Students Engage Issue of Nuclear Proliferation

By Breanna Jones ‘12

On November 6th, Professor Siegfried Hecker, an expert in nuclear proliferation, sat down with students to talk about the spread of nuclear weapons in today’s world. Professor Hecker, who has toured North Korea’s nuclear facilities many times, engaged 20 eager students in a discussion about the significance of the nuclear situation in North Korea. The event was sponsored by Stanford in Government’s Campus Awareness Committee, which hosts casual biweekly “Policy Lunches” to encourage undergraduate students to engage with faculty and other prominent members of the Stanford community around current political issues.

Over the course of the hour-long lunch, Professor Hecker touched on North Korea’s path to the bomb, past nuclear testing, recent behavior in the international nuclear community, and the Obama administration’s response to North Korea’s nuclear program. Throughout the discussion, Professor Hecker encouraged students to add their ideas and ask questions. One student posed a question about media speculation on Kim Jong Il’s imminent death, asking whether regime change would substantially influence the current situation. Another asked about the strengths of the international nonproliferation regime relative to those of existing nuclear powers in negotiating with North Korea. Several students were curious about the international relationships, questioning Hecker about China’s paternal stance toward North Korea and North Korea’s reactionary posture toward the United States, as well as the specter of nuclear collaboration among North Korea, Iran, and Russia.

At the conclusion of the Policy Lunch, Professor Hecker commented that he was “excited that students—especially undergraduates—are

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SIG Chairs’ Note

By Rebecca Schindel ‘10

Greetings, all – Ariana and I hope this newsletter finds you well. I am pleased to report that Stanford in Government has enjoyed a tremendous start to the 2009-2010 academic year. We received an unprecedented number of applicants seeking to join SIG, and the enthusiasm of our new board of directors and committee members has translated into a highly productive fall quarter.

The Programming committees already have hosted 8 small speaking events and “policy lunches,” during which Stanford students engage with leading Stanford faculty and visiting Hoover Media Fellows on current events and policy issues. The Campus and Community Partnerships Committee is hoping to establish a youth commission in conjunction

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SIG Fellow Works with State Senator

By Siddhartha Oza ‘11

Through the Stanford in Government Fellowship Program, I had the opportunity to intern with California State Senator S. Joseph Simitian this past summer. I spent 13 weeks in Sacramento, gaining invaluable knowledge and experience. Although I had taken public policy courses at Stanford, it took me a few weeks working in the Capitol to truly understand and appreciate the legislative process.

The way in which a bill becomes a law can be found in any civics textbook. However, the nuances of negotiation, politics, and networking involved in the bill process can only be learned first-hand. In assisting Senator Simitian during the budget logjam, I spent 24 sleepless hours in the Capitol observing and absorbing legislative tactics aimed at getting the bills passed into law.

On Monday, July 20, the “Big Five” (the Governor plus the Legislature’s leadership) completed their negotiations, attempting to balance California’s gaping $26 billion budget deficit. Giving legislative counsel just four days to draft 31 budget bills, the legislature intended to cast their votes on Thursday, July 23rd. On that day, the office staff all stayed after work, ordering dinner and waiting for the votes to come in. Finally, at 8 pm, the senators began to vote. I stood on the Senate Floor as the senators quickly moved through the more “digestible” budget bills. Although the night was long – I stayed at the office until 7am on Friday – I had been “initiated,” as one staffer told me. Another staffer remarked, and I agreed, that history was being made as we were standing on that Senate Floor.

At the beginning of the summer, I thoroughly researched the California High Speed Rail Initiative with regard to federal funding. As a part of the stimulus package, the federal government allocated $8 billion to high-speed rail projects in the United States. With 10 projects for the federal government to consider, it is clear that no single project could receive all $8 billion, as many in California perhaps had hoped. In terms of research and voter approvals, California’s project is much further along than many of the others proposed; its supporters hope it will win significant federal funding.

While I appreciated learning about the California budget crisis and high-speed rail, I especially enjoyed working on environmental legislation. Drawing on my interdisciplinary study of environmental science and public policy, the senator’s Chief of Staff Annette Porini asked me to brief the Senator on bills passing through the Natural Resources and Environmental Quality Committees. In that capacity, I conducted extensive bill analyses that included my

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Lunch with Rob Reich

By Nate Levine ‘13

October 6, 2009 — Campus Awareness hosted a lunch discussion with Associate Professor Rob Reich of the Political Science department. Reich focused on the topic of public service, and gave an introduction to a course he will be offering next quarter on the ethics of welfare. While neither supporting nor discouraging public service per se, Professor Reich relished complicating the sometimes simplistic ways in which students may view service. He suggested that some “charitable” actions might in fact be a burden to the community, while others might be generally positive, but might also have negative side effects.
Chairs Discuss Year so Far and Future Plans

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with the city government in East Palo Alto, planning an environmental conference for local high school students, and developing a forum to connect residents in East Palo Alto with legal experts via “know your rights” presentations.

