Athletic Goal: $100 Million

Columbia launched its $100 million campaign to transform the University’s athletics program, and in recognition of a $5 million gift, the playing field at Lawrence A. Wien Stadium was named the Robert K. Kraft Field. Kraft is a 1965 graduate of Columbia College who now owns the New England Patriots. The field was renamed during homecoming weekend.

In addition to that gift, William C. Campbell, chairman of the University’s board of trustees and himself a former captain and head coach of Lions football, pledged more than $10 million to the athletics initiative. There were eight other gifts of $1 million or more.

The Columbia Campaign for Athletics: Achieving Excellence, part of the University’s $4 billion capital campaign, has raised $46 million so far. The money will be used to invest in people, places and programs, said athletics director M. Diane Murphy.

A major part of the plan is to recruit and retain administrative and coaching talent, as Columbia does for its academic departments. “We have set the financial goals for establishing endowments to be consistent with professorships and department chairs across the University,” Murphy said.
ON CAMPUS

IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

Step aside, Dancing with the Stars. Barnard College, along with Columbia and the World Music Institute, hosted some 600 tango lovers at a festival Oct. 4–5, to celebrate Latino/La Re tenure Month. Participants came from far and wide, including Los Angeles and Boston, for an opportunity to see and learn from 30 leading tango dancers, musicians and scholars. Pictured above is Manuela Franganillo, primary organizer of the event, in a performance with tango partner Oscar Martinez Poy. Participants were also treated to instructional classes from beginner to advanced levels, lectures on the social history and development of the dance form, and evenings of milongas, or social dance parties with live music.

IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

Dental Students of Yore

Dear Alma’s Owl,

The College of Dental Medicine turns 90 this year. Was it the first dental school?

No, the Baltimore College of Dental Medicine was first, in 1849, and in 1865, Harvard founded the first dental school affiliated with a university. Columbia is the fourth-oldest university-affiliated dental school.

Prominent dentists, physicians and scientists started advocating for a dental school at Columbia starting in 1892, but then-president Seth Low thought the proposition was too expensive; according to a history of the school written for its 75th anniversary. The medical faculty made a formal proposal in 1915, putting forward the somewhat novel idea that dentists should be educated as doctors. The following year, the Dental School of Columbia University admitted its first two students for a joint six-year program. Joseph Schroff earned his M.D. in 1920 and received the first Columbia D.D.S in 1922.

In the early years, Columbia merged with two other dental schools and was called the School of Oral and Dental Surgery. In 2006, the name was changed to the College of Dental Medicine to better reflect the school’s academic and scientific bent. —By Bridget O’Brien

Send your questions for Alma’s Owl to curecord@columbia.edu.
One night in the early 20th century, Costa Rican architect Oscar Hijuelos was a young man on West 118th Street in Manhattan. He was a child of Morningside Heights, and his parents were migrant workers. "I was truly amazed by my immigrant upbringing and his journey into the literary world," Hijuelos said.

Oscar Hijuelos, left, talks about his life with fellow author Gay Talese.

Hijuelos was a small child, and his mother (who died three years ago) spent most of her life as a hotel worker and homemaker. He enjoyed books at a young age, but it wasn't until college—at Manhattan Community College and later at CUNY—that Hijuelos fell in love with literature. "I never thought I'd be a writer as a kid," he said. "I wanted to be a cartoonist."

When his children ask what he did first in the world, Hijuelos told them, "I was energized to write this novel."

Hijuelos' life as a writer gained momentum. Talese wondered what pushed Hijuelos to leave the neighborhood in the first place and graduate from college, particularly since it seemed he had few role models. He asked, "You didn't have people advising you. … Something must've motivated you."

According to Professor Diller, in the early 20th century there was a great optimism about glass, described by Hijuelos as a golden age of glass. Hijuelos said, "I was an immigrant writer and Former New York Times reporter, the conversation started with Hijuelos' immigrant upbringing and his journey into the literary world. "What was it like to grow up next door to Columbia University?" Talese asked.

"We were aware there was a university, but we really didn't have access to that world of learning or wonderfulness," said Hijuelos. It was a different neighborhood in the 1960s. Hijuelos added, a lot "rougher." Rows of tenement apartment housing dominated the stretch of Amsterdam Avenue between West 118th Street and West 116th Street, before SIPA and Columbia Law School were built.

