



FROM THE POLITY

Reflections on Huron Forum

A few weeks ago, I attended a student forum with two representatives from Huron Consulting. The purpose of the forum was, primarily, to provide Huron with an opportunity to learn directly what we believe the spirit of St. John's to be, and what is most necessary to preserve to keep that spirit alive. It was also an important opportunity for students to put names and faces to the suspicious Huron Consulting and their Strategic Visioning Plan that has been spoken of with unease and mistrust for so many months.

The consultants asked us a series of basic yet important questions about St. John's, hoping to hear personal and honest accounts of what we love most about our college, what drew us here in the first place, and what changes would improve our experience. Though many students initially seemed wary, it was not long before we were all giving earnest accounts of our own experiences. The consultants seemed genuinely interested in our stories and were constantly asking us to elaborate further so that they might better understand each of our unique St. John's experiences.

Though the idea of an outside consulting firm becoming involved in our small, intimate college is uncomfortable to us all, the people running this project seem to be intent upon preserving what we love about St. John's and ensuring that we have a long, bright future ahead of us. I spoke personally with one of the consultants, and when I asked him what the goals of their project were and how the forum would prove useful, he said that their goal was to help the school attain financial stability for the sake of ensuring the long-term survival and success of our Program.

It is impossible that one short forum can fully calm our worries about what kinds of changes Huron will suggest, or what the future might bring for St. John's as we struggle to maintain an unconventional program and survive in the modern world. But I can say that, on first impressions alone, the Huron consultants displayed real curiosity and interest in getting to know students and becoming familiar with everything that makes our life and education here so important to us.

It is up to us students to build strong relationships with the people that will decide our future, and to remember to use our voices in times of change, in order to ensure that our future properly reflects who we are.

Catherine Greer

A WELL-EXAMINED LIFE: Memorial Service Honors the Legacy of the Late Ms. Brann

Saturday, January 18, 2025, was a day marked by somber skies and slippery roads. Temperatures in the thirties did little to deter the steady stream of attendees arriving to honor Ms. Eva Brann, who passed away on October 28, 2024. By 2 p.m., the Great Hall was alight with warmth and conversation. Among those present were Grace Cavalieri, Maryland's 10th poet laureate, and former Santa Fe president Mike Peters. At the right side of the podium stood a portrait of Ms. Brann, in front of an impressive bookshelf, holding her book *Feeling Our Feelings: What Philosophers Think and People Know*. Her wise, warm smile seemed to embrace all who had come to celebrate her extraordinary life.

President Demleitner opened the program with a heartfelt welcome. She spoke of Ms. Brann's immense contributions to the college, emphasizing that her legacy would endure not just in the institution's history but in the lives she had touched. The formal tributes began with Tutor Joan Silver, who had assembled the program. Other tutors delivered tributes, including former president Christopher Nelson, Eric Salem, David Carl (Santa Fe, in absentia), Steven Crockett (in absentia), and Janet Dougherty. Former students, alumni, and friends Robin Tzannes, Paul Dry, Sharon Bishop, Barry and Gretchen Mazur, and Kimo Mackey delivered the remaining remarks, painting a colorful picture of Ms. Brann as an educator and friend.

Born into a Jewish family in Berlin, her father, a doctor, introduced her to Kant on their walks in the park when she was five. Her early years were marked by a duality: though she grew up in Nazi Germany, her childhood was remarkably protected. In 1939, Ms. Brann's father was attending a conference in the US when the pogroms of the Reichskristallnacht took place. The family told him not to return to Germany. In 1941, at 12 years old, she left Germany for Portugal alongside her mother and 9-year-old brother Wolfgang. Their destination was the United States, where they would finally be reunited with Ms. Brann's father.

Despite traumatizing experiences—including the suicide of her younger brother, a veteran of the Korea War, who she viewed as “the gifted one”—people described her as a woman without grief. In fact, some even called her the least angst-ridden person, i.e. the complete opposite of Achilles.

Ms. Brann always maintained that she was not a refugee. In the US, she had not found refuge, she had found paradise. Where else would a college like St. John's be possible?

She returned to Germany once. This one trip revealed to her that she was in fact an American. She recognized that if the Nazis had not come to power, she would be doomed to become a professor which would have forced her to specialize and would have brought about her tyrannical side. Ms. Brann loved her new country—especially the Southwest—and described the United States as a “country growing upwards.”

