Hundreds of music fans, among whom was the Chairman of our Board of Governors Prof. Alfred Tauber, came to hear the semester's end performance of the Music Department's students ensembles, which took place last week at the Dr. Reuven Hecht Arts Center. Performances included the University Choir, conducted by Dr. Tomer Heiseg, and the Ensemble for Mediterranean Music conducted by Prof. Taiseer Elias, among others. Other performances included the Music Department's Blues Ensemble, Recorders Ensemble, Ensembles for Spanish, Classical and Folk Music, as well as additional students and ensembles.

Within the framework of a first of its kind collaboration between the University and the Israel Oceanographic and Limnological Research institute, a festive cornerstone laying ceremony took place for the establishment of deep-sea research laboratories for the University's Helmsley Charitable Trust Mediterranean Sea Research Center. Within the collaborative framework, the University will build a lab for autonomous and remotely operated underwater research vehicles; an engineering and research pool; an optics lab that will deal with development and experimentation with underwater imaging systems; underwater acoustic laboratories that will deal, among others, with sonar systems; an underwater motion laboratory that will deal with the development of underwater motion bodies and systems; marine diving workshop and more. Prof. Zvi Ben-Avraham, who is leading the initiative and is Head of the Mediterranean Sea Research Center of Israel and Director of the Leon H. Charney School of Marine Sciences, noted that the combination of a research university and an oceanographic institute is the leading model in the world for marine research, and he was congratulatory on making this vision a reality.
Dr. Maya Benish-Weisman from the Department of Counseling and Human Development was a guest at a one of a kind event organized by the American Society of the University of Haifa which exposed University activity among the members of the Jewish community in Phoenix. Dozens of guests attended the event and heard Dr. Benish-Weisman describe her research dealing with factors influencing children's success or failure in their studies.

One cannot help but notice the new exhibit currently being displayed at the foyer on the ground floor of the University’s Main Building. The exhibit is a part of the Classmates for Coexistence program, an educational initiative that has been made possible through the generous donation of the Robert Bosch Foundation and the German Friends of the University of Haifa which strives to bring Arab and Jewish students closer through their studies, dialogue groups and social activities. At the end of the year, a delegation of leading and exceptional students will set out to Germany where they will participate in a ten day long summer camp that will focus on coexistence, pluralism and tolerance.

At a Reception in St. John’s Wood, hosted by British Friends of the University of Haifa Hon. President Lady Irene Hatter, the University announced a new academic collaboration with the prestigious Cambridge University School of Autism Research. Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, Director of the Autism Research Center, spoke about the latest developments in the field which emphasize language and communications skills and introduced the University of Haifa post-doctoral research fellow now working alongside him at Cambridge, Dr. Florina Uzefovsky to further progress this crucial work. Thanks to the encounter, a connection was made between Dr. Shimrit Ziv of Cambridge and Profs. Avi Sagi-Schwartz and Simone G. Shamay-Tsoory of the University of Haifa’s Department of Psychology, in an effort to create joint research in the field.

In answer to multiple requests from the crowd of users, raised in satisfaction surveys and petitions calling for advice counters, a new system has recently been launched to identify available public computer stations around the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Library. The system, developed by Tzachi Shusterman of the Library Information Systems Department, is being displayed to the visitors on a screen stationed at the lending counter at the entryway.

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A new study conducted by Prof. Oren Gazal-Ayal of the Faculty of Law in partnership with Prof. Guy Grossman of the University of Pennsylvania and two US researchers has found that an Arab defendant appealing his sentence has a better chance of getting leniency in his sentence if an Arab judge sits on the panel discussing the appeal. On the other hand, it is better for a Jewish defendant if the panel discussing his appeal is all Jewish and he has a better chance of succeeding if there is no Arab judge on the panel. The findings will soon be published in The American Journal of Political Science, one of the two most important political science journals in the world, and also the local Ha'aretz published the findings.

"Since King Abdullah's death in Saudi Arabia significant changes have been taking place inside the ruling family. Despite the new King Salman's desire to display stability and continuity to the throne, the Sudayris – the strong group in the family who were excluded during Abdullah's reign – have taken over most of the power centers in the country after his death," said Dr. Eran Segal of the Ezri Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies to the Jerusalem Post regarding the power struggles around Saudi rule following the death of King Abdullah.

"The cancelling of sanctions on Iran, especially in the area of energy, could cause tensions to surge with other energy producers, such as Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar," wrote Prof. Brenda Shaffer from the School of Political Science to The Washington Institute in light of the latest developments in Iran-US relations and Obama's speech in which he declared a change in policy.