But Hijuelos is now connected to the University in a way that will give others access to his life and work. In August 2006, Columbia's Rare Book & Manuscript Library acquired a large collection of Hijuelos manuscripts, including thousands of pages and drafts from his novels and shorter works that document the author's process of composition and revision. At the time of the acquisition, Hijuelos said the fact that Columbia had acquired his papers "is the kind of thing that would have truly amazed my immigrant parents."

"I wanted to be a cartoonist. I read comics," he said. "I was energized to write this novel."

Hijuelos' immigrant upbringing and his journey into the literary world...
A DAY FOR BUDDING SCIENTISTS

By Stacy Parker Aab

The kids knew their mission: save the egg.

Spread across the floor of Earl Hall, they surveyed their materials and strategized. Would drinking straws, Popsicle sticks, a plastic baggie and masking tape cushion an egg against a five-foot drop? The countdown began. The egg, heavily insulated, plummeted to the ground. “It’s good!” Lauren called, to cheers and applause.

Enthusiasm and inspiration were in large supply at Siemens Science Day at Columbia University on Oct 20th. More than 1,500 students, parents and instructors participated in 20-plus workshops and exhibits, tangle by Columbia faculty and graduate students, Siemens professionals and specialists, such as criminals from New York City’s own crime lab.

From classroom to classroom students practiced with robot snakes used for surgical procedures, listened to earthquakes and learned about endangered species. Local teachers had their own workshops, designed to provide them with curriculum ideas to make science fun, with titles like “School of Rock Workshops.”

The Siemens Foundation is one of the private sector’s biggest proponents of math and science education. Since launching Siemens Science Day in 2005, the program has reached 30,000 children nationwide. This was Columbia’s first time hosting the event.

U.S. Rep. Charles Rangel, whose congressional district includes Harlem and Columbia, lauded the science day as an investment ensuring “our young people become part of the most educated workforce in the world.” City Councilman Robert Jackson also welcomed participants and presented a proclamation from the mayor.

In the “Bath Bubbles” workshop, Dr. Aberdeen Allen, a senior research scientist at Colgate-Palmolive, showed students how to make bath bombs—soaps that fizz and dissolve in bathwater. “I had fun,” said Jazmine, 8, after attending the workshop. “I also learned that scientists sometimes make mistakes. You shouldn’t get intimidated.”

Graduate student Andy Waskovitz’s exhibit, “Who Stole the Cookies from the Cookie Jar,” showed students how to analyze DNA samples. He marveled at the wealth of interactive play at Siemens Science Day. “I would have found my way to science a lot easier if I’d seen something like this as a kid.”

During the opening ceremony, Nobis Laureate Jost Steinmar described one of his most affecting childhood memories: hearing the “beep, beep, beep” of the Soviet Union’s Sputnik satellite on his radio 50 years ago. This generation faces another wake-up call, he said. “Young people like you will address global warming,” adding that he hopes to see many of them at Columbia again— as students.

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James Whaley, president of the Siemens Foundation, thinks that’s possible. “We inspired some kids today,” he said. “As I was walking out of the egg-drop workshop, I heard a young girl say: ‘I’m going to be a scientist now.’”

COLUMBIA PEOPLE

RICHARD BUSSERT

WHO HE IS:
Director of Landscaping and Grounds, Morningside Campus and Baker Field

START DATE AT COLUMBIA:
January 2006

WHAT HE DOES:
Every morning, Bussert tours campus by foot, checking the condition of the lawns, noting any irregularities in the landscaping and hardscapes (the concrete, granite and asphalt surfaces.) He routinely examines the irrigation systems and ensures the grounds are presentable, particularly if there was an outdoor event the night before. If something is out of place, the grounds supervisor is alerted, and it becomes a topic during the grounds crews’ daily 9:00 a.m. meeting. Bussert also works with the sports turf manager at Baker Field and the supervisor at the Morningside Campus who oversees the labor shop employees charged with event set-ups, tear-downs and furniture moves.

