real about crying out and being real in that.

Gerberding: There should be a level of sensitivity about where you should display your work or take your music. Hardcore music to a [group of people aged 75 and over] wouldn't be edifying. Certain images might be better suited to different audiences. In the Christian life, we can gauge how much we share or hold back; not that we are not being truthful, but when you approach an absolute stranger you speak to them differently than you would a friend. I don’t think that it is not being true to your Lord; it is just being sensitive to the Spirit.

Ajimatanrareje: We have to be considerate. We have our responsibilities to ourselves, to our audience, and to our Lord. As Christians, we are called to take these things into consideration. It demands a responsibility. Like a secular artist can do whatever he wants and express whatever he feels; however, we are not secular artists – we are supposed to be different. Therefore, it is up to us and the discernment of the Holy Spirit to know how to present even the difficult things.

Gerberding: We have a beautiful way to discuss the difficult things and have Christ behind that. I say this sensitively, that this is a place to push the envelope and not be afraid of being controversial. As Christians, we are controversial. Christ was controversial. It needs to be approached with humility. There needs to be sensitivity, also, to the brokenness in our world and caution in that. That doesn’t mean it is to be ignored.

Bang: I absolutely agree. We have to discern what is appropriate where. Reality is, there [are many] difference[s] even among Christians, and levels of liberalism or conservatism. We just have to deal with it as artists. People won’t always understand us or get it. I think a lot of us are hardened, for lack of a better word, and have gone through those experiences and have not let them affect us.

"We have our responsibilities to ourselves, to our audience, and to our Lord."

Ajimatanrareje: [Fashion] is not addressed by the Christian world or Biola whatsoever. Fashion seems to be taboo. The church doesn’t want to have any part of it. In a sense, I feel that there are many ways in which we are not necessarily hindered but not given a chance to express ourselves in the ways that interest us.
WE ASKED THE STUDENTS TO COMMENT ON THE ATTITUDES TOWARDS ART THAT THEY HAVE SEEN ON BIOLA’S CAMPUS.

Gerberding: I have seen a lot of changes as a senior, for the good, but one point of contention is how we are allowed to install art pieces around campus and then they are misinterpreted or seen as artsy-trash just littering the campus and people blow past, or don’t look…As artists, we [want] the Biola community to interact with our gallery [and our] art. Do you know how many people have never even been in the gallery? That breaks our hearts because the world out there is filled with art that is devoid of Christ. We are going into a war-zone as artists. I want to encourage Biola to not be afraid of art and immerse you[rself] in the arts. They praise God and show characteristics of Him.

Burris: I haven’t felt stifled; however, we recognize as artists we have this desire to use the gifts that we have been given, to be rational to a world that does not know what we know. I look [at] Xopoc and it is a blessing to this campus. It is something that wasn’t here before and now allows people to connect. Being able to express what you feel God has blessed you with and being able to perform and do what God made you to do is such a positive thing. If we are able to execute things with discretion, I just think it could be so good. I hope that all can be accepted by a conservative community without an overwhelming sense of fear or ‘What is this?’

Heurkins: I think it is good that we have boundaries and push them. We are trying to find out where the line [is] and it is important to realize sometimes boundaries are good.

In closing, Ajimatanareje shared a verse that resonated with everyone. Exodus 31:3-4a says “and I filled him with the Holy Spirit, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs...”
A dorm room is a place on campus where students can escape and relax, and some students are relaxing in very unique ways. Some have a comfortable couch or two, while others hang out in forts, on bean bags or in hammocks hung beneath their beds. Some sit on their couches and listen to a complete surround sound system, and others catch a show on their 42” plasma TV.

You might have noticed a table outside the Cafe in March that was taking nominations for the best-dressed dorm rooms. The Point magazine staff received 50 nominations in total and narrowed those down to the eight most impressively decorated dorm rooms by visiting the rooms and selecting those that stood out the most. The staff created a judging panel that consisted of three judges: AS student body President Jared Gibo, Assistant Director of Residence Life, Rachel Clark and Biola University Chaplain, Ron Hafer. The three judges and a few magazine staff members went to the top eight dorm rooms for the judging, which were located in Horton, Hope and Hart. The rooms were judged based on their personality, overall décor, use of color, livability, organization and creativity.