On the Fellowships side, we recently secured five new fellowship placements. In addition to the 28 existing fellowships, we will now offer students the opportunity to work in the San Jose Auditor’s Office; at Global Integrity, the Sunlight Foundation, and the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict in Washington D.C.; and with the Nonprofit Enterprise and Self-Sustainability Team in Chile.

With such a breadth of activity underway and a great deal more in the pipeline, Stanford in Government continues to honor its longstanding commitment to the promotion of public service and political engagement. However, Ariana and I also believe that Stanford in Government ought to serve as a forum for the political and educational development of its own members.

To that end, we have dedicated this quarter to building a more cohesive organization, breaking down the barriers between committees, and fostering greater collaboration between the leadership team and the larger membership base by having larger, more inclusive group meetings. The Operations Committee has hosted a number of SIG social events, including a bonfire at Lake Lagunita and a cheese-and-crackers get-together. We also created a 2009 SIG Yearbook, which contains information on each member’s academic and extracurricular interests. In addition, we have allocated a nominal portion of our budget to intra-SIG mentorship activities. Through our “Coffee Chat” program, we encourage (and fund!) younger members of SIG to take a Board member out for coffee, enabling the freshmen and sophomores in the organization to learn more about the upperclass students’ academic and service experiences at Stanford. The purpose of such initiatives is to foster a community of service-oriented individuals. We wish members to see SIG not merely as a commitment, but as an opportunity to learn, to share, and to grow.

As autumn quarter draws to a close, Ariana and I are pleased with the efforts SIG has made thus far and are eager to push forward with new initiatives in the months to come. In particular, we hope to soon begin the planning process for SIG’s 50th anniversary celebrations in 2013. Please take a closer look into SIG’s work on campus through this newsletter, and feel free to contact Ariana or myself with any comments or suggestions for future projects. We wish you all merry holidays and a happy new year!
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becoming involved at such an early age in politics.” He noted that students’ in-depth questioning and “genuine interest in international security and cooperation [was] refreshing.”

One student in attendance, Nate Levine, commented that he “really appreciated the open discussion style and learned a lot.”

The Campus Awareness Committee works hard to provide many Policy Lunches like this one. Past participants have included

Associate Professor Rob Reich (see page 2), up-and-coming politician Kai Stinchcombe (see sidebar), and Iranian political expert Professor Abbas Milani. Campus Awareness has also hosted other events, including a lunch with Chuck Ludlum ’67 about getting an internship in Washington (see picture above) and a student debate on health care (see picture below). We look forward to continuing to host and support other exciting events in the future.

October 28, 2009 — Campus Awareness hosted a lunch discussion with Kai Stinchcombe, MA ’05, a Stanford alumnus who is running for Assemblyman for the 21st District (Stanford’s own district), hoping to become the youngest Californian in the legislature. Mr. Stinchcombe is several generations younger than most of the professors that Campus Awareness usually hosts for lunch discussions, and thus delivered a particularly strong message of youth political involvement. He spoke to students about issues ranging from those related to his campaign, to the problems facing California. He also shared tips from his own life about pursuing government work, elected or not, and he emphasized the power of youth both as a voting bloc and as a source for innovation and change. Mr. Stinchcombe also cautioned ambitious students, reminding them to remain in touch with the reasons that they pursued politics in the first place and to avoid remaining in politics for wealth or power.
Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar Speaks to SIG

By Zev Karlin-Neumann ’11

On June 12, 2009, a lucky group of SIG students met with Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar for an intimate and wide-ranging discussion. Salazar, who was in town for the graduation of his daughter Melinda Salazar ’09, joined 10 students in the Graham Stuart Lounge of Encina Hall for a conversation that ranged from Salazar’s past and present careers to his thoughts on climate change, energy policy, and the Obama administration.

Describing his deep Colorado roots, and his time as State Attorney General, U.S. Senator and now Cabinet Secretary, Salazar emphasized the importance of education and becoming passionate about issues – in his case, civil rights and natural resource management.

His own passion shone through as he sketched an optimistic picture of the steps he hopes to take to preserve the country’s natural treasures and strengthen all the areas under his department, a vast portfolio encompassing U.S. overseas territories and the entire outer continental shelf, in addition to the more traditional “interior” of the country.

While modest and casually dressed in jeans and a blazer, Salazar nonetheless conveyed the importance of his department’s work to the Obama administration, which has much to do to attempt to balance competing environmental, recreational, and extractive interests. Although he initially declined President Obama’s offer to join the Cabinet, Salazar ultimately agreed, and now meets regularly with the President, often as a participant in the President’s pick-up basketball games.

Salazar was eager to take every question posed to him, and he answered each one thoughtfully, stopping only when seniors had to leave to attend graduation festivities.

As he left, Salazar urged students to enter public service and dedicate their lives to helping others. It was a lesson SIG students – and the Stanford community as a whole – were lucky to receive from such a devoted public servant.