A GOOD DAY ON THE JOB:
“At the end of a difficult day, before I leave campus, I may reflect on the beauty of the architecture and landscape for a moment, and amidst the activity of the lawns and plazas come to recognize a sense of pride in what I do and where I work.” Others recognize it, too. This month, the Professional Grounds Management Society will honor Columbia with the Grand Award for best in urban university grounds. In August, Columbia’s landscaping team submitted 26 photos for consideration, all taken by University photographer Eileen Barroso, that showed campus scenes during the four seasons and highlighted a few of the landscaping challenges and the staff at work. Pictured here is a sample of the winning photo. The award will be presented on Oct 27 by the society at its annual expo in Louisville, Ky.

—By Record Staff

BEST PART OF THE JOB:
“As much as I like the grass, shrubs and trees, the best part of my job is the people I deal with on a daily basis: employers, co-workers, clients, contractors, event people I have never previously met. The diversity of the people and the fact that my workload changes both daily and seasonally make this work challenging, exciting and rewarding.”

IN HIS SPARE TIME:
Bussert still enjoys playing golf and loves spending time outdoors. At age 56, this is the first time in his life he is taking the subway to and from work. “I remind myself what Professor Kenneth Jackson said: ‘It only takes a week to become a New Yorker, really.’”

—By Melanie A. Farmer

OCTOBER 25, 2007
Out With the Old Card, In With the New
By Record Staff

Between now and Nov. 16, Columbia and its affiliates will issue and replace tens of thousands of ID cards, as the University moves to a new security system designed to address identity theft concerns and make the cards generally easier to use.

The new ID cards will go to all faculty, staff and students at every Columbia campus, as well as those who work or study at Barnard College, Union Theological Seminary, Teacher’s College and Harlem Hospital. About a third of the new cards were distributed at the start of the academic year to incoming students and new faculty and staff hires.

A main purpose behind the switch is to issue new cards that do not have the user’s Social Security number embedded into the magnetic strip. With the new system, each individual will be assigned a randomly generated number (known as a unique identifier) in place of the Social Security number. As an additional layer of security, each card is also assigned a unique number; if a card is lost, only the card number—not the unique identifier—is exposed. The new card numbers will continue to provide access to buildings, library borrowing and, for students, their debit accounts. In addition, the system’s old card swipers will be replaced by contact-less card readers.

There were a few early glitches with dining privileges associated with the card, as Columbia began switching from a system with 70,000 card users, 37 formats and 13 security systems. “The past problems have mostly been in getting the systems to talk to each other,” said Rosemary Keane, assistant vice president of student services at Columbia. “Since the summer, we’ve been operating two parallel systems.” The issuance of the new cards will put all the users into one system.

For students, Columbia also is looking into whether the cards can be used off-campus to charge items. “We’d like to do that for students, but there are a couple of steps involved,” said Keane. “The first step that we’re taking now is to talk with students about where they would want to see the card accepted off-campus.”

And no, despite the ubiquity of her name and picture on all the sample ID cards, there is no Rita Hollander at Columbia. The woman in the picture is a model.

Columbia is expanding and enhancing its dental coverage for faculty and staff, lowering the cost of coverage, increasing reimbursement and adding a nationwide network of dentists beyond what the University currently offers.

Under the new coverage, the University will offer a single plan called the Aetna Columbia Dental Plan. It will include the current CU dental network as well as the national network offered by Aetna’s dental plan. In addition, it will offer coverage for any dentist, even those not in either network. The new plan goes into effect Jan. 1.

Those who use Columbia network dentists will receive higher coverage than they do today. For example, if you use a Columbia network dentist, your annual maximum benefit will be $1,500. If you use an Aetna dentist, the annual maximum benefit will remain the same as it is now, at $1,250.

“Currently, we have a dental plan with access to Columbia alumni dentists,” said Linda Nilsen, assistant vice president for Human Resources Benefits at Columbia. “Through our arrangement with Aetna, we’ve been able to build on this network while lowering administrative costs.” The savings will be passed on to participants through lower premium costs, even as the network is expanded nationwide.

With the addition of Aetna, plus the out-of-network feature, “all our families can find a dentist close to home—even children away at college can get coverage by their school,” Nilsen added.