After the judging, the panel selected four winners, including two boys’ rooms and two girls’ rooms. And now, the winners are....
i. One of Bodemer’s favorite items in the room is the shiny 42” flat screen Samsung TV dubbed “Black Beauty” that Brandon was given for his 20th birthday.

ii. Adding a homey touch to the room is the lamp on Mitchell’s desk which is originally from Auschwitz. It belongs to his father; however, it has been passed down in his family, and he now has the privilege to treasure this remarkable relic.

iii. Four chairs in the room form the shape of a semi-circle surrounding the TV. These creative chairs are a combination of both traditional and contemporary interests. Both Mitchell and Hahn brought two chairs from home.
I. Macmillan’s favorite item in the room are paper cranes hanging from the ceiling, which display a variety of colors and shapes to dazzle the eye.

II. A favorite place in the room is the “den” underneath their combined lofted beds. Cushions and pillows create a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere along with warm colors displayed throughout the area in the den. Special lighting includes hanging Christmas lights and lamps.
i. The room looks like a discotheque with the 15 sources of lighting spread throughout. A disco ball glimmers in the room like a spotlight above Garret and Simonin’s closet; with the lights dimmed, the rainbow colors of the spinning DJ ball are visible.

ii. The sound of The Shins on a classic record player greeted the judges as they entered this room. “Oh this is cool!” said Jared Gibo as he pointed to the record player. Johnson brought his from home along with his collection of 50 records in their vintage sleeves.

iii. “Essentially, everyone has their own personal touch that makes the room ‘home’ for them,” said Simonin. On top of Johnson’s bookshelf is a bottle cap collection stored in a large Culligan water jug.

2nd Place

Guys: Glenn Garret, Kyle Johnson and Mark Simonin
I. Two words for this room: “Sports and lovely,” Ron Hafer says as he enters. At the entrance of Boer’s room is her collection of sports hats hung vertically on a rack by the door. “Well, despite their logos being on the front of the caps, I have a gigantic collection of baseball hats… a couple Seattle Mariners hats, Seattle Seahawks, Boston Red Sox, Los Angeles Dodgers, Angels and [miscellaneous] trucker hats like Bubba Gump Shrimp Co,” says Boer. By her bed, a wall dedicated solely to sports displays a collection of various Sports Illustrated and ESPN magazine cutouts of her favorite sports teams.

II. A dusty, broken-in batting glove is displayed in a glass case on one of the walls in the room. The keepsake belonged to former Seattle Mariners baseball player, Bret Boone. Boer worked for the Mariner’s Ball Club and attended their home games during junior high and high school.
CLARK HEDRIC: Sophomore, political science/international business major, co-leader of College Republicans club.
TRACY TOEWS: Sophomore, political science major, has interned with Cong. Rohrabacher’s office.
MITCHELL YOUNG: Senior, cinema & media arts major, Chimes Features Editor from 2006 to present.

It’s easy to find yourself in a political camp all your own – perhaps dwelling in the “Indifferat” group or giving “Perplexedican” a try – and rarely is it a student’s top priority to hit up Yahoo News for the latest on the last presidential polls. But with the insurmountable importance of this year’s election, students carry great weight with their vote. We need to realize we play a crucial role in the decisions of our government. If we, as Christians and as students, hope to see the Church influence the state, we ought to become informed in our political decisions for ourselves and for our future.

Liz: I’m glad to see you guys all here. Ok, the first question: For Biola student voters, what would you say are the top two or three issues that they need to consider this election? What issues are most important for us to gauge when looking at the candidates? Let’s start with... Clark.

Clark: Well, the two big issues this election cycle will be the economy and the Iraq War. The majority of voters will choose their candidate by these two issues. These two issues will decide the course of the nation’s future in both the short term and long term.

Tracy: Well, I believe those topics will help decide which party one would vote for, but for any democrat the decision is deeper, as they will have to decide whether universal health care is the right decision. I agree that the Iraq war and the economy will be essential, but Democrats have had additional choices to make. But by the time November rolls around, those three issues will be extremely important.

Liz: Mitch, what do you think?

Mitchell: I think our (college) generation is in a unique position to have tremendous transformative impact when it comes to a lot of the issues that we’re more in touch with now. A major issue for me is how our country is going to respond to mass global tragedy,
The Political Orientation Of Biola Students
Paul W. Rood:
Lecturer in Political Science

When I first started teaching political science courses for Biola students, I was warned to expect low enrollment and a low level of student engagement in the classroom. At evangelical Christian colleges like Biola, I was told, the typical youthful laments – “government is boring,” “politics is corrupt and absurd” – merge with broader skepticisms of this generation of Christian youth toward traditional ideals of capitalism, nationalism and natural liberty, in favor of broader apolitical holistic movements of social justice, global awareness and spiritual community. Having completed my undergraduate and graduate education at secular universities that attracted public policy students (Claremont, U. of Chicago), a lifelong active involvement in politics (Republican), and a long management consulting and corporate business career heavily focused on public policy, government and economics, I found politics anything but boring and irrelevant. I have been asked by the editors to address two questions.

