The University's Museum of American Political Life was the place to be on Election Night, Nov. 7. Several hundred students, faculty, staff, administrators, media representatives and people from the community were on hand to watch the returns and celebrate the opening of the exhibition, “The Will of the People: Presidential Campaigns That Made the Nation.”

Organizers of the exhibition must be credited with unusual prescience; the exhibition could not have been more timely. With the 2000 presidential election ending in a virtual tie, the outcome was still too close to call when *The Observer* went to press 10 days later.

As in all of the country and much of the world, the astounding events on Election Night and the days that followed were watched closely by those on campus and discussed energetically, not just in classes but in dorm rooms, offices, Gengras, the Commons, The 1877 Club. Many saw the excruciatingly close vote and its aftermath as a crisis and an indication of a great divide in the country. Others viewed the vitality of the national debate as a healthy exercise of democracy. The dramatic, often contentious, unfolding of history became a supreme civics lesson for all, not only for the students who were voting for the first time in a presidential election but for their professors as well.

Intense interest in the campaign was evident throughout the fall, with a level of student attention to the political process that had not been seen on campus in more than two decades.

Four days before the election, Channel 2, the University's student-run television station, broadcast a live town meeting from the campus television studio. The event, the brainchild of senior Michael Baldyga and junior Ezra Shanken, was organized and run entirely by students. Participating in the forum was an audience of 50 students and a panel that included Connecticut Comptroller Nancy Wyman; Assistant Secretary of the State Tanya Meck; Paul Lewis, news director for WTIC-TV, Channel 61; Guy “Chuck” Colarulli, associate provost and dean of undergraduate studies, who is also associate professor of politics and government; and representatives of the Bush and Gore campaigns.

Among the topics discussed were why 18- to 24-year-olds tend to stay away from the polls, the rising cost of higher education, and violence in schools.

In early October, members of the Government and Law Society joined other students nationwide to give electronic feedback on the presidential and vice-presidential debates.

*continued on next page*
The Progressive Student Alliance invited Green Party candidate Ralph Nader to campus for a rally in Lincoln Theater on Oct. 4 and, later in the month, Reform Party vice-presidential candidate Ezola Foster spoke to students in Suisman Lounge. The dialogue continued two days after the election as civil rights leader Martin Luther King III discussed the results with several hundred students, faculty, and staff.

Launching the political events on campus in September was a roundtable discussion, sponsored by the University’s annual Deeds Symposium, with four noted political strategists and pollsters discussing presidential campaigning and the impact of the new forms of electronic media. —DS

### Rating the Debate

**by Terri Raimondi**

As millions of Americans tuned into the presidential and vice-presidential debates at home this fall, University of Hartford students tuned in to “Rate the Debate” live, via the Internet.

On Thursday, Oct. 5, and Tuesday, Oct. 17, 20 members of the Government and Law Society joined thousands of other students nationwide to give simultaneous, moment-by-moment feedback on the candidates via the Internet. The Hartford students used the latest in Internet technology on state-of-the-art equipment in the University’s new Computer Learning Center (CLC) to respond positively or negatively while they watched the candidates debate on television.

On Oct. 5, the students rated the vice-presidential debate between Democrat Joseph Lieberman and Republican Dick Cheney. On Tuesday, Oct. 17, students rated the presidential debate between Al Gore and George W. Bush.

Sophomore Andrew Fimka, president of the Government and Law Society, said the group had traveled to Boston for the first presidential debate between Gore and Bush and were eager to participate in “Rate the Debate.”

What the candidates said during the debates mattered less than how their messages were received at CLC. As students gave live reaction to the debate and to some of Campaign 2000’s tough issues, their responses were automatically tallied and reported by Fox News.

“Rate the Debate” is an interactive Web initiative sponsored by Speakout.com and Fox News Channel, which records television viewers’ responses to the candidates’ performances during the debates. The sponsors and Youth Vote 2000, a nonpartisan coalition that urges young people to vote, encouraged students nationwide to log on and rate the debate.

