

# SIR NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Number 3



Fall 2006

*“The principle of give and take is the principle of diplomacy - give one and take ten”*

*– Mark Twain*

## Message from the President

Dear SIR Member,

I would like to share with you a short exchange I had today with a colleague which began with his reporting on the results from a study conducted by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute on the "civic literacy" of American college students. The survey is at once an eye-opener but also a bit depressing, challenging each of us—faculty and students alike, to consider the purpose of our education and our study of international affairs. The survey can be found at:

<http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/report/summary.html>

Some highlights of a survey on basic knowledge about US history, government, world affairs, and market economy:

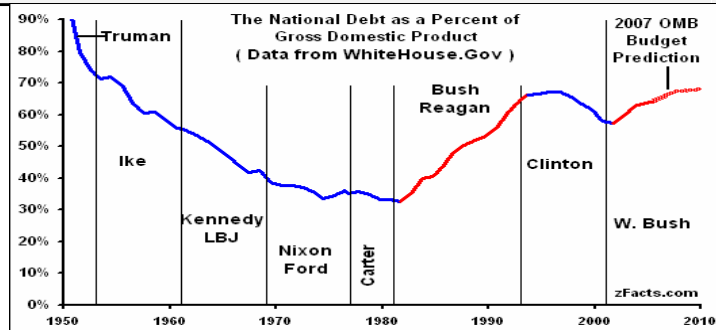
- On all five subjects, average score was about 50% -- or a failing grade.
- On average, seniors scored just 1.5 points above freshman. So a college education isn't helping much. (In fact, in some schools seniors scored lower than freshman.)
- Colleges ranked high in US News and World Report were ranked low in the ISI survey. In fact, a 1 percent increase in civic learning as measured by the survey corresponded to a 25 position decline in the US News ranking. (Unfortunately, Penn was not part of the rankings, but Princeton scored 18th, Harvard 25th, Stanford 31st, MIT 38th, Yale 44th, etc.)
- Fewer than half, 47.9 percent, recognized that the line "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal," is from the Declaration of Independence.
- More than 75 percent of college seniors could not identify that the purpose of the Monroe Doctrine was to prevent foreign expansion in the Western Hemisphere.
- Even with their country at war in Iraq, fewer than half of seniors, 45.2 percent, could identify the Baath party as the main source of Saddam Hussein's political support. In fact, 12.2 percent believed that Saddam Hussein found his most reliable supporters in the Communist Party. Almost 5.7 percent chose Israel.

In my view, what is worse in some regards, while contributing to this phenomenon is the university's drift into "corporatization," and the "Disney-fication" of campuses due to an unrelenting and pervasive consumerism on campuses. This is driven as much by the rankings game as by the desire to improve the quality of life on campuses. There is too much self-censorship, abdication of faculty and student governance prerogatives, and excessive deference to central administration in the hope that benign paternalism will ensure that all boats rise (and fall) equally. The notion of devoting time, resources, and energy to demonstrate a commitment to democratic education or democratic processes within the university does not go much beyond mission statements and glossy recruitment brochures. But the problem is also rooted in society and is correlated structurally with rising vocationalism, consumerism, credentialization, social promotions (beginning in middle school and through high school), and a culture that says that no one is responsible for their actions

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## *Message from the President*

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but is owed an entitlement of a college degree and a job following it.

Of course I would like to think that members of Sigma Iota Rho are the exception to these trends. It is usually the case that when a student opts to study international affairs as an undergraduate it is because they see the relevance of the subject matter to all aspects of our day-to-day lives. The short-hand for this, *globalization*, impacts the social, political and economic realms in both good and bad ways; in ways we can control or alter and ways in which we are passive recipients of larger structural forces. Through our formal studies, our extracurricular activities, and in the internships, jobs, and volunteer service we pursue, SIR Members stand out as exemplars of the American civic literacy.

Here in the National Office we have been receiving calls this fall from various chapters trying to reorganize new groups of students for this academic year, or report on new staff members or a new faculty advisor, all of who need to get up to speed on how to organize and manage the chapter. A good place to start is the **Sigma Iota Rho Chapter Handbook**. You should have a copy at your departmental office or in the possession of the faculty advisor. It is available online or as a pdf. file that we can send to you electronically. The handbook tells you how to organize a student executive committee to run the organization. It suggests various subcommittees to help put together an action agenda and an events schedule for the year ahead. It has template and guidelines on how to hold an induction ceremony and three pages of ideas for activities you can organize on your campus. If you need additional copies they can be purchased for \$10.00 or are available in a pdf. file on the SIR website (it is password protected, which you can get by contacting our office).

Looking ahead, the Editorial Board of the *Journal of International Relations* has been formed and we are still seeking **Peer Reviewers** to work on the editorial board to assist in the selection of articles. A **Call for Papers** will be going out shortly to all Faculty Advisors to distribute on your campus.