Are Biola Students Politically Apathetic?

I have found them to be no more politically apathetic than their generation as a whole, in some individual cases more engaged in the political dialogue than their secular peers. While political ideology and partisan dialogue in and out of class typically requires some prompting, I have a number of students who are very engaged in current issues and political campaigns – Biola has a nationally ranked debating program, and our few political science classes and the Washington D.C. semester are well attended. I’m also gratified that we have a higher number of students who have both completed military service or are currently involved in reserve and active duty military programs (currently only 1 percent of enlistment age citizens serve nationally). Their service and patriotism is an inspiration to me and our students.

Dave Peters, our long serving Professor of such as the AIDS epidemic, famine in other countries, genocide and other large scale examples of social injustice. I feel that the younger high school and college generation, armed with the increased interconnectivity and media-saturation of our culture today, is in a unique place to strike hard at these issues, and I’d be interested to hear how the government plans to aid what is largely becoming a grassroots movement. I’d add to this list abortion and gay rights – they’re issues we come in contact with almost daily and should be prepared to respond to.

Clark: Yeah, I agree with Tracy that health care is a major issue – not only for Democrats. The Republicans have just chosen a candidate that has little record on issue. The average American can no longer afford good health care.

Tracy: However, health care is being stretched due in part to illegal immigration, so this is obviously an important topic, though it may not be a primary concern.

Clark: And Mitch, I agree that the issues you mentioned are very important issues, unfortunately I do not see them being major issues in this election. Haha…

Tracy: Haha…be nice boys.

Mitchell: I will save my great rebuttals for later :D.

Liz: What are your reasons for supporting the _____ party during this election? What issues sway your vote one way or another?

Mitchell: I’m a registered Republican, but I’m switching to an Independent before the November elections because I feel that I walk the middle on many of the issues. I’m still up in the air about who I’m going to vote for come election time, but I feel like at this point I’m supporting Obama because his campaign carries with it the most fresh platform that is seriously advocating change. I am always more swayed by specifics in any campaign, so if a candidate just talks about general ideas and principles rather than specific strategies, I am less likely to vote for him or her. It’s more about the candidate for me than the party. I don’t support parties anymore.

Tracy: I agree. It’s very hard to. Hillary is the only candidate I can have confidence in, so this naturally influences my decision to vote Democrat, which is new for me. She has had years of experience in Washington and in the White house, which will aid her against Obama; however, she is a polarizing figure because she is a woman and a Clinton, and
this will greatly influence her success. I do not agree with her completely, but I respect her as a woman and politician, which is more than I can say for any other candidate.

**Liz:** Ok, Clark?

**Clark:** I’m a registered Republican. I have been very disappointed with the direction of the party over the last four years, but I still agree with the general platform of the party. My vote is not swayed by individual issues but by values – I believe in small government and responsible spending. I will be voting for McCain in November.

**Liz:** Any responses?

**Tracy:** That was beautiful, Clark.

**Mitchell:** Tracy, one of my concerns about Hillary is that if she can distinguish herself as a candidate from her husband’s political views. It seems like he’s been very vocal, sometimes to her disadvantage, on the campaign trail.

**Clark:** As a Republican voter, I would be much happier with a Hillary presidency than with an Obama one. That’s my two cents on the Democrat nomination. I still won’t vote for either of them though.

**Mitchell:** McCain differs a little bit from the traditional Republican platform on his beliefs, don’t you think? I mean, I know Ann Coulter had that thing where she said Hillary was more conservative than McCain, and that was probably an exaggeration, but he is a little lenient on the issues, in my opinion.

**Tracy:** Very little about these campaigns are traditional this time around.

**Clark:** For sure, he is not a traditional Republican; I am not a traditional Republican

Political Science, and I (as a newcomer) have tried to do what we can and encourage others to raise the level of political engagement and dialogue on campus, despite the political somnolence on the campus overall. We shouldn’t forget that Biola is among the top 15 academic institutions with respect to preparing currently serving U.S. Senators!

