

## THE CULTURE OF SERVICE: HOFSTRA STUDENTS GIVING BACK

Hofstra is proud of the contributions that our students make to the local, national and international communities. From the Alternative Spring Break trip to coat drives and other charity fundraisers coordinated by student-run clubs and organizations, to participation in Hofstra's annual Service Week, our students have demonstrated a long-standing commitment to service.

This fall, Hofstra University is proud to announce our newest service initiative, the Hofstra Discovery Program. This dynamic interactive program is designed for first-year students who want to be actively engaged through service-learning, adventure and discovery. The Hofstra Discovery Program allows first-year students to come to Hofstra early, learn the campus, make friends, connect with student-leaders, participate in

service projects, and get a jump-start on their transition to college.

During the Hofstra Discovery Program, students choose one of two paths of discovery with adventurous and reflective activities: compassion or conservation. Participants work on service projects in small groups led by upper-class student discovery leaders, who help enhance experiences and serve as resources throughout the program. Students are housed together in order to facilitate group interaction, programming and discussion.

Students' daytime activities vary, depending on the discovery path they choose. All groups reconvene for a daily meal and share their experiences. The program culminates with interactive presentations and a final group meal.

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Two compassion teams of the 2009 Hofstra Discovery Program revitalized the basketball courts at the California Avenue Elementary School in Hempstead, NY. Professor Brian Clocksin of Honors College lead the student project.

Kimberly Rhyan is the assistant director of the Office of Student Leadership and Activities (OSLA). This fall, the SERVICEday series kicks off an exciting year of community service projects, such as the Adopt a Grandparent Program, a Hunger/Homelessness Awareness Project, and an Annual Toy Drive. For more information on OSLA community service projects, please visit [hofstra.edu/slaservice](http://hofstra.edu/slaservice).

# DISTINGUISHED TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

We asked four recipients of this year's Distinguished Teacher of the Year Award to discuss the importance of teaching in their higher education careers. Professors Robert A. Leonard's and Bruce Torff's interviews are below; Professors Mary Anne Trasciatti's and Ahmet Karagozogl'u's interviews will be published in the spring edition of *Family Connection*. All four award recipients will present model classes for parents and family members during Family Weekend on Friday and Saturday, October 23 and 24, 2009. (Visit [hofstra.edu/fw](http://hofstra.edu/fw) for information about Family Weekend.)



**Robert A. Leonard**

## ROBERT A. LEONARD

### HOFSTRA COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

Professor Leonard's specialty of forensic linguistics applies the science of linguistic investigation to issues of U.S. law. Forensic linguistics augments legal analysis by applying rigorous, scientifically accepted principles of analysis to legal evidence, such as contracts, confessions, and recorded speech.

Dr. Leonard has served as consultant on language and intercultural matters to clients that include *The New Yorker*, law firms, advertising agencies, television networks, and police and government agencies. While an undergraduate at Columbia University, Dr. Leonard co-founded and led the rock group Sha Na Na, performed at the Woodstock Festival as bass player and lead singer and the Fillmores East and West, and also appeared on *The Tonight Show* and in the Academy Award-winning film *Woodstock*. Dr. Leonard has had extensive experience in the media, both as a recording artist and performer and as an academic leader in his field.

## BRUCE TORFF

### SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Bruce Torff, an educational psychologist, is professor of curriculum and teaching at Hofstra University. He has published numerous articles and books on topics including teachers' beliefs and attitudes (especially concerning critical-thinking activities and professional development initiatives), expertise in teaching, intelligence, and musical cognition. He earned a doctoral degree and two master's degrees from Harvard University — where he worked with Howard Gardner — and held a postdoctoral appointment at Yale University in collaboration with Robert J. Sternberg. At Hofstra, Professor Torff teaches courses in educational psychology and human development and serves as program director of the Doctoral Program in Learning and Teaching. He remains active as a presenter of professional development workshops for educators. Professor Torff is also a pianist and songwriter.



**Bruce Torff**

## PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR AREA OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE AND/OR RESEARCH.