Tributes from friends and colleagues revealed her singular impact as a teacher and mentor. When Ms. Brann began her tenure at St. John's, there were only four women on campus. She became the college's first female dean in the 1990s. She had to keep her address a secret because otherwise students would just show up to discuss the books.

She did not aim to be an expert at the seminar table, but rather an expert in conversation. This approach resonated deeply with students and colleagues alike. Tutor Janet Dougherty recalled Ms. Brann's practice of “governing through conversation.”

Musical interludes during the service provided pauses for reflection. Tutor Chester Burke (flute) and alumnus James Siranovich (piano) performed the first movement of Bach's Flute Sonata in B minor. Later, a group of students, staff, and tutors, conducted by Ms. Paalman, delivered a rendition of Dona Nobis Pacem from Bach's B Minor Mass.

Especially to current students, Ms. Brann can appear a larger-than-life figure, but tributaries were able to develop a three-dimensional vision of the person that Ms. Brann had been. Surprising facts about her were part of this. Here is a selection that elicited chuckles from the audience: she had fondness for McDonald's, cowboy novels, sailing trips, and children— which explains her desire to open a day care on campus. There were also allusions to Ms. Brann's unique sense of humor. Apparently, when she said after lunch that she was going to “go and read the Bible,” this was a code word for her taking a nap. Ms. Brann received the National Medal of Humanities twice. Thus, she met

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This Week in Seminar

Freshman:

- Thursday, January 30: Plato, *Sophist*, beginning – 242B
- Monday, February 3: Plato, *Sophist*, 242C – end

Sophomores:

- Thursday, January 30: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, selections
- Monday, February 3: Christian Creeds and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, selections

Juniors:

- Thursday, January 30: Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, selections
- Monday, February 3: Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, selections

Seniors:

- Thursday, January 30: Writing Period!
- Monday, February 3: Melville, *Benito Cereno*

Friday Night Lecture:

No Lecture (Long Weekend)

Upcoming Events:

Friday, January 31:

- Long Weekend begins

Saturday, February 1:

- Senior Essays Due at Midnight (Bell Ringing at McDowell Hall)!

Sunday, February 2:

- Groundhog Day

Monday, February 3:

- Long Weekend ends with seminars at 7:30pm

ANNAPOLIS RECEIVES SOLAR ENERGY GRANT

For anyone attending the Board of Visitors and Governors meeting in October, a certain measure of jealousy was undoubtedly directed towards Santa Fe. Not only did attendees have to hear about how the energy costs for our campus are a whopping \$700,000 per year compared to their paltry \$140,000, but it was revealed that much of their energy is now supplied by a shiny new solar panel installation on their campus. Their access to green energy has been enough to turn the rest of us green with envy!

Fortunately, news has reached your humble journalist that our dear Annapolis is not far away from solar energy itself. St. John’s has recently been approved for a Maryland grant to advance green energy on our campus. The Higher Education Clean Energy Pilot Program has granted us \$1.03 million, and finally we shall have solar panels! The plan is to install these on the roof of Mellon and the nearby heating plant. Also included in the grant are funds to create a new master plan for our campus that focuses on promoting green energy, as well as the framework for multiple student internships on campus. Over the next few months the Career Development Office will be working to finalize these internships, which will be offered to the Polity as soon as they are available.

The process will begin fully in February, when members of the administration will meet with structural architects from the Kezlo group and solar contractors from Solar Energy Services, including Johnnie alumni Ethan Goddard who is the latter’s VP of Energy Technology. Before solar panels can be directly installed, we must carry out desperately needed repairs on the Mellon roof. The College also has to apply for permission from the Annapolis

Historical Society along with the State of Maryland. According to our CFO Ally Gontang-Highfield, “They are primarily trying to ensure that we are taking care to preserve our historic buildings and that the design is acceptable under historic standards for the city of Annapolis.” Once all permits have been secured and the plans have been approved, installation can begin for these solar panels. The administration hopes that work can begin this semester and that we will have a fully functional solar array as soon as this fall, but ultimately the timeline is up to how quickly the city and state will approve the details for the project.

The solar installation size is still not firmly planned, but current estimates sit at a 346.9 kW/h (kilo-watts per hour) array on the Mellon roof, and a smaller 64.9 kW/h array on the roof of the heating plant for a total size of 411.8 kW/h. This is smaller than our sister’s newly installed array, but it must be remembered that the Santa Fe campus has much more open space and Southwestern sunshine than we do in our crowded downtown Northeastern campus. Again, estimates are not yet firm, but the expectation is to cut about 5% off our annual utility bill and avoid sourcing a comparable amount of energy from the main power grid.

In addition, depending on the decision of our current Federal administration, we may be able to apply for annual renewable energy credits to further decrease our energy costs. This will likely be the largest solar installation anywhere in downtown Annapolis, including recent installations by the city. These solar panels are only a piece of our new energy grant. Along with internships that we students can apply for, the College will also be implementing a new master strategy that focuses on green energy. This is not connected to the plans being laid out in conjunction with Huron Consulting, which are primarily focused on fundraising and student enrollment. This master strategy will be a plan for the physical layout of the College, and will replace a severely outdated strategy from several years ago. Tailored to our more modern needs, this plan will ensure that as the College renovates and constructs buildings around campus, it will follow a guide to grow as green as possible.

While Santa Fe may still have a leg up in terms of green energy, Annapolitans can be glad to know that we too can soon harness our own piece of sunshine. As the administration works to implement large-scale changes, don’t forget that the student body can have a huge impact on energy consumption! I urge you, student or faculty, to be on the lookout for ways you can cut down on energy uses around campus. As always, don’t forget to turn out the lights!

Special thanks to CFO Ally Gontang-Highfield, who was instrumental in providing the information for this article.

Aphorism of the Week

Ἐκτὸς τῆς πόλεως οὐκ εἶσι θύραι.

Tarik Mahmoud

Reagan Bottomley

Eva Brann Memorial, cont’d

President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama. When asked to describe these men, she called Bush “very fit,” and Obama “interminably charming.”

Ms. Brann was well traveled and had friends around the world. She would visit her former student and friend Robin Tzannes on the Greek island of Kythnos. There, she liked to “cook up a storm.” Barry Mazur shared that she was so curious about the world that she asked him to “spy” for her on Mount Athos, where women were prohibited.

As the program drew to a close, Sharon Bishop’s words lingered in the minds of all present: “We are her legacy.” Ms. Brann’s life was a well-examined one, full of conversations with texts, with students, with the world. Her ability to live without regret, to govern through dialogue, and to inspire others to think deeply and broadly will be remembered. Even those who did not know her personally felt the weight of her absence.

After the memorial, attendees were invited to the FSK Lobby for light refreshments and conversation. Though the skies remained gray, those who departed did so with a renewed sense of purpose, honoring Ms. Brann’s demand: “we must continue the conversation.”

Helen Felbek



“At the retirement party for Eva Brann, the dean reads with surprise at a galley copy of her newest book, *The Past-Present*, delivered by tutor Pamela Kraus and designer Adrienne Rogers, 1997,” *St. John’s College Digital Archives*.

Editor’s Note: While scouring the college’s digital archives for a photo of Ms. Brann, I discovered scans of the autobiography she wrote when she was 14, titled *I Came Across the Ocean*. Pieces of it were quoted during her memorial. You can read it if you search the archives! Go to <https://digitalarchives.sjc.edu>.

“We save up the events of our days to tell our friends, feeling that until our affairs have been told they haven’t quite happened: Thus do our friends confirm our lives.” - Eva Brann, *Open Secrets / Inward Prospects: Reflections on World and Soul*

ABOUT THE ST. JOHN’S COLLEGIAN

The St. John’s Collegian is the weekly newspaper of St. John’s College Annapolis. We work to bring quick and timely coverage of important events going on, to help develop a more informed student body. If you’re searching for more in-depth investigations and reporting, as well as essays, art and culture, check out the Gadfly, our affiliated publication, which is published once every three weeks.

Want to submit an article? We always need more writers, whether for opinion or reporting! Submissions for news articles should be between 400-600 words, while opinion should be kept short at 350 words. Just email sjca.collegian@gmail.com with your article, and we will work to get it in print! Longer form articles and more in-depth exploration of ideas should go to the Gadfly, which accepts submissions at canicholskaufman@sjc.edu.

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