Stanford in Government members pose with Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar after having a discussion about current issues he faces overseeing the US resources. Article author Zev Karlin-Neumann is second from right. (Photo: Ariana Poursartip)
SIG Hosts Largest Homecoming Breakfast Yet
By Otis Reid ’12

On Sunday, October 25th, Stanford in Government joined the Haas Center in celebrating our alumni with a homecoming weekend breakfast. A record 20 current Stanford in Government members woke up early to talk to a similar number of alumni who came for the event. Alumni ranged from the era preceding SIG’s founding to those who were only five years out of Stanford. Over a breakfast of muffins, orange juice, and plenty of coffee, current SIG members were able to connect with alumni and see how their careers had played out since leaving the Farm.

In addition to the mingling, the new executive director of the Haas Center, Tom Schnaubelt, spoke about the Haas Center’s new strategic plan, which is being developed in the context of the Haas Center’s 25th anniversary, looking to the future of service at the Farm. He invited students, as well as interested alumni, to get involved in the process of shaping how Stanford encourages public service and what the Haas Center should do to pursue the goal of “life-long commitment to public service by Stanford students.” The faculty director, Gabriel Garcia, echoed Tom’s comments, citing his love for Haas and the fulfillment that comes from being involved in service.

At my table were two alumni whose time at Stanford predated the creation of Stanford in Government by almost 15 years. Jan and Bud Richter both from the class of ’49, were here at Stanford to celebrate their sixtieth reunion and came to the breakfast because their commitment to service continues today. They currently help support a public service center at Fresno State University, which is similar in concept to Stanford’s Haas Center. Since they never had the opportunity to work in SIG, our discussion was an exchange, as they were very interested in how we measure the impact of our programming on students and how we set our priorities.

Another alumnus in attendance was Peter Dalglish ’79, founder of Street Kids International, which works with street children to develop “self-help” projects that can prevent otherwise unattended children from falling into crime or prostitution. He is now the Executive Director of the South Asia Children’s Fund, which works to improve education for disadvantaged groups in South Asia, particularly in Nepal. He spoke with SIG attendees about internship opportunities with the Fund, including the possibility of teaching English at Shree Mangal Dvip, a boarding school that sponsors rural children in Nepal who would otherwise be unable to continue their educations.

Other alumni I spoke with discussed their careers working with nonprofits, government, and young people, all of whom had been touched either by SIG or by public service at Stanford. We encourage all SIG alumni who are at Stanford for next year’s homecoming to come to the Sunday breakfast at the Haas Center so that this valuable tradition of continued interaction between students and alumni can continue.
Students, Faculty Discuss California Constitutional Reform

By Laura Garvey ’12

Among the Public Policy Forum’s (PPF) most important events are the SIG Media Lunches with visiting Hoover Media Fellows and Hoover-affiliated Stanford faculty. These lunches are open to members of Stanford in Government as well as the greater Stanford community and provide students with an opportunity to engage with prominent individuals in the media through intimate and animated discussion. The most recent luncheon occurred on Monday, November 9th in the Donald Kennedy Room of the Haas Center, where Professor Tammy Frisby engaged an enthusiastic group of Stanford students in a discussion about the California Constitutional Reform movement, the possibility of a convention to change the constitution, and California’s serious budget woes.

Frisby is both a Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution and a faculty member in the Political Science department and Public Policy program. Frisby, who studies state and national politics and is currently working on a book on the politics of health care reform, will be teaching a Public Policy class during the spring quarter of 2010.

The luncheon’s conversation topics extended from political analysis to experiential learning when Frisby expressed a desire to see more Stanford students seeking internships, jobs, and volunteer opportunities in Sacramento. The SIG State and Local Fellowships in Sacramento are one such medium, through which students are able to engage in real-world legislative work. She lauded the excellent hands-on experience that students receive and the positive impact of “great young minds” working to solve California’s problems, encouraging students to pursue work in Sacramento, whether through SIG or another organization.

PPF looks forward to continuing to sponsor more discussions about state and national politics and the media. Finally, PPF is gearing up for its annual Big Speaker event, which will bring in a major policy-maker on the national or international level to speak to the student body about current issues. Look for more information about “Big Speaker” in our spring newsletter.

SIG Fellow at Senators Office

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recommendations on how the Senator should vote on each bill. Reading and analyzing hundreds of bills exposed me to the exhausting yet fascinating life of a legislative staffer.

As an Earth Systems major at Stanford with a concentration on environmental policy, I welcomed this summer’s opportunity to sit in on Environmental Quality (EQ) Committee hearings (which Senator Simitian is chairs) and discuss environmental policy with the EQ Committee consultants. This Sacramento fellowship encouraged me to draw on a wide array of experiences in discussing policy, whether during staff meetings or through the more formal policy papers. My summer was both exhilarating and enlightening; I can only hope that every Stanford student has the opportunity to gain from such an enlightening experience by better appreciating the role that state government plays in our everyday lives.

Fellows Nicole Gaetjens, Siddhartha Oza (article author), and Tara Smithee in Sacramento (Photo: Corinne Thomas)
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.

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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