**Bruce Torff (BT):** I am an educational psychologist with an interest in development and learning during adolescence. My research is focused mainly on teachers' beliefs about appropriate instruction for different populations of learners (that is, learners who differ in cognitive abilities, learning styles, socioeconomic advantages, etc.).

I am also active in research on expertise in teaching. I write a column for *Alternatives to Lecture*, Hofstra's Center for Teaching and Scholarly Excellence's newsletter.

**Robert Leonard (RL):** My professional expertise is in two areas: theoretical linguistics and forensic linguistics of English as applied to U.S. law. I have served as consultant in some well-known cases such as the Tye Diggs-Idina Menzel arson threat letters, the McGuire "suitcase murder," the Alvarez spy case, the Hummert murder, and the John Karr false confession of the unsolved JonBenet Ramsey murder case.

Prior to specializing in forensic linguistics, I researched and worked for eight years in Africa and Southeast Asia, living in traditional tribal societies, Islamic societies, and Confucian and Buddhist societies. I spent six months of a recent sabbatical studying in Thailand, Laos and Burma, and remain active in research on the semantics and grammar of the African Bantu language Swahili.

Beginning in 1974, when I first advised the Civil Service Commission of Nassau County court-ordered removal of language bias in official examinations, I have applied the science of linguistics to a wide range of legal issues such as disputed authorship, libel, forgery, plagiarism, the meaning of contracts, and linguistic analysis of letters by request of police departments in cases of murder and threatened violence.

In 2001, I established courses in language and law at Hofstra, and as a result, the University joined the handful of U.S. colleges that teach forensic and legal linguistics. Subsequently I taught the first course in the United States titled Forensic Linguistics. The Forensic Linguistics Internships began in 2004. I am also a member of the International Association of Forensic Linguists.

## WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR? IS TEACHING IMPORTANT IN YOUR CAREER?

**BT:** I chose to be a university professor for the same reason I chose to be a high school teacher many years ago: to be a significant, positive force in young people's lives. Apart from my family commitments (I have two children), teaching is the most important part of my life. I am very active in research and writing, but nothing in my career takes a backseat to teaching. Teaching is by far the most gratifying part of being a professor.

**RL:** It is only through teaching that one can truly understand the subject one is teaching. I'm excited about the topics I teach and I remember what it was like to be a student — to be liberated by being part of the process of learning rather than being talked to.

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD TEACHER?

**BT:** Obviously, a good teacher must have a strong grasp of the subject at hand and a gift for creating effective lessons. But a good teacher is also skilled in listening to what students have to say and drawing on these statements to help students enhance their knowledge and skills. There's an art to asking the crucial question, the one that causes students to think critically and take control of their own learning. This capacity to teach oneself is essential for promoting lifelong learning. A good teacher is also a caring individual whose main goal is not the

delivery of curriculum, but the fostering of students' learning and development. Success is when students learn, not when the curriculum is covered.

**RL:** Teaching is a two-way street. The dialogue between the professor and his/her students is a cooperative effort. It is because of this cooperative effort that the professor comes away from it further enriched in his/her understanding of the subject and having experienced a thoroughly enjoyable semesterlong social interaction.

Also, a professor must treat students with respect if s/he expects respect in return.

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD COLLEGE STUDENT?

**BT:** There are many ways to be a good student, but a common thread is the capacity to hang in there when the going gets tough. If a class is too easy, students learn very little. The better class is the one that challenges students, and that means students have to work hard and show pride in the quality of their work (even when there may be more fun things to do, as there always are!). The good student is rarely the most gifted; it is more often the most hardworking, tenacious, determined, and goal-oriented student. Many employers agree with this statement, so it is fitting that college courses challenge students and reward them for their hard work.

**RL:** A good college student is someone eager to see the world through different lenses that he or she has never before looked through. My eyes were opened when I took Swahili and fell into it by accident.