Students logged onto an Internet-based “dial meter” that allowed them to score every second of the debate on a 0-to-100 scale, indicating their level of approval or disapproval. The continuously running graph displayed the results of their input immediately, producing instant online results.

Fimka said that using the Internet gave credibility to the students’ answers and put participants’ responses on equal terms nationwide.

Junior Jeffrey Morris, a politics and government major, described “Rate the Debate” as an interactive learning experience. “We watched the candidates speak and simultaneously voiced our opinion” said Morris. “The candidates reiterated what they believed in.”

The students generally liked what they heard, although many students were critical of how the candidates responded and felt they did not give direct answers. Many students were interested in
knowing how the candidates would benefit education.

George Brophy, the University’s new director of information technology services (ITS), said “Rate the Debate” was a true example of teamwork across the University. Although the Computer Learning Center was not yet in use, ITS was able to work with other departments, including media technology services and telecom, to make the new center ready for “Rate the Debate.” When fully equipped, CLC will include more than 20 computer seats plus printing and scanning capabilities, and a professional presenter’s station with a ceiling-mounted projector, screen, and television hookup capability.

“The technology performed flawlessly as the students watched and listened to the debate via the television hookup, and rated the debate in real time over the Internet,” said Brophy. “It was both exciting and enjoyable to see our students in action using this technology while participating in the political process.”

The “Rate the Debate” event attracted impressive media attention, including WFSB-TV Channel 3, NBC 30, WTIC-TV Channel 61, New England Cable News (NECN), and The Hartford Courant. Channel 61 and NECN set up satellite trucks and broadcast live from the event.

“I was pleased to see how well our students interacted with the media and how well they presented themselves and the University of Hartford,” said Brophy.

Freshman Ugo Mbawuiki said “Rate the Debate” is a good example of democracy in action. “If we all took time to do something like this, the world would change,” he said.

Continuing his advocacy for decent wages, universal health care, affordable housing, campaign finance reform, and his opposition to excessive military spending and corporate greed, Nader said that both major candidates had forgotten the poor and people of color and overridden the sovereignty of the American people.

Corporate power, including that of multinational corporations, has wrested control from taxpayers, who are the actual... continued on page 22
A Warm Welcome for a New Provost

The University’s chief academic officer, on the job for just five months, is approaching her new post with energy, vitality, and an enthusiasm that is contagious. “I was very pleased to have been selected as provost, and I’m even more pleased with the job now than when I accepted the position,” Donna Randall said during her first interview with The Observer.

The new provost has been most impressed with the level of dedication, commitment, and caring of the faculty and staff—a level, she said, that she has not seen anywhere else she has worked. “There are so many people here that go far beyond what is expected of them.”

At her previous institution, the University of Memphis, Randall was interim senior vice provost of academic affairs and a professor of management, and prior to that, she served as dean of its Fogelman College of Business and Economics. Perhaps it is her understanding of the importance of customer service relations that makes her particularly appreciative of the student focus she sees on campus. “Faculty and staff understand that they are here for the students and genuinely want our students to be delighted with their educational experience,” she said.

Randall feels fortunate to have arrived at the University when she did. She enjoys working with President Walter Harrison, who, she said, does so much to strengthen the sense of community on campus and to build ties with the external community. “He has a presence on campus. You frequently see him walking around campus talking with students and attending faculty lectures and performances. On any given day you can find him anywhere from playing softball with the staff to making a presentation before the board of regents.

“I believe that the combination of such a group of committed and capable faculty and staff with a high-energy and visionary leader bodes very well for the future of this University,” she said.

Randall says she is continually surprised and gratified at the amount of teamwork she sees exhibited among faculty and staff. She speculated that some of this could be a result of the difficult financial times that the University experienced during the recession of the early and mid-’90s. Faculty and staff pulled together to meet the challenges of that period, and she believes that this sense of working together to resolve problems still pervades the campus.

