Sharing Tsunami Relief Lessons
When Dr. D. Scott Smith arrived in post-tsunami Indonesia, he knew the conditions were ideal for a catastrophic outbreak of malaria . . .

Tsunami waves had traveled miles inland, blanketing the countryside with pools of stagnant, salinated water. Seasonal rains had diluted the salty puddles, creating the perfect breeding ground for the anopheline mosquitoes that carry the deadly malaria protozoan, Plasmodium falciparum.

Smith, who is Chief of Infectious Diseases at Kaiser Permanente Redwood City and a Stanford Human Biology lecturer, was among the first geographic medicine specialists sent to the regional capital of the Aceh Province. Under the direction of MENTOR-Initiative, a non-profit organization, this team’s goal was to prevent a widespread epidemic of malaria and dengue fever.

“As our military transport plane landed in Banda Aceh, we were hit by the magnitude of the problem,” says Smith. “The runway was piled high with relief supplies. Buildings were leveled, leaving a half million people homeless and exposed to the elements, and there were unidentified bodies still lying around.”

The relief team’s first task was to train Ministry of Health volunteers on mosquito control. Pesticides continued on page 2

Director’s Message

When a natural disaster the size of the Indonesian tsunami hits, the ripple effects are felt around the world. The complexity of coordinating relief supplies and aid workers to different countries and cultures is staggering.

Jeffrey Wine

Dealing with these types of challenges is where graduates of the Program in Human Biology excel. Our curriculum integrates the natural and social sciences, and applies them to the complex world in which we live. It teaches students how to take a holistic approach to issues, factoring in local culture, social policy, and politics, as well as the biological sciences.

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Tsunami

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were distributed, and teams of fumigators were sent out to spray each structure. Medical relief workers were taught to recognize the signs and symptoms of malaria and dengue fever. And drugs and diagnostic test kits were delivered to outlying regions.

The tsunami left over a half million homeless in Aceh Province, Indonesia.

Many of the traditional approaches to mosquito control were not particularly applicable in Indonesia, in the context of this disaster. For example, while distribution of insecticide-treated bed-nets might help prevent bites from the female anopheline mosquito, the vector for malaria, it wouldn’t work well against *Aedes aegypti*, the day-time feeding mosquito that carries the virus that causes dengue fever. Instead, the team focused on Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) and educational campaigns on how to prevent mosquito breeding in peridomestic water sources.

Smith notes that recent advances in communications technology were a real boon in this natural disaster. Satellite phones, portable computers, and memory sticks allowed relief workers to share maps and coordinate supply distribution, even with a breakdown of local communication infrastructure.

Smith feels that the prevention efforts of MENTOR-Initiative were a success. The anticipated epidemics never materialized, and there was only one severe malaria outbreak in Maulauboh, a town on the west coast. Smith adds, “The ironic thing about public health efforts are that when they work, you don’t hear about it in the press.”

Smith recently shared his tsunami experiences with Stanford students in his class, “Parasites & Pesticide: Infectious Public Health Challenges.” Attended primarily by Human Biology and Environmental Science majors, the course provides many students with their first exposure to careers in public health.

During this course, each student “adopts a parasite,” learning everything they can about a specific organism. Students then share their research with the class. Microbiology lab sessions complement the lectures; and parasite reports are posted on a class web site, making this information accessible to people around the world.

Smith also invites a number of public health officials to conduct guest lectures, building connections between students and the community. For example, Karen Smith, Napa County’s Tuberculosis Control Officer, spoke to the students about drug-resistant tuberculosis and local responses to the SARS outbreak. Chindy Peavy, Vector Ecologist at San Mateo County Mosquito Abatement District, lectured on entomology, and Beth Schultz, from SMCPH San Mateo County Public Health, illustrated the techniques for outbreak investigations with real examples from around the county.

“In this course, I try to give students an appreciation for diseases beyond our borders,” says Smith. “Because with the prevalence of international travel, diseases like SARS, HIV, and tuberculosis are just an airplane ride away. It’s crucial that we learn how to handle these growing threats.”

>>For more: [http://www.stanford.edu/class/humbio103/](http://www.stanford.edu/class/humbio103/)
Faculty News

Russell Fernald, the Benjamin Scott Crocker Professor of Human Biology, was jointly awarded the Rank Prize in opto-electronics for “work on compensation for chromatic defocus in lenses of vertebrates.” Established in 1972 by Lord and Lady Rank, the Rank prizes are awarded every two years in the fields of optoelectronics and nutrition. He shares the Rank Prize with Ronald Kröger in Sweden, Melanie Campbell in Canada, and Hans-Joachim Wagner in Germany.