## WHAT CAN PARENTS OF UNDERGRADUATES DO TO SUPPORT THEIR STUDENTS?

**BT:** Parenting adolescent learners (including college-level ones) is tricky, because you want to strike a balance between letting them work independently and intervening to optimize their learning and development. The Goldilocks advice applies: not too hot, not too cold. Show interest in what your children are doing in school. Ask questions. Listen — and don't give up when their answers are cryptic or evasive. Read their written work. Encourage them, and go easy on the criticism. When you do need to criticize, use the "sandwich" approach: start with something positive, sneak in your critique, and end with something positive. Affirm before you advise, if indeed you must advise at all. Sometimes just listening works better. Avoid putting untoward pressure on students to make decisions about what to major in or what career to pursue; this pressure almost always makes the decisions harder and undermines your relationship with your children. College students need you more than they let on, so stay involved and upbeat.

**RL:** Parents must understand that a liberal arts education is not a vocational training program. A liberal arts education is extremely valuable because it teaches students how to become fast, intelligent learners of new subjects. This is extremely valuable in the workforce because employers want to hire individuals who are able to come into a new situation, pick up the important points, and synthesize new solutions.



Incoming first-year students during New Student Orientation 2009.

# SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Hofstra University's Services for Students With Disabilities (SSD) arranges academic accommodations and provides support for students with physical, learning and/or psychological disabilities.

In order to access services, students must first formally disclose their disability by registering with SSD, and then must submit appropriate documentation for review. Staff members are available to help students with the registration process and will work with students to determine which accommodations are appropriate for their needs at the college level.

Suzanne Carl, associate director and learning specialist for SSD, urges parents of incoming students with disabilities to make sure their student's registering documentation is current and complete, which is the most common problem that causes a delay in services. In addition to arranging accommodations, SSD helps students develop the skills they will need to be effective self-advocates at Hofstra and beyond. Parents should encourage students to develop self-advocacy skills and allow them to learn and understand what their disability is. By stepping back, parents can encourage students' active involvement in managing their own disabilities, with coaching and support along the way from SSD.

Often first-year students with disabilities are used to being helped through various programs in high school and now want to try to be independent and dismiss help on the university level. However, as Suzanne Carl tells many of the students that come into her office, "make use of our services!" As she says, "their challenges will always be there, and just because students are entering college does not mean their disability will go away." Carl states that everyone has some challenge to deal with, whether it's physical, emotional, or learning, and some bear more challenges than others. A goal of SSD is to compensate for students' weaknesses and increase their strengths.

SSD also administers the Program for Academic Learning Skills (PALS). PALS is a program designed to assist students with learning disabilities and ADD/ADHD, and program admission is determined by application and interview at the time of admission to Hofstra. PALS students meet weekly with a learning specialist during their first year at Hofstra in order to address their unique learning challenges. There is an additional charge for this program.

For questions about PALS or any of the services offered by SSD, please call **(516) 463-7075**.



C. John Demirayak was the conservation leader during the Hofstra Discovery Program this past August. John is a senior political science major who spent the spring 2009 semester as an intern in Washington, D.C. for Senator Charles Schumer.

## WHAT HOFSTRA PARENTS THINK

Most of the 855 respondents of the Parent Survey 2009 are parents of first-year and sophomore students who are residing on campus; live outside New York state; have B.A. or post-graduate degrees; are not Hofstra alumni; are female; and are baby boomers (ages 45-67).

### PARENT SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ According to the Hofstra Parent Survey 2009, Hofstra parents get information most often through the *Hofstra Family Link* e-newsletter\* (86%); Parent and Family Programs Web site ([hofstra.edu/parfam](http://hofstra.edu/parfam)) (72%); and the *Hofstra Family Connection* printed newsletter (59%).  
(\*To subscribe, please e-mail [parents@hofstra.edu](mailto:parents@hofstra.edu).)
- ▶ Parents communicate often with their students: 24% are in contact daily; 22%, 2-3 times a week; 19%, 4-6 times per week; 17%, once a week; 15%, more than once a day; and 3%, 2-3 times per month.
- ▶ Parents communicate with students most often using: student's cell phone (86%); text messaging (50%); e-mail (42%); instant messaging (17%); postal mail (5%); and student's landline phone (4%). This is quite a change from a generation ago; do you remember those Sunday afternoon lines for the public phones in your college dorm?
- ▶ 72% of parents agree or strongly agree that Hofstra University includes parents and families in the campus community. (Our staff in the Office of Parent and Family Programs is especially proud, as this result represents a 5% increase from 2008.)
- ▶ 86% of parents agree or strongly agree that their student made a good choice in attending Hofstra.
- ▶ When asked how they think their student will change/has changed while in college, 67% of Hofstra parents think students develop slowly and gradually throughout all years of college; 17% observe the most significant changes in the first year with less development in subsequent years; 14% say that little or moderate change occurs in the first year with more changes closer to graduation; and 2% think there is no change across all years in college.
- ▶ The greatest concerns parents have regarding their student are: academics (57%); finances (50%); health and safety (42%); and career planning/job search (40%).
- ▶ Students most requested parent assistance and advice with: finances (56%); academics (44%); career planning/job search (30%); and health and safety (23%).