I am also pleased to announce that we will be offering five **Scholarships or Research Grants** to SIR members around the country this year. The funds for these grants are derived from your dues and from our **Merchandise** sales, so please support these good works by buying SIR Merchandise for your chapter or for personal use.

Our staff remains unchanged this year as **Justin Meservie** continues as my able right hand man as National Liaison Officer; **Dina Saginur** supports us as our Administrative Aide (and National Liaison Officer in training), and of course, **Donna Shuler**, my Administrative Assistant and office manager keeping everything moving smoothly. Have a great year and let us know how we can help you make it better.

Regards,  
Frank Plantan, Jr.

President

## **SIR ACTIVITIES SUGGESTIONS**

**These are just a handful of recommendations. Please do not let them limit your creativity!**

***Let us know YOUR great ideas too by contacting the National Office.***

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### **Welcome Back/Farewell**

- Welcome Back BBQ
- Get to know SIR Social
- New Inductees Dinner/Reception
- End of the Year Picnic
- Reception for Graduating Seniors
- Mentoring/Peer Advising Socials

### **During the Year: Professional**

- Peace Core Recruiting
- State Department Recruiting
- International Studies and Your First Job
- Alumni Career Panel
- Graduate Education Options
- Foreign Service Exam Workshop

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## Recent Examples of SIR Internships and Study Abroad Programs:

### Government

- U.S. Department of State, *Washington, DC*
- Offices of U.S. Senate, House Members, *Washington, DC*
- United Nations Information Center, *Washington, DC*

### Non-Profit

- Lutheran Children and Family Service, *Philadelphia, PA*
- Project for Nuclear Awareness, *Philadelphia, PA*
- Casa Italia Pro-Children, *Cartagena, Colombia*

### Private Sector

- JP Morgan, *San Francisco, CA*
- Innovative Technical Solutions, *Honolulu, HI*
- JGC Corporation, *Beijing, China*
- Gymboree Corporation, *San Francisco, CA*

### Study Abroad Programs

- London School of Economics, *London, U.K.*
- Butler-IFSA COPA,, *Buenos Aires, Argentina*
- Edinburgh, *Scotland*

*For more information regarding both internships and study abroad please contact either your school advisor or the SIR National Office*

## Studying Abroad – A Student's Perspective

As told by Christian Colin, Epsilon Chapter Member ('07)

### London and the LSE

A senior at Penn, I am double majoring in International Relations and Economic History. I studied abroad my junior year at The London School of Economics and Political Science.

London is out of control -- 7 million people cramped into a continuous expansion of swerving and twirling roads, parks and squares with statues of pregnant handicapped women, superimposed shops, theatres, and museums, Subways and Starbucks at every corner, limousines crowding the streets, self-loathing/scooter riding intellectuals and homeless, curry shops and student union bars, sex stores and street comedians, etc. The city is great.

I lived along the Southern bank of the Thames River, right across from the Tate Modern. Slightly removed from the hectic center of the London, Bankside House (my dorm) is ideally located in a historic district of city. The close proximity of Shakespeare's Globe, the London Eye, Waterloo Station, and countless other attractions made Bankside a unique place to live.

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## SIR Featured Chapter: Brigham Young University

*Each issue, the SIR National Office recognizes the extraordinary efforts of one of its chapters by highlighting recent events and accomplishments. Featured this month is Brigham Young University.*

The Omega chapter at Brigham Young University hosted a back to school open social in September. It was largely a new initiative taken by its entire chapter, led by student president Kasey Clemens and Chapter Advisor, Dr. Darren Hawkins to make the chapter more active and successful. In preparation for the event, the Omega chapter purchased large quantities of SIR t-shirts from the national office and printed off a series of flyers which were posted around campus. The chapter also had the event advertised through BYU's international relations department. The chapter also wore the SIR t-shirts around campus prior to the event to raise awareness.

For the event, the students reserved a courtyard on campus and were able to have a local popular hotdog vendor "J Dawgs" to cater the event in addition to having a DJ. SIR members had an informational table set up to answer questions and also took contact information from students who were interested. As the crowd gathered, the SIR student leadership and Dr. Hawkins gave a brief overview on the honor society. The event was without a doubt a major success with a turnout of approximately 300 students.

The National Office congratulates the Omega chapter and wishes them a very successful academic year.



*Students lining up at BYU's information session while enjoying food and music*

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## New Member Benefits:

### **SIR Partnership with the *Internationalist***

In line with Sigma Iota Rho's purpose of promoting the study of international affairs and to support the interests' of its members in current events, the national office has negotiated a new agreement and benefit enhancement for each of its members.

As an added benefit of membership in Sigma Iota Rho, the *Internationalist* magazine will be offering all SIR chapters and members in good standing a free subscription to their publication. The *Internationalist* is a non-profit 501(c)(3) publisher that covers global trends, culture, events, and politics with the purpose of cultivating a generation of informed, globally-minded, optimistic young thinkers. Its design, format and content are geared toward college students, though its substance will appeal as well to professors, business people and other informed citizens. The *Internationalist* is published quarterly and will send your SIR chapter as many copies as desired depending on the size of chapter and events you may have planned during a publication cycle. To learn more about the *Internationalist*, visit [www.intmag.org](http://www.intmag.org).