Today, the University is experiencing a dramatic recovery, with record undergraduate enrollment, a balanced budget for the third year in a row, and for the first time in many years, an operating reserve. A portion of that reserve will be used to invest in a variety of academic initiatives and to support long-needed physical-plant enhancements, faculty and staff development needs, and technological improvements.

Challenges remain, however, as a legacy of the earlier economic constraints. “As a result of earlier funding levels, we are experiencing ‘academic deferred maintenance’ in several areas,” Randall said. “We have too few faculty for the broad range of programs we currently offer.”

That became evident soon after her arrival on campus, when the Connecticut Board of Education granted probationary approval to the Division of Education’s teacher certification programs. The state raised a number of concerns, some of which are administrative in nature; others involve the number of programs and the level of resources allocated to them. The University is aggressively addressing those concerns, and the new provost is confident that state officials will renew accreditation for the programs following the next campus visit in 2001.

Such a situation does make clear, though, Randall said, that the major challenge currently facing the University could be summed up in one word: focus.

“We have too many academic programs, considering the size of our institution, the number of faculty and staff we employ, and our operating budget,” she said. “We do offer a wonderful diversity of academic programs, but if we try to do too much, we cannot have the resources needed to invest in select programs to make them distinctive. The strategic planning process currently under way at the University will allow us to develop that focus. Through this process, we will be able to identify our strengths more clearly and target certain areas for growth.”

If focus is the first challenge facing the University, then preparing students to be “technologically literate” is definitely the second, according to Randall. “Many students are coming to us better prepared technologically than many of us are. As educators, it is our responsibility to prepare them for a world pervaded by technology. We need to review the current state of technology at our University and compare where we are with our peer institutions. Through strategic planning efforts, we will be able to identify where we need to strengthen our technological infrastructure, which academic programs and structures should be in place to support goal achievement, and how much we will need to invest in the area of information technology.”

She sees a technological window of opportunity that will be open for five to 10 years. At the end of that time, she believes, the University must emerge at full technological capability in order to be a competitive private university among its peers.

Two opening events this fall were remarkably enlightening for her, Randall told The Observer. The first, for new students and their parents, had been arranged to answer questions about tripling in the residence halls. As many universities experienced this fall, a large entering class, combined with an...
increased number of returning students who chose to remain on campus, resulted in crowded residence halls. While questions were posed about how various aspects of University life would be handled for these students, the most pressing questions clearly concerned technology. Would all students sharing a room be able to access University servers? Was there enough space for three computers in the tripled rooms?

Similarly, at a new-faculty orientation session, faculty became very interested when the topic of technology was introduced. What classrooms are wired on campus? How can they reserve these rooms? What level of technological support exists for faculty on campus? Whom do they call if they are experiencing difficulty with their computers?

Someone who plans to help in this particular area is Randall’s husband, Paul Hagner. He brings with him to the University of Hartford a National Learning Infrastructure Initiative Fellowship, which allows him to study how universities can encourage faculty to use new teaching technologies. Hagner is currently preparing an institutional readiness report. Over the next six months, he will be meeting with all faculty, as well as many staff and student representatives, to determine how the University currently supports learning technologies and what level of support faculty, staff, and students would like. Once the “where we are” and “where we want to be” questions are answered, Hagner will help develop and implement a plan for the adoption of new teaching and learning technologies for the University.