To view all the results of the *Parent Survey 2009*, compared to results of *Parent Survey 2008*, visit [hofstra.edu/parfam](http://hofstra.edu/parfam) (click on "Survey"). *Parent Survey 2010* will be available online in May 2010.

### The winners of this year's Parent Survey sweepstakes are:

**Valerie Robin**, Tiburon, CA

• \$400 JetBlue airline voucher

**Tim Koprowski**, Newburgh, NY

**Julie Sweet**, Sherrill, NY

• \$100 Barnes & Noble gift cards

# SERVING FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

Stefano Fasulo, an advisement dean at Hofstra, describes how his family reacted when he began attending college: “My mom and dad did not really understand what college was all about. They did not consider sitting down with a book and studying for class as work. Work was building, cleaning, moving, or just doing something involving physical labor. My parents, immigrants from Italy, would keep asking when I was going to get a job, though I was busy going to college. I was the first in my family to attend a four-year college.”

Stefano’s experience is typical of many first-generation college students. While his family was very supportive of his efforts, Stefano needed to learn on his own how to be a successful college student. Dr. Jayne Brownell, assistant vice president for student affairs at Hofstra and an expert on student development, points out that sometimes those challenges can feel overwhelming for students. Research compiled by the U.S. Department of Education shows that first-generation college students have lower graduation rates than students whose parents graduated from college (Choy, 2001<sup>1</sup>). They are also more likely to work during college, take fewer credits, earn a degree more slowly, and are less likely to continue on to graduate school (Chen, 2005<sup>2</sup>; Choy, 2001).

“The success of our first-generation students is very important to us,” says Dr. Brownell. On Hofstra’s annual student survey, 27% of undergraduate students identify themselves as the first in their families to go to college, which is higher than the national average at private, four-year institutions. (First-generation students are defined, on this survey, as those whose neither parent has a



Advisement Dean Stefano Fasulo (on right) acted in the student-written skits as well as presented information sessions during Parent Orientation last summer.

college degree.) We know that along with family support, assistance with the transition to college, academic achievement, involvement and a sense of belonging on campus are key to the support and success of first-generation students.

To further support first-generation students, our newly formed First-Generation Committee is organizing a session during Family Weekend on October 24, where a panel of administrators, students and family members will discuss the vocabulary of college, academic programs and requirements, and services for students and families. We hope to both inform and learn from first-generation family members, so we

can work together to support their college student’s career. Please refer to the back cover of this newsletter for more information about the Family Weekend program and registration, or you may visit [hofstra.edu/fw](http://hofstra.edu/fw).

1. Choy, S. (2001). “Students Whose Parents Did Not Go to College: Postsecondary Access, Persistence, and Attainment.” Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics: [nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/2001126.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/2001126.pdf).

2. Chen, X. (2005). “First-Generation Students in Postsecondary Education: A Look at Their College Transcripts.” Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics: [nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005171.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005171.pdf).

## H1N1 FLU: HELPFUL INFORMATION

On September 1, 2009, Vice President for Student Affairs, Sandra Johnson and Director of the Health and Wellness Center, Maureen Houck, sent a letter to all Hofstra parents describing Hofstra’s preparedness for the upcoming flu season. You may read the letter online at [hofstra.edu/parfam](http://hofstra.edu/parfam). Information, updates and answers to frequently asked questions are available at [hofstra.edu/H1N1](http://hofstra.edu/H1N1).