Participants can get more information about the dental plan by going to the human resources Web site, www.hr.columbia.edu.

This year, online Open Enrollment for Benefits is from Oct. 29 to Nov. 16. Sign up for the new dental benefits for 2008!
BOO! HOW THE BRAIN HANDLES SURPRISE, GOOD AND BAD

Whether it’s a mugger or a friend who jumps out of the bushes, you’re still surprised. But your response—to flee or to hug—must be very different.

Now, researchers have begun to distinguish the circuitry in the brain’s emotion center that processes surprise from that which processes the aversive or reward “valence” of a stimulus.

C. Daniel Salzman, M.D., Ph.D. and colleagues at the Columbia University Medical Center published their findings in the September 20, 2007 issue of the journal Neuron, published by Cell Press.

“Animals and humans learn to approach and acquire pleasant stimuli and to avoid and defend against aversive ones,” wrote the researchers. “However, both pleasant and aversive stimuli can elicit arousal and attention, and their salience or intensity increases when they occur by surprise. Thus, adaptive behavior may require that neural circuits compute both stimulus valence—or value—and intensity.”

The researchers concentrated their study on the amygdala, known to be the brain center that processes the emotional substance of sensory input and helps shape behavioral response to that input. In their studies, which used monkeys, the researchers performed two types of experiments as they recorded the activity of neurons in the animals’ amygdala. In one experiment, they taught the monkeys to associate a pattern on a TV monitor with either the rewarding experience of a sip of water or an unpleasant puff of air to the face. The researchers measured how well the monkeys learned the association by recording how frequently the animals anticipated the water sip or the air puff by, respectively, licking the water spout or blinking. This experiment was intended to establish whether there were specific amygdala neurons activated by rewarding or aversive stimuli.

In the other experiment, the researchers surprised the monkeys by randomly delivering either the water sip or the air puff—which aimed to establish whether the amygdala harbored specific surprise-processing circuitry.

The researchers’ analyses of the activity of the amygdala neurons did reveal different types of neurons. Some neurons responded to either the reward or the aversive stimulus, but not both. However, the activity of distinctly different sets of neurons was affected by expectation of either a reward or an aversive experience.

Climate Scientists Work To Battle Disease

continued from page 1

can help predict outbreaks in malaria or dengue. In Botswana, IRI experts, working in collaboration with the WHO and other partner organizations, helped develop such a system, based on population vulnerability, rainfall and health surveillance, to predict malaria epidemics.

By using a number of climate models the researchers were able to consider the uncertainties in the predictions, which could then be expressed reliably as probabilities. The researchers’ findings, published last year in Nature, show that these probabilistic climate forecasts can be combined and used effectively in malaria forecasting.

In Botswana, forecasts provide health service managers with warnings of changes in epidemic risk five months before the peak malaria season and four weeks earlier than predictions based on actual rainfall observations. Following Botswana’s lead, integrated malaria early warning and response systems are being developed in conjunction with epidemic prevention and response planning activities in a number of Southern African countries—and now in Latin America as well.

“What makes this work fresh and exciting is its approach,” says Walter Baetgen, director of IRI’s Latin America and Caribbean Program. “We have here a project on climate change adaptation, funded by a large and respected global institution, that is looking at ways to reduce a society’s current vulnerabilities to climate as a means of improving its future ability to adapt.”

Clean Tech Mixer to Show Off Inventions

By Stacy Parker Ash

How do you connect leading Columbia experts who are developing cutting-edge technologies with investors who can help bring such advances into our economy and society? The answer is to create opportunities for both groups to meet in a forum that is “somewhere between a speed date and a candlelight dinner,” according to Ira Abraham, director of Columbia’s Science and Technology Ventures (STV).

On October 9, STV hosted just such an event, a half-day meeting where more than 20 representatives from 14 investment funds met Columbia University scientists and researchers were able to consider the uncertainties in the predictions, which could then be expressed reliably as probabilities. The researchers’ findings, published last year in Nature, show that these probabilistic climate forecasts can be combined and used effectively in malaria forecasting.