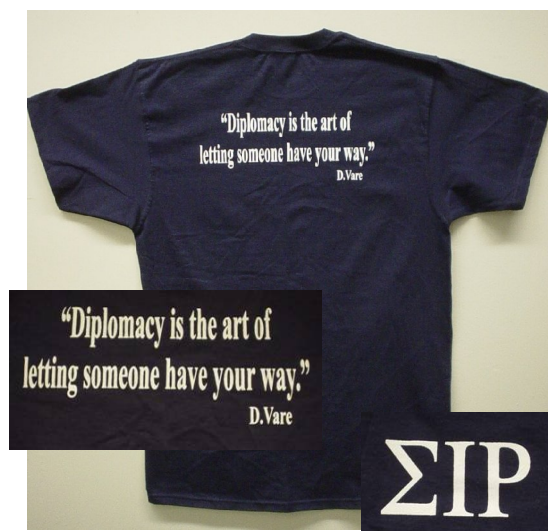
To order sufficient copies for the SIR chapter at your institution, please complete the application through the link below, and fax (206.337.0408) or email ([circ@intmag.org](mailto:circ@intmag.org)) it directly to the *Internationalist*.

*SIR has many future partnerships currently in the works and will continue to pursue many more benefits for our membership.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Merchandise Update

- **SIR will be adding pad folios and banners to merchandise lineup within the next few weeks. The National Office will contact each chapter to update them on when this will be available.**
- **Discounts are now available for SIR T-Shirts when purchased in bulk orders for chapters. For orders of 10 or more, each will cost \$12.50 as opposed to \$15.00 per shirt with orders under 10.**
- **Don't forget to order your own SIR Keychain for \$5! Picture available at [www.sigmaiotarho.org](http://www.sigmaiotarho.org)**



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## *SIR Activities Suggestions (continued)*

### **During the Year: Academic**

- Coffee Chats/Dinners with Faculty
- International Studies Movie Night with Faculty Discussion
- Topical Speaker Series
- NGO-Themed Weeks
- Trips to Graduate Schools
- Major fairs Representation
- Peacekeeping Simulation
- Collaborations with Related Departments and Schools
- Final Exams Open House – Free Coffee, Food, etc.

## **SIR Journal of International Relations Update**

Do have an interest in international affairs?

Do you want to be published in a nationally distributed academic journal?

The Sigma Iota Rho National Honor Society of International Relations is currently **seeking submissions** for its *Journal of International Relations*, published through the University of Pennsylvania .

The Journal will be circulated **nationally** and include the writings of undergraduate students from across the country, thus we encourage SIR members from any university to submit their work for consideration.

We welcome any submission of **scholarly work** from people of all majors, as long as it is pertinent to the study of international relations. We encourage submission of original work, papers written for class, and excerpts from longer papers. This is a great opportunity to have your work and ideas showcased on a national level.

We request that submissions do *not* exceed 4,000 words.

Email submissions to Editor-in-chief **Edward Lin** at **ejhan1@sas.upenn.edu** and please include your name, school, and contact information.

The deadline for submissions is **January 12, 2006**.

## *Study Abroad – A Student's Perspective (continued)*

LSE is an amazing school. In the center of the London, about a twenty minute stroll from my dorm, it's completely different from Penn. Just a series of buildings that blend into the rest of the city, overshadowed by, yet complementary to the grandiosity of the Royal Court of Justice right next door. The school's immersed seclusion is only somewhat broken by two small LSE panels that lead you in and out of the university domain. The students are from all over the world. I've met people from Georgia to Sri Lanka, from Sudan to Chili, from Taiwan to Lebanon.. you get the point. Courses were interesting and the professors incredible. I took four yearlong (8 credits) Economic History courses – Latin America and the International Economy; Africa and the World Economy; Comparative Economic Development in Russia, India, and Japan; European Economic Integration. Though dry and repetitive at times, these classes greatly expanded my understanding of economic history and international relations.

Overall, the LSE is an perfect school for students seeking to break away from American isolationism, experience an eclectic European lifestyle, adapt to a different educational system, travel, explore, learn, and have a great a time.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Thanks and Acknowledgements**

A special thank you is due to the student leadership and faculty advisors for responding to our information request about the local happenings. It is our hope that you will find this newsletter fun, informative and helpful.

We are only as strong as our membership, so thank you all for making SIR what it is, an outstanding National Honor Society for International Studies.

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SIGMA IOTA RHO c/o International Relations  
Program

255 S. 36<sup>th</sup> St, 635 Williams Hall Philadelphia, PA  
19104-6305

Tel: 215-898-0452 • Fax: 215-573-3207