# PARENT ORIENTATION

More than 1,300 parents participated in Parent Orientation this past summer:



## STUDENT VOICE

### A STUDENT LEADER'S PERSPECTIVE

by Jennifer Soehngen, Class of 2009

During my time at Hofstra, I have learned a great deal of valuable information. I have learned that assignments turn out better when you start them ahead of time, professors are willing to help you the best they can, one red sock can turn a whole load of whites into pink clothes, getting involved is important, and at 2 a.m., you are guaranteed to always find a late-night snack. My experiences at Hofstra have allowed me to grow as an individual and realize who I am. They have helped develop my personality, as well as my time management and networking skills.

One thing I would highly recommend is getting involved on campus. Being involved has opened up numerous other wonderful experiences and activities throughout campus and off campus. It has given me the opportunity to meet and get to know different faculty members and other students. It also has allowed me to broaden my perspective on various topics.

I have been the head captain of the Hofstra Pep Band, a residential assistant, an undergraduate assistant in the Office of Parent and

Family Programs, a senior residential assistant, a member of different dance clubs on campus, and a member of the Residential Student Association. I was the recipient of the Hofstra University's Senior Woman of the Year and Spirit Support's Pep Band Student Leader, and was also featured as the Dutch Treat during this past year's spring semester. Throughout all these experiences, I definitely have maintained commitment to the University, and plan to continue this fall as a new graduate student pursuing education studies.

There are numerous positive and funny experiences I have come across throughout my time at Hofstra; however, since my space is limited, I will leave you with one funny experience that I will never forget. During my first year, I had a roommate. My roommate and I got along well, yet we were involved in different activities (which worked out well). One day, I had just gotten back from the Recreation

### Jennifer's Top Five Tips for Incoming First-Year Students

1. Always carry your HofstraCard. You never know when you might be hungry.
2. If living on campus, always remember to take your keys with you, even if just to the bathroom. No one likes to be stranded outside their room waiting for Public Safety in their towel or pajamas!
3. Get involved; it's the best way to meet people. If you don't see a club or sport you like, talk to someone and he or she will make it happen.
4. Buy rain boots and an umbrella. You never know when you are going to step in a puddle or be caught in the rain.
5. Call home at least once a month. After being away from home, you are going to want to be welcomed back for a home-cooked meal.

Center and decided I was going to shower. Before entering the shower, I told my roommate I was going into the shower and that if she was to leave for any reason, to leave the room door open. Well, needless to say, she left and the door locked behind her! After I finished my shower and got out of the bathroom I could not get into my room! I also had no phone, because who takes their phone to the shower with them? I had to wait in the common room until my roommate or suitemate returned to get into my room. It was a long and awkward wait in a wet towel. After that experience, I learned my lesson about not taking your keys to the bathroom!

## PARENT VOICE

### MY SON'S INVOLVEMENT ON HOFSTRA CAMPUS

by Karen Berry, Parent of Jared, Class of 2010

Throughout high school Jared was always active in many extracurricular activities, and we knew college would be no different for him — it's one of the reasons he picked Hofstra. He tried all different clubs, and by the end of his first year, became active in three organizations: Student Government Association, American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), and the National Association of Music Educators (MENC).

Jared would always call to tell us about new and exciting things going on in student government as he moved from senator to rules chair, and most recently, vice president. He loves working with administrators and students to make sure Hofstra is a constant thriving community. Boredom was never a problem at Hofstra.

With so many events going on, Jared's problem wasn't trying to find things to keep him busy; but rather, it was trying to find enough time in each day to accomplish the goals he originally set out to accomplish.

ACDA and MENC allows Jared to not only socialize with friends in the Music Department (his major being music education), but to also network with potential graduate schools and other musicians in the field. As president of both groups at Hofstra, he constantly goes to conventions to supplement his learning outside the classroom; he is always looking to raise the bar.