**Are Biola Students all Conservative Republicans?**

You hear a lot of talk about how Biola students are all “Republicans,” so there is no point in political “dialogue.” A number of my students whose views are more Democratic left-wing say they find few people who share their political views on campus and prefer not to talk about politics for fear of being socially ostracized by what they perceive as a dominating “Christian Right” mentality; however, I think this is more perception than reality. Outside of Biola, on the secular campuses and in the youth culture settings, the dominant political values are decidedly left, and “Christian Left” students experience a comfort zone where they can engage with secular leftists from a Biblical perspective and be both energized, tolerated and sometimes even valued. They may certainly experience less affirmation in the Biola zone, from what are more conservative Christian students with different social-political viewpoints who are often prepared to further challenge them on the Biblical basis of these views. Unfortunately, what should be a setting for serious mutual dialogue shuts down into private spaces.

Aggregate statistics for Biola on Facebook indicate a predominant population of conservative Republicans and independents. I believe this is inaccurate and misleading. In my Survey of American Government classes over the past four years, I have been surveying student political attitudes using a more reliable tool. These are general education requirement classes, so they contain a broad section of Biola undergraduates in all disciplines. Students complete an anonymous political values assessment, and the results of this survey have been rather consistent class by class and year by year. While the overall statistics reveal a student body that is solidly moderate, 19.5 percent “traditional moderates” and 23.3 percent “compassionate conservatives” (a euphemism which combines traditional cultural/moral views with a robust and compassionate social welfare network), we have a broad representation of views along the political spectrum (ranging from
either. We do not agree on many issues, but he still represents an ideology that I generally agree with.

**Mitchell:** Well said. But that’s also why I’m not voting along any party lines at all...

**Tracy:** Same here. I have switched also.

**Liz:** Let’s move on to #3: What issues are non-compromise-able and what issues are secondary?

**Tracy:** I must say I am pleasantly surprised and relieved that legalizing same-sex marriage and the controversy over a woman’s right to choose are not key issues this year. Despite being repetitive, I believe for most voters, the candidate’s stance on the Iraq War and the economy will be essential in aiding decision making for both parties come November. Health care is also a hot topic, but I have noticed that people are more passionate about the war and immigration than health care... for now at least.

**Clark:** Compromise is one of the strengths of democracy. I know that many Republicans disagree, but I think common ground should be sought in every issue. This nation would not have survived more than 20 years without meaningful compromise. That said, the values in the constitution and our obligations to human rights demands that we agree on certain issues (i.e. we should have never compromised on slavery). I do not believe that there are issues currently in which we should not find common ground (with the possible exception of the right to life).

**Liz:** Mitch?

**Mitchell:** I agree with Tracy on this – issues that affect the welfare of the country as a whole should be non-compromise-able. A firm stance on the war is important. I would also add health care and energy as important issues, though immigration is definitely huge, especially for McCain – I hadn’t thought about that until Tracy mentioned it. Abortion, gay rights and other issues that fit under a more “moral” branch of thinking are secondary because for the most part, I don’t think they should be regulated by government control. But, to get back to my first response, abortion and gay marriage are, in some ways, the most relevant to college voters.

**Tracy:** College students happen to be targeted by Obama, and it is interesting that he has said little on either topic. However, he is quoted for saying, “no one is pro-choice.”

**Mitchell:** Obama does fascinate me...

**Tracy:** This is interesting, as he is considered to be farther to the left than Hillary.

**Mitchell:** I think it’s the theme of “change” in his campaign; college students love change

**Tracy:** He is an amazing speaker. But until he can speak about more than “change,” he might run into a few problems.

**Clark:** Change is not always good.

**Tracy:** The concept of a presidential election is based on change. I do not understand why Obama is credited for this.

**Clark:** I do not think Obama represents good change.

**Mitchell:** Because I honestly believe that’s some of what is fueling Obama’s campaign — the frustration the country feels with the current administration.

**Liz:** Let’s move on to the next question: Beyond this year’s election, what motivates you to be informed about politics? What motivates you personally to be informed on politics? Some people are interested in politics only for this year’s election.

**Mitchell:** Well, I connect my passions with my desire to be informed in politics. For instance, I’m a film major who’s really interested in the field of media and I really care about social justice, so when political ideas or decisions directly affect these goals, I pay attention. I also have had the opportunity to interface with people from different cultures through my experience in film, and so I’m aware at how they view me as an American. I basically don’t want to continue the stereotype of the “dumb” American.

**Liz:** Tracy?

**Tracy:** I believe the government shapes everyone’s daily lives, whether they realize it or not. So it is wise to pay attention to what is going on and be involved if possible. Plus, I find the whole system of government fascinating. I really have no better answers than this.