Randall said her family already feels at home in West Hartford, where her 13-year-old daughter, Kate, is attending Sedgwick Middle School. Kate and her parents are looking forward to their first snowfall. After several years in Tennessee experiencing Southern hospitality, they were somewhat surprised to have found such a warm welcome from their new Northeastern neighbors. “Our move north has been so easy,” Randall said. “People here have been every bit as open, friendly, and welcoming.”-DS

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**Rogow Distinguished Lecturers**

Jeff Bezos, the founder and CEO of Internet giant Amazon.com, enthusiastically accepts a bust of himself made entirely out of LEGO blocks. The bust was presented to Bezos by Peter Eio, president of LEGO Systems, Inc. and vice chair of the University’s board of regents. Bezos kicked off the Rogow Distinguished Visiting Lecturers Program this fall with an entertaining discussion tracing Amazon.com’s history, from its humble beginnings to its current status as one of the world’s leading Internet retailers. The University presented him with an honorary doctorate of commercial science, which, according to Bezos, was his first honorary degree.

Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Tracy Kidder (right), poses with President Walter Harrison and Helen Rogow, whose gift has made the Distinguished Visiting Lecturers Program possible. Kidder, the third lecturer in the series, discussed his beginnings as a writer and talked about his newest book, *Home Town*, a portrait of Northampton, Mass. As a writer, Kidder is known for immersing himself in the lives of ordinary people. *Time* magazine named *Home Town* the best nonfiction book of 1999, and Kidder has won a wide range of literary honors, including the Pulitzer Prize in general nonfiction and the National Book Award.

South African writer John Michael Coetzee stands beside University Provost Donna Randall as he is presented with an honorary Doctor of Letters degree. Coetzee, the second lecturer in the 2000 Rogow series, delivered an innovative presentation on the humanities in Africa. He read from a prepared fictional text in which the characters explored the topic. Coetzee has won many of the world’s top literary honors for his novels, which are noted for their eloquent protest against political and social conditions in South Africa. He is the first person to win Great Britain’s prestigious Booker Prize twice, most recently for his 1999 novel, *Disgrace*. 
A Commitment to Hartford Scholars

by Barbara Steinberger

As the Hartford Scholars program celebrates its 10th anniversary, members of The Associates of the University of Hartford are exploring ways of expanding their already critical role in the project.

The Associates, an organization comprising members of the greater Hartford business community, has supported the University’s scholarship program continuously since its inception in 1964. In 1990 former University President Humphrey Tonkin asked The Associates to commit a portion of its scholarship support to the Hartford Scholars initiative. The Hartford Scholars program enables Hartford public school graduates who meet the University’s admission criteria to attend UofH for half-tuition. The Associates plays a major role in funding the program through events such as the annual auction and the scholarship gala.

The 1999–2000 year marked the 10th anniversary of the Hartford Scholars program. During the program’s first decade, 322 students participated, earning 58 associate’s degrees and 112 bachelor’s degrees. One student went on to earn a master’s degree from the University, and other former Hartford Scholars are working on or have completed master’s degrees at other institutions.

The Associates recently conducted a review of the Hartford Scholars program’s first 10 years. During the review process, The Associates’ executive board met with members of the University’s offices of multicultural affairs, financial aid, admission, and career services, and with outside organizations and individuals, including Hartford School Superintendent Anthony Amato. In addition, The Associates surveyed a group of former Hartford Scholars to gain their perspectives on the benefits of the program and suggestions for improvement.

As the review progressed, members of The Associates discussed ways in which they could have a greater impact on the lives of Hartford Scholars. A small number of Hartford Scholars have participated in The Associates’ annual auction and the scholarship gala over the years, but otherwise, there has been little interaction between The Associates and the Scholars.

Christopher R. Zell, senior vice president of Fleet Bank and chair of The Associates, said that the organization’s role in the Hartford Scholars program must go beyond financial support. “Our ultimate goal is to assist the Hartford Scholars in truly becoming scholars and to further enhance their experience at the University of Hartford,” Zell said.

Students in the program should understand that members of The Associates are providing more than just a scholarship grant; they are providing educational opportunities that could ultimately develop into permanent positions at Associates’ member companies, according to Zell.

The Associates developed a plan of action aimed at expanding the interaction with Hartford Scholars and at better communicating the opportunities available to them.