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—Francesc Fontdevila contributed to this story.
Interviewed by Melanie A. Farmer

FACULTY Q&A

Suzanne Bakken

POSITION: The Alumni Professor of Nursing, School of Nursing Professor of Biomedical Informatics, College of Physicians & Surgeons

LENGTH OF SERVICE: 7

HISTORY: Professor of Nursing at University of California-San Francisco Critical Care Nurse, Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit, Stanford University Medical Center

A s a nurse who specializes in biomedical informatics, Suzanne Bakken focuses her research on ways to use information and communication technologies to improve care for those who need it most: the elderly, young children, and groups that are more vulnerable to certain diseases. They are, in nursing speak, the underserved, and most broadly they are “those people who are most at risk for health disparities,” said 56-year-old Bakken. “There’s all kinds of data on what that is, and it’s very clear that particular racial and ethnic groups are more likely to experience such disparities.”

Bakken is principal investigator of the School of Nursing’s Center for Evidence-based Practice in the Underseed, which develops tools to help patients manage their own healthcare, or provide them with the resources to do so.

The center, which was established in 2001, received $2.4 million from the National Institute of Nursing Research to fund it for the next five years. Bakken and her colleagues are using the grant for four feasibility studies: evaluating a tailored, Web-based intervention to help adolescent diabetics and parents learn how to manage their diabetes using insulin pump technology; developing interventions for Heart Healthy living in HIV/AIDS; evaluating a self-management technique that adult diabetics with hypertension can use to help reduce their blood pressure; and designing a fall-and-injury assessment and prevention module for elderly patients that could be included in their medical records, so that there is information on their risks to such injuries.

Bakken spent six years early in her career as a critical care nurse, but turned to informatics to help narrow the care for those who need it most: the elderly, young children, and groups that are more vulnerable to certain diseases. They are, in nursing speak, the underserved, and most broadly they are “those people who are most at risk for health disparities,” said 56-year-old Bakken. “There’s all kinds of data on what that is, and it’s very clear that particular racial and ethnic groups are more likely to experience such disparities.”

Much of the materials that are written and on Web sites tend to be written at eighth-grade levels and above. Some people use the approach of just writing everything at a low level, like third- to sixth-grade levels. That’s not the approach we like to use. We firmly believe that, regardless of the level of health literacy that a patient has, it is the clinician’s responsibility to figure out how to communicate with that patient. This is essential for high-quality care and it is essential for patient safety ... It is very important that you match the level of the message with the person’s literacy level.

Q. What are some key issues the center is addressing?

A. Sometimes it is the language [barrier], so most of the materials are still in English; sometimes there are increasing amounts in Spanish. Sometimes they are culturally inappropriate. And thirdly, there is the issue of the readability—a mismatch between the readability of the health information that is presented and the health literacy of the person who needs the information.

Q. You are originally from the San Francisco Bay area. What brought you to Columbia?

A. It was the ability to have a joint appointment at a place that was good in both nursing and biomedical informatics. [Columbia] is one of the few places in the country that has strength in both.

Q. What excites you about nursing in the 21st century?

A. From the minute I was a nurse, I was always thinking about how to make it better for a group of patients. So I probably was an informatician before I even knew what one was. That is the part that I still enjoy—designing tools that help both clinicians and patients address healthcare problems.

ON EXHIBIT: KARA WALKER

I n her new exhibit at the Whitney Museum, Visual Arts professor Kara Walker’s compositions, set in the antebellum South, play off stereotypes and portray life on the plantation, with masters and slaves in an unsettling historical struggle.

Arranged as a narrative, Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love, features works ranging from the artist’s signature black-paper silhouettes to recent film animations. Walker has gained national and international recognition for her large-scale (often room-sized) scenes, in which she combines themes of racism, violence and sexuality. She has received many grants and fellowships including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Achievement Award in 1997, the Deutsche Bank Prize in 2004 and the Larry Aldrich Award in 2005. The exhibit will be on view at the Whitney through Feb. 3, 2008.

—By Record staff
In a quote that is not nearly so famous, Jacques Barzun said, “when all is said and done, one does not teach a subject, one but certainly explains his standing as a great
study and teaching.”

