And the Oscars Go to...

Three films with close ties to SOA’s film division: Capote, Brokeback Mountain and Walk the Line

At the 78th annual Academy Awards on March 5, Philip Seymour Hoffman, an adjunct professor in Columbia’s School of the Arts (SOA), took home the award for best actor for his masterful portrayal of the celebrated American writer Truman Capote.

In his acceptance speech, he warmly thanked screenwriter Dan Futterman, CC’89, along with director Bennett Miller: both of whom also received nominations. Futterman and Miller developed the original idea for Capote with Hoffman in mind. The three are old friends, having known each other since they were 16.

Before receiving the Oscar, Hoffman had already won a slew of awards for the role, including a Screen Actors Guild Award, a British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) Award, a Golden Globe Award and an Independent Spirit Award. Futterman, too, took home an Independent Spirit Award for best screenplay.

When Ang Lee won the Oscar for best director for his cowboy romance, Brokeback Mountain, he offered warm thanks to producer James Schamus, an associate professor of film at SOA. Earlier this year, Schamus picked up the Golden Globe for best dramatic film Brokeback Mountain, which also garnered Oscars for best original score and best adapted screenplay, has two more Columbia links. Executive producer Michael Hausman is an adjunct professor of film at SOA, and Jake Gyllenhaal, who plays one of the two leads, briefly attended Columbia College but left as his career took off.

At Reese Witherspoon flashed the best actress Oscar for her portrayal of June Carter Cash in Walk the Line, a film about the life of country music star Johnny Cash, she offered special thanks to James Mangold, who directed the film and co-wrote the screenplay. Mangold is a 1999 SOA graduate.

Senate Now Two for Three on Setting Sexual Misconduct Policy

By Thomas M. Mathewson

With the finish line in view after months of deliberations on student sexual misconduct policy, the University Senate stumbled on Feb. 24, succumbing to a quorum adjournment at the dusk of the meeting. The most contentious debates over the past decade have arisen in the Senate and the Executive Committee, the resolution’s formal proponent, whose membership includes the president, another friendly amendment called for mandatory training for all university officials required to report sexual assaults. But the meeting was nearly two hours old when the resolution on disciplinary procedures surfaced on the agenda, and the president, the provost and all but a few faculty senators were gone. David Bonstein (Stu., GSAS/Hum) called for a quorum, and Executive Committee chair Paul Duby (Ten., SEAS) immediately adjourned the meeting.

In other actions, the Senate established an executive M.S. in biomedical informatics, a distance learning program, and a new dual Master of Public Affairs program between SIPA and the Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po).

The remaining resolution on sexual misconduct will be on the agenda for the next plenary on Friday, March 31, at 1:15 pm in 104 Jerome Greene Hall in the Law School. Anyone with a CUID is welcome.

For more information, go to: www.columbia.edu/cu/senate

Senate Column

Legislative Report

Advancing a National Innovation Agenda

By Ellen S. Smith

Based on the recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences’ recent report, Rising above the Gathering Storm: Energizing and Employing America for a Brighter Economic Future, President Bush announced the American Competitiveness Initiative in his State of the Union address on Jan. 31.

Over 10 years, the Initiative commits $50 billion to increase funding for research in the physical sciences at the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Department of Energy’s (DOE’s) Office of Science, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology. In addition, funds have been allocated to improve science and mathematics instruction at the primary and secondary school levels, increase the number of science and math teachers, and provide on-campus teachers with additional training.

Following a March 1 press conference by Republican leaders in the House of Representatives, Congressman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA.), who chairs the House Republican High-Tech Working Group, introduced the Innovation and Competitiveness Act (HR 4845), which he said would complement President Bush’s new agenda by creating a scholarship program for individuals to pursue undergraduate or advanced degrees in physical, life or computer sciences, as well as mathematics and engineering, and by providing incentives for teachers to specialize in math, science and other technical fields.

On the other side of the aisle, Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) recently proposed the Right Time to Reinvest in America’s Competitiveness, or Right TRACK, Act (S.2045). Notably, Kennedy has not confined his agenda to the physical sciences. Rather, he recommends a 10 percent annual increase over seven years for the research and development arms of the National Institutes of Health, NSF, NASA, the DOE’s Office of Science, and Basic and Applied Research at the Department of Defense.

All of these initiatives sound very promising, but it remains to be seen what, if anything, can be implemented, given the severe constraints imposed by deficit reduction efforts.