Associates members have started coming to campus to speak to Hartford Scholars about their companies and their fields and to share their own personal success stories. Members hope that these “awareness sessions” will help students recognize the many career opportunities that exist in the Hartford region, encourage them to stay in the area, and enable them to make connections for future employment. The first of these sessions was held in October, and additional ones are set for January and March.

The Associates will have greater interaction with the Hartford Public Schools, thanks to the efforts of Amato. Associates members and University representatives will visit Hartford high schools to discuss the Hartford Scholars program with faculty members and guidance counselors. In addition, they hope to be able to discuss the program directly with high school students and their families.

A new initiative, the Hartford Scholars Internship program, is designed to recognize the efforts of Hartford Scholars who achieve a grade point average of 2.75 or higher and demonstrate involvement in the community. After a rigorous application process, the program will match a Hartford Scholar who is a junior or senior with a company that is committed to funding the half-tuition portion of that student’s financial aid package. The company will also provide an internship for that student for a minimum of one summer, with permanent employment as the ultimate goal for both the student and the company. The internship program will begin in 2001. LEGO Systems, Inc., is the first sponsor.

“Members of The Associates strongly believe in the partnership between business and higher education, and understand that educated individuals are vital to a sustained and healthy economic environment,” Zell said. “Our businesses need the Hartford Scholars to be successful at the University of Hartford so they can go on to become successful members of the workforce.”

Lisa O’Connor (left) of Otis Elevator, one of the member companies of the University of Hartford Associates, works with Hartford Scholar Daymalee Bultron (center) as Associates Chair Christopher R. Zell of Fleet Bank looks on.
Sophomore Year Brings New Experiences for Hartford Scholar

The Winter 1999 issue of The Observer featured nine students from the Class of 2003, one from each of the University's nine schools and colleges. To tell the ongoing story of their lives, The Observer will periodically visit each of them during the four years at the University.

For this issue, The Observer caught up with Eulalia Garcia. Eulalia's story is especially appropriate for this issue since she is one of the students who benefits from the scholarship support provided by The Associates.

Now in her sophomore year at Hillyer College, Eulalia has flourished at the University, both academically and in terms of her experiences outside the classroom.

During her freshman year, Eulalia made a conscious decision not to take on a lot of extracurricular activities so that she could focus on her academic work and adjust to college life. Her strategy paid off. She earned a grade point average of 3.8 during her first semester and 3.6 during the second semester of her freshman year.

Now that she is feeling comfortable with college life, Eulalia is branching out in many new directions. For example, as a Hartford Scholar, she has gotten involved with The Associates, which partially funds the Hartford Scholars program. The program enables students like Eulalia, who graduate from Hartford public schools and meet the University's admission criteria, to attend UofH for half-tuition.

Eulalia will earn an associate's degree from Hillyer College in May, after which she plans to transfer into the College of Arts and Sciences as a criminal justice major. This spring, she hopes to work as a legislative intern at the Connecticut State Capitol. Eulalia's ultimate goal is to become an FBI agent, but she is also thinking about attending law school. She gained invaluable experience working at a Hartford law firm last summer—a job she got by going through the yellow pages, calling local law firms, and being persistent.

Eulalia's goal for the next two and a half years is simply to get the most she can out of her time at the University of Hartford. "I'm going to try a little bit of everything," she said. "So far, it's been a great experience." -BS

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Eulalia became interested in criminal justice taking a law course during her junior year at Hartford Public High School. Someday, she would love to be involved in law enforcement right here in her home city. “The city I grew up in has a bad reputation, and I’d like to change that,” she said.

Eulalia will be the first person in her family to graduate from college. She is working to be a positive role model for her two younger sisters, ages 5 and 9. Eulalia lived on campus during her freshman year, but this year she is living at home with her mother and sisters, both to save money and because she misses them. She knows that her sisters look up to her and that her college experience will encourage them to place a high value on education.

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