Jacques Barzun, the Babe Ruth of humanistic
collectively rejoice over their ranks being joined
this year by the towering—and handsome—
mentioning a baseball bat that Barzun bought
baseball aficionado, capped his remarks by
The Modern Researcher
Social Sciences.

Matthews Professor of Dramatic Literature;
Henry R. Graff, professor emeritus of History;
William Theodore De Bary, John Mitchell
Mason Professor Emeritus and University
provost emeritus; and Kenneth T. Jackson,
Jacques Barzun Professor in History and the
Society of Columbia Graduates could somehow
resides in the museum alongside Barzun’s most
signature, and which Graff, in turn, sent back
to the Baseball Hall of Fame where it now
presented to Graff with his
in Cooperstown, presented to Graff with his
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If all the Great Teachers chosen by the
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be here tonight,” said Graff, “they would
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certainly explains his standing as a great
teacher. Barzun said, “when all is said and
done, one does not teach a subject, one
chooses a student how to learn it.”

ANSWER TO LAST CHALLENGE: The lamp post in front of Havemeyer; No winner.

HINT: Rain or shine, this knight stands guard on a popular ledge.
Where does he keep post? Send answers to curecord@columbia.

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NO PLACE LIKE HOMETEAMING

The stands at Wien Stadium at the Bailey Field Athletics Complex—newly named Robert K. Kraft Field—were packed for Columbia’s Homecoming game Oct. 13 against the University of Pennsylvania. Across, from left to right: Creative fans soar for the Lions, and head Football Coach Norries Wilson shares a moment with son Cecil.

ALL SCIENCE, ALL DAY.

That’s what was in store for more than 1,300 students, parents and
instructors who participated in workshops and science exhibits at the
Oct. 20 Siemens Science Day at Columbia. Above photo: Middle school students learn how to test water quality in “Rain or Drain!” workshop—one of many interactive workshops offered at the all-day event.

A GREAT READ FOR LITTLE READERS

Who doesn’t love a good bedtime story? Especially
in the middle of the day. More than 10,000 people
attended the third annual New York Times Great
Read Oct. 14, hosted by Columbia and presented by
Target. Civic leaders, journalism and television, film
and Broadway stars read to children from throughout
the city from books selected by librarians from the
two boroughs. Clockwise, from top left: NYPD Police
Commissioner Ray Kelly reads Dr. Seuss’ Green Eggs
and Ham; actress Julie Andrews Edwards reads from her book, Thanks to You: Wisdom from Mother & Child; and Mariaska Murphy of Law & Order: SVU
reads from Charlotte’s Web by E.B. White.

GOLD MEDALISTS 2016

Kids aged three to 12 got to tumbling in Dodge Physical Fitness Center Oct. 5 and 12, for free
Gymnastics clinics to show off what the Wendy Hilliard Foundation offers in its gymnastics
training and sports clinics, the Hilliard Foundation, which uses its efforts toward inner city
youth, is one of the recipients of funds from Columbia Community Service, an employee driven
fund-raising campaign, which raises money for more than 55 local community groups.
Above photo: Budding gymnasts participate in a free class; bottom photo: A child enjoys one-on-one
instruction on the parallel bars from a Wendy Hilliard trainer.

100 Years of Barzun

“As one whose teaching career began
virtually in college, when I did a good deal of
tutoring, I could readily understand receiving a
Long Teacher award,” Barzun wrote. “The
appellation of Great Teacher must come to
anybody as a surprise and make one feel
humble and grateful. This is because teaching
is an activity that defines assessment, certainly
assessment by the performer. It consists in
the effort to change the contents of many
minds at a time, by removing error and
inserting knowledge in its place. What an
impossible task!”

Born in France on November 30, 1907,
Barzun moved from Paris to New York City
in 1920, was valedictorian of the Columbia
College Class of 1927, and received his Ph.D.
in 1932. He taught as Seth Low
Professor of History and in the course of his
career served as dean of the Graduate School,
dean of Faculties and as provost before re-
tiring in 1975 as University Professor.

Jacques Barzun’s career served as dean of the
Graduate School, dean of Faculties and as provost before re-
tiring in 1975 as University Professor.

Speakers at the dinner included Austin E.
Quigley, dean of Columbia College. Henry
L. and Lucy C. Moses Professor, and Brander