Fernald’s research investigated the optics of animal eyes. Studying the African cichlid fish, Haplochromis burtoni, his team discovered that fish eye lenses use a carefully designed refractive index gradient to focus blue, red, and green light to a common location.

“Well-focused color images are thus created by a single lens, an accomplishment that had been thought to be impossible because of the laws of physics,” Fernald explained.

Robert Simoni, professor of Biological Sciences, was awarded the inaugural Donald Kennedy Endowed Professorship in recognition of scholarly achievement and departmental leadership. Donald Kennedy, the namesake of the chair and the founder of the Program in Human Biology, began teaching at Stanford in 1960. He was the president of the University from 1980 to 1992. Kennedy is currently working at the Stanford Institute for International Studies, where he co-directs the Environmental Studies Program. He is also editor-in-chief of Science magazine.

William H. Durham, the Bing Professor in Human Biology and former director of the Program in Human Biology, was named the Jerry Yang and Akkiko Yamazaki University Fellow in Undergraduate Education. Durham is known for uniting biological and cultural anthropological theory. His book Coevolution: Genes, Culture and Human Diversity, has been described as one of the most important works of theory ever written by an anthropologist.

H. Craig Heller was named as a Bass University Fellow in Undergraduate Education, joining the ranks of fellow Human Biology professors Russell Fernald and William Durham. Eight university professors were chosen for the honor, which recognizes faculty members who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to teaching and mentoring undergraduate students. Heller is the Lokey/Business Wire Professor of Biological Sciences and Human Biology in the School of Humanities and Sciences. He is a former Bing Professor of Human Biology and received the Walter J. Gores Award for Excellence in Teaching. Professor Heller does research in the neurobiology of sleep and circadian rhythms, in addition to his work on exercise physiology. §
Peac e Corps
Diary
From 2002-2004, Silvia Chiang (BA ’02) served in the Peace Corps in two small towns located in the Peruvian Andes. Here are some excerpts from her letters to home.

Road to Chiquián

I was the twenty-third passenger in a 16-passenger van riding up to Chiquián. I sat on a giant sack of rocks, so close to the van’s sliding door that I had to twist my body so that my legs would fit in the vertical space above the step. For the 45-minute ride, I sat with my knees and calves pushed up against the door, my forehead plastered against the window, and my behind pressed down against the pointed edges of the rocks.

After five minutes of transportation hell, we drove into view of the Huayhuash Mountains. The peaks glistened like giant dragon’s teeth, jutting into the sky against a red-orange sunset. As the van snaked its way up the mountain, I alternated between facing the Huayhuash and having my back towards them. With each passing switchback, the colors of the sky changed, casting the mountains with a different mood. The palette of the sky dimmed from the warm red-orange to a dramatic red-violet and, finally, to a dark steel blue.

Meanwhile, the woman wedged in next to me kept complaining, in a good-natured way, that her feet were falling asleep. Then after awhile, she told me that she couldn’t feel her feet anymore.

But the chameleon-like beauty of the Huayhuash Mountains continued to amaze me, and the trip was well worth the discomfort.

My Month Anniversary

Today is the one-month anniversary of my arrival in Chiquián, a town of 5,000 residents located about six hours north of Lima. My main job with the Peace Corps is to help the local health promoters educate the townspeople about better hygiene and nutrition. The local health post staff would like me to start giving talks, or charlas, to teach the community about health practices. Since most of my three-month Peace Corps training centered on charla-giving skills, I feel fairly confident in helping them with this goal.

In Carcas, we’re working to improve sanitation. They don’t have latrines, so townspeople urinate in chamber pots, then dump them on the ground. When they have to do “number two,” they scurry down to an isolated patch of riverbank. Animals run loose inside houses, and no great effort is made to clean up the animal feces on the dirt paths that crisscross through town. Garbage bins have been built, but the community does not
use them; instead, they pile up their trash in a field near the river.

I am beginning a campaign to convince the community to build public latrines and to use trash cans instead of dumping their trash in fields. Unfortunately, there are a lot of hurdles to overcome with both of these projects. The volunteers don’t always show up to our meetings, and the townspeople don’t appear particