SIG Brings Immigration Lawyer to East Palo Alto

By Leah Karlins ’11

On March 14th, almost one hundred East Palo Alto residents attended an immigration law workshop held at St. Francis Church in East Palo Alto. The event was hosted by Stanford in Government and organized by SIG’s Campus and Community Partnerships committee (CCP). Attendees learned about the politics of immigration reform and had an opportunity to personally consult with an immigration lawyer.

Sylvia Romero, a community organizer from Peninsula Interfaith Action, kicked off the workshop with a talk about political advocacy and the immigration reform process. She emphasized how important it was for all residents to be counted in the 2010 U.S. Census, and explained how they could express their opinions about immigration

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Incoming Chair’s Note

By Valentin Bolotnyy ’11

It is both an honor and a privilege to accept the position of SIG Chair for 2010-2011. I joined SIG during my sophomore year as I was starting to focus my academic interests and getting ready to declare a double major in Economics and International Relations. I started as a committee member in International Fellowships and quickly began to appreciate the importance of SIG’s work for the undergraduate community. The more I worked with professors, the Haas Center, representatives of international organizations, and fellow SIG members, the more I became attracted to the idea of promoting public service. This year, my junior year, I expanded my involvement in the organization by directing the International Fellowships committee.

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Campus Awareness Hosts Discussion of Immigration Law and History
By Rebecca Sachs ’13

On May 24th, Assistant Professor of Sociology Tomás Jiménez, an expert on immigration and assimilation, sat down with students to talk about immigration reform in the United States and Arizona’s new immigration law, SB 1070. Professor Jiménez, who is currently examining how citizens in host countries view the assimilation of immigrants, met with about 20 students who were excited to engage in a discussion about the history of immigration and the implications of Arizona’s law.

The event was sponsored by Stanford in Government’s Campus Awareness Committee, which hosts biweekly “Policy Lunches” to encourage students to engage with faculty and other prominent members of the Stanford community around current political issues and areas of interest that they may share.

Over the course of the hour-long lunch, Professor Jiménez touched on historical aspects of American immigration policy, the impact of focusing on border regulations versus identifying immigrants already in the United States, and the growing debate over immigration policies. Stating, “You can look at Arizona as a flash point of the debate, not the whole debate,” he stressed the importance of understanding Arizona’s immigration law in the context of the larger immigration debate. The changes taking place are not drastic, but they do pose an ethical dilemma. Professor Jiménez then went on to briefly discuss laws in other states and the varying reactions to Arizona’s law across the country.

Throughout the discussion, Professor Jiménez encouraged students to comment and ask questions. Students at the debate came from a wide variety of backgrounds. There were students interested in getting involved in immigration issues on campus, students affected by the law who felt confused about how reform could be beneficial, and students who were interested in learning more.

The Campus Awareness committee has provided many Policy Lunches. Past participants have included Director of the Center for Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law Larry Diamond; Deputy Director of the Hoover Institution

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Incoming Chair Discusses Vision for Coming Year

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Although my focus remained on fellowships, I began to see SIG more as a single unit, with Programming, Fellowships, and Operations working together toward a common goal. The shared drive and dedication among SIG members to public service work inspired me to get even more involved in the organization’s leadership. My love for SIG, appreciation of its work, and vision for growth have made me excited about the role of the Chair and will guide me in my decisions next year.

SIG will take a bold and challenging path in its programming. The Public Policy Forum will pursue more big speakers throughout the year whose policymaking expertise spans a broad spectrum of disciplines and will strive to appeal to those students who may not have thought about pursuing public service before. Campus Awareness will work with a similar mindset, continuing to engage Stanford students in discussions with professors, policymakers, and others involved in public service. Campus Community Partnerships will partner SIG with other organizations on campus to increase interest in public service in underserved communities through workshops, voter registration drives, and programs for high school students.

SIG will also seek to strengthen its fellowships program. This past year has witnessed our fellowship offerings increase further, reflecting greater demand for them from organizations, students, and academic departments. Such strong interest in our work is encouraging and makes it vital that we continue to ensure that our fellows’ experiences remain excellent. Next year we will further solidify the partnerships that we have established with this year’s new fellowships and make sure that we are meeting student demand in the best way possible.

SIG’s Operations branch will continue to be important to the culture and cohesiveness of the organization. By improving communication across committees, creating more community-building activities for the whole group, and increasing connectivity with other student groups, “Ops” will serve as a key element to SIG’s success.

The ideals of public service and giving back strike a sensitive chord with me as someone who has worked with SIG for two years and who has a background as a Ukrainian immigrant to the U.S. In that light, I want to warmly thank the many SIG alumni (most former chairs or officers) who under the leadership of Jon Oram ‘94 and Susan Thomas ‘95 have created the new Jeanne Wahl Halleck Endowment for SIG. The fund will provide annual dollars to the SIG chair for program innovation, and honors longtime SIG advisor and Haas Center staff member Jeanne Halleck, who retired in 2007 from Stanford.

I am thrilled to be able to put my energy and passion into leading an organization whose work I admire and whose values I cherish. I can’t wait to get started!
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reform to their elected representatives. Jacqueline Raine, a bilingual immigration lawyer from the International Institute of the Bay Area, then offered individual consultations. Several attendees expressed how much they appreciated the chance to have their questions answered. Fr. Lawrence C. Goode, the pastor at St. Francis, said that he sees consistently high demand for these types of events in the community.

Lexi Shechtel ’10, Co-Director of CCP, explained that her committee responded to feedback they had received at the “Know Your Rights” workshops organized for Stanford employees last year.

“We learned from that experience that what people really wanted – what was most valuable to them – were answers to their specific legal questions.” Shechtel explained further, “We wanted to host the event in a different format – one where people were able to ask their specific questions about personal issues.” Shechtel said her committee is hoping to hold similar events in the future, both on the Stanford campus and in neighboring communities.

ASSU Executive Debate

By Erin Olivella-Wright ’12

On Tuesday, April 6th, Stanford in Government’s Campus Awareness committee joined together with The Stanford Review and the The Stanford Daily (the two largest newspapers on campus) to host the ASSU Executive Debate at the CoHo. Held just a few days before the polls opened, the debate allowed each of the slates for ASSU Executive (President and Vice President of the student body) to discuss their platforms and answer questions from the audience. The debate, moderated by Stanford Daily president and editor in chief Kamil Dada ’11 and Stanford Review news editor Tom Corrigan ’11 was attended by all six slates, including the eventual winners Angelina Cardona ’11 and Kelsei Wharton ’12.
Outgoing Chairs Discuss Another Successful Year

By Rebecca Schindel '10 and Ariana Poursartip '10

It has been a pleasure serving as Stanford in Government’s co-Chairs for the 2009-10 academic year. As we prepare to conclude our leadership term, we look back with great pride on all that Stanford in Government has done over the past nine months.

Since you received the previous version of this newsletter in January, the Programming Committees have sponsored and co-sponsored several large events. In addition to hosting biweekly Policy Lunches, Campus Awareness has secured stronger ties between Stanford in Government and other groups on campus. In April, the Freeman-Spogli Institute hosted a campus and community-wide lecture with Rye Barcott and Salim Mohamed, founders of Carolina for Kibera (CFK) – a non-government organization that inspires and nurtures youth leaders in the slum of Kibera, Kenya. In conjunction with this event, Stanford in Government sponsored a student-only event with the founders of CFK to engage students in their organization’s model of participatory development. In addition, Campus Awareness worked closely with the Haas Center for Public Service to arrange a discussion between Elizabeth Eagin from the Open Society Institute and students interested in human rights work. We believe these types of events supplement our current policy lunch program by enabling students to engage with practitioners of public service.

Throughout the year, Stanford in Government has been intimately involved in the ASSU’s sustainability initiatives on campus. We co-sponsored a well-attended and well-received lecture by Dr. Steven Chu, current Secretary of Energy. In working with GAIA – an ASSU-affiliated alliance of sustainability groups – on their FutureFest Environmental Conference, Campus and Community Partnerships secured spaces for local high school students and developed a program agenda targeted to these students’ academic and career interests.

Under the direction of Allie Welch '10, the Vice Chair of Fellowships, SIG’s fellowships program undertook a number of new initiatives this year. Perhaps most notably, we coordinated with the Haas Center Fellowships

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Secretary of Energy and Professor emeritus of Physics at Stanford Steven Chu speaks to a full audience of Stanford students and community members. Stanford in Government co-sponsored the event in conjunction with the ASSU and GAIA. (Photo: Masaru Oka / The Stanford Daily)
Outgoing Chairs Celebrate Year

Program to align our respective application and orientation processes. Such collaboration is sure to improve the consistency and sustainability of our fellowships program. We once again had a record number of applications, from which 35 outstanding students were selected to serve as the 2010 SIG Fellows. This spring, we have also been working with alumni and faculty to create four new fellowship opportunities for next year, with particular focus on environmental policy and Middle Eastern politics.

Stanford in Government’s productivity has again been recognized by the student body through the ASSU Special Fees process. This year, we received over 75% of the undergraduate vote in favor of increasing our student-government funding next year. Special-fees funding is critical to our public service initiatives, both on campus and in the local community.

Within SIG, we are very pleased with the increased sense of community and cohesion among our members. In our very first letter to you last spring, we highlighted how important it is for SIG members to feel that they have gained personally, academically, and intellectually from having served in this organization. Our efforts to foster greater mentorship between the older and younger members have been successful, and we believe that such community and personal development will only increase in the coming years.

On that note, we are delighted to introduce Valentin Bolotnyy ’11 as the Stanford in Government Chair for the 2010-2011 academic year. Valen has long been one of Stanford in Government’s most dedicated and motivated members, and we are confident he will prove an excellent leader of the organization. Valen has surrounded himself with a highly competent and enthusiastic Board of Directors that is sure to accomplish a great deal over the coming year.

We are also excited to announce the addition of two new individuals to SIG’s Board of Advisors. We welcome Professor Stephen Stedman and Corinne Thomas, who have served as invaluable advisors to SIG over the past few years; we are grateful for all they do to ensure the continued success of our programming and fellowships committees.

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CCP Hosts Environmental Conference for High School Students

By Nita Bhat ’10

Stanford in Government’s Campus and Community Partnership (CCP) committee welcomed Bay Area high school students to campus on April 17th for a conference titled “Environmental Policy: Youth in Action!” The conference was part of a Stanford campus-wide collaboration called FutureFest, a day-long sustainability festival that combined the resources and talents of a number of Stanford student groups.

For the conference, CCP forged a partnership with Stanford Educational Studies Program, which brings thousands of high school students to campus for a program called SPLASH, in which they take classes taught by Stanford students in a variety of subjects for a day. Through SPLASH, CCP hosted panels that drew many high school students interested in environmental policy, including one with Silicon Valley venture capitalist and author Elton Sherwin, who advised students on how to bring sustainable living to their communities. Another panel featured young environmental activists Valerie Gardner, Brendan Appold ‘10 and Ishan Nath ‘12. These panelists have all initiated green businesses, nonprofits, or campus programs and presented the high school students with ideas about how they could be environmental leaders in their schools and communities.

At lunchtime, Y2E2 tour guides gave the high school students a tour of Stanford’s sustainable building and taught them what actually makes a building “green.” Students also attended Stanford Professor Frank Wolak’s presentation on energy economics.

But the day was not all about classes and panels: the high school students also enjoyed the wide array of extracurricular activities present at Stanford. They roamed around the SoCA’s Art Affair, watched dance and music performances, ate at FutureFest booths sponsored by Stanford Dining, and watched the Sustainable Fashion Show. The day was topped off by a rally and talk in White Plaza by keynote speaker Van Jones, environmental advocate, best-selling author, entrepreneur, and former Special Advisor for Green Jobs to the Obama Administration. Van Jones speaks in White Plaza (Photo: Milena Gonzalez)

Students Discuss Immigration

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David Brady; Former State Assemblyman Joe Nation; and History Professor Al Camarillo. Campus Awareness has also hosted other events, including a debate with the candidates for The Associated Students of Stanford University Executive. Committee members look forward to continuing to host and support other exciting events in the future.

Corinne Thomas joins SIG’s Board of Advisors (Photo: Erin Olivella-Wright)

Chairs Discuss End of the Year

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Last, but of course not least, we thank Suzanne Abel and Damali Robertson of the Haas Center for their inestimable assistance, counsel, and support. Their institutional memory and steadfast commitment to this organization makes SIG the successful group that it is.
Stanford in Government is grateful for the generous contributions from donors and alumni who support SIG programming, fellowships and other opportunities that help increase political awareness on campus. We hope that you will consider supporting SIG in its mission to engage students and faculty in a broader civic dialogue and to connect students with opportunities in public service. Thank you to all who gave in 2009-10 to SIG!

Yes, I’d like to support Stanford in Government’s programs! Enclosed please find my check (payable to Stanford University with “Stanford in Government” on the memo line) in the amount of:

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