In addition to participating in activities, Jared works on campus as a student aide in the Music Department and as a Pride Guide

in Undergraduate Admission. He enjoys talking to prospective students about his wonderful experiences at Hofstra and how much he has grown, both educationally and socially. Through his college experience he has met a diverse group of people in both academic and community settings which, in my opinion, is a great precursor for moving up and out into everyday life after college.

As a parent, letting him explore all these activities and encouraging him to always strive to do better was an important factor in helping him learn and grow. He has truly found his niche at Hofstra and seeing him happy is the most important thing a parent can ask for. I can rest easy knowing Jared made an excellent choice in his decision to attend Hofstra University.

### I WAS A FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT

Ellen Miller, BA '87, MS '89, CAS '02; Parent of James DaVolio, Class of 2012

I hope to be a role model to my children and give them the advantages that I didn't have. I took great pains to expose my children to different educational opportunities from a young age so they would feel unlimited in their potential. From the day they started school, I have instilled upon them the value of a good education. I am proud to say that my son is entering his sophomore year at Hofstra this fall.

My grandparents were illiterate Italian immigrants; my father only barely finished the 8th grade and my mother was a high school graduate. However, it was always understood that I would go to college. As a student in the honors/college preparatory track, I felt huge pressure to continue my education as well. Because I love learning new things, it was a no brainer for me.

However, when the time came for me to begin the college application and admission process, my parents were of little assistance. There was no discussion of how to finance my education and they barely participated in the college shopping experience. There was some input from my older sister but that was limited since she no longer lived with us. This did not mean my parents did not care; they just did not know how to help me and

were struggling through their own life problems.

Because of my home situation, I turned to my high school guidance counselor. With a graduating class of more than 750 students, he gave me little assistance nor was he sensitive to the frustrations I dealt with at home. When I finally realized I was on my own, I applied to a few local schools. The only directive I got from my family was to stay close to home and study something that would give me a marketable skill. When I visited Hofstra during an admission event, I was immediately impressed with the campus (even back in the early 80s) and staff.

I was very excited to start college though a bit sad that I was not going away to school like most of my friends. However, I still remember sitting in one of my first psychology classes at Hofstra taught by Dr. Fred Cohn. He was so impressed by my performance in a class filled with juniors and seniors, and he encouraged me to pursue graduate studies regardless of the obstacles I might face. He made all the difference in the world for me that first semester. I decided then and there that I wanted to help college students in the same way he was encouraging me. So here I am 29 years later



Ellen Miller

(gulp) as associate dean of university advisement. I get to do what I love every day.

As a Hofstra adviser and a mother, I constantly walk a fine line between wanting to know everything about my son's academics to letting him just figure out things on his own. I am thrilled he is attending my alma mater and experiencing all that Hofstra has to offer.



# HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF PARENT AND FAMILY PROGRAMS

DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

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## FAMILY WEEKEND 2009 – OCTOBER 23 AND 24, 2009

### Hofstra's Fantastic Family Fest!

Hofstra students and their families are invited to attend Family Weekend, on Friday and Saturday, October 23 and 24, 2009. Activities include:

- ▶ The finale of *Hofstra Idol*
- ▶ Faculty model classes for parents
- ▶ Arboretum and gallery tours
- ▶ Football, soccer and field hockey games
- ▶ Hofstra's Cub Zone (for younger siblings)
- ▶ Family barbecue
- ▶ Student musical: *On the Town*
- ▶ Off-campus trips to a Broadway show, Metropolitan Museum of Art, or Phipps Mansion at Old Westbury Gardens on Long Island (additional cost)



Register online and view the complete Family Weekend schedule of events at [hofstra.edu/fw](http://hofstra.edu/fw). The cost for the weekend is \$85 per person, and \$55 for one day (free to Hofstra students and children 10 and under). The fee covers all events, sessions, game tickets, listed meals, and materials for the weekend, excluding off-campus trips. If you have questions, please call the Office of Parent and Family Programs at (516) 463-4698 or e-mail [parents@hofstra.edu](mailto:parents@hofstra.edu). The registration deadline is Thursday, October 15, 2009.

### OFFICE OF PARENT AND FAMILY PROGRAMS

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