**Liz:** Clark?

**Clark:** As Christians (primarily) and Americans, we have an obligation to use the rights that we have been afforded to select our authorities. We’ve had good and bad presidents and politicians in the past, but as a nation we have far exceeded all other nations in our ability to maintain a good society. This is not something we should take for granted; it will not take much for us to lose it. That is why we must stay...
including politics. Let’s start with Clark.

Clark: Well, as you may know, the College Republicans Club was recently re-established on campus, and we would love a continued and expanding involvement in that. Also, with the Internet there is a wealth of easy-to-reach information. I would say that 20 minutes each week could sufficiently bring any student of any ideology up to date on the happenings in the political world; it’s an opportunity that I think is definitely worth it because our government informs the way we live our lives on a daily basis. A great web site to find balanced political information is realearnpolitics.com.

Tracy: Nice pitch, Clark :)

Liz: Great. Tracy?

Tracy: I have a lot to say on this... so... sorry in advance. Just like with faith, it is important to know what we believe and why we believe it, politically speaking. I can’t help but lose respect for people who support one party, or feel strongly about an issue simply because their parents do. Part of growing up is deciding for ourselves what we believe. If you agree with your parents — great. If you don’t, at least know why not, and stick with that. I see so many of my peers skating through life and not seriously thinking through the values they have heard their entire lives. Plus, so many people on campus seem to want to make a difference in the world, whether it is through donating shoes or short-term missions trips. Politics, especially American politics, influences the world on a much larger scale — not that I am opposed to donating shoes. I think that’s great. I work in a Congressional office, and I am often frustrated by those who want to vent to me about immigration or other types of public policy because it is now affecting them personally. If their lives had not been personally touched, they would still be ignoring the issue, thinking that it is someone else’s problem.

Clark: Nicely put.

Tracy: Thanks.

Mitchell: I think it’s easy for a lot of college students to adopt a cynical, hands-off approach to voting and elections because they’ve grown up to see government as a bunch of talking heads buried underneath bureaucratic red tape. To echo what everyone else said, people don’t typically pay attention unless the issues are in their face, confronting them personally. I think it’s worth it to get at people’s passions and try to let them know that the things they really care about are being affected by the policies our government makes. I know a lot of gay people and I know a lot of students on this campus do as well. When Huckabee was still in the running for candidacy, he was supporting a federal marriage amendment to define marriage as between a man and a woman. That’s huge for me as it would affect a lot of people I personally know. I’d just kind of say things like that to get people thinking about how government does affect them. Gay rights may not be one of the defining issues of the election, but if that’s what it takes to get people to start caring about politics, I’m all for discussing it. Very few of us are born to be politicians, but that doesn’t mean we can’t still be well-informed and opinionated about these issues. I think it just speaks well for us as educated Americans when we come in contact with other cultures if we know what’s going on in our own country, let alone in theirs.

Clark: I completely agree.

Tracy: Same here. Nice work.

Liz: What do you guys say to students who become confused and eventually, indifferent about politics? Or perhaps not confused but indifferent from the start - there seems to be so much to know and so many different sources with different agendas, it’s hard to know where to start and what to believe as fact. Any resources? Tips?

Tracy: I encourage them to talk it out. You can only absorb so much by reading and news. It really helps to talk it out with other people, as this usually leads to a more well-rounded approach, since the media is biased.

Mitchell: Yes, discussion’s great, especially with people with differing viewpoints (like this discussion)...you’d be surprised how much you actually believe or don’t believe when you are actually forced to put it into words.

Tracy: Exactly.

Mitchell: I also would add that students should decide for themselves what to believe, using the information and people they have available to them. Don’t become a Republican just because your parents are Republican or because you think all Christians should be Republicans...

Clark: Everything in life will disappoint us at one point; that is why God is so great. Politics is no different and when our government fails, it does not give us an excuse to space out — it is a test of character and faith to continue.

Tracy: Exactly. So often college students will become wrapped up with a certain issue or politician (like Obama) because it is interesting, and all their friends are doing it. It becomes almost like a popularity contest, which is not the point, even though students are still involved.

Mitchell: I agree with both of you.

Clark: Thanks Liz for the good questions, it’s been a great (albeit “information-age”) discussion.

Mitchell: Yes. Thanks, Liz.

Tracy: Haha true. Thanks.

Liz: I’m glad you guys enjoyed it.

Mitchell: Night all!

Mitchell has left.

Tracy: Night!

Tracy has left.

Clark: Night...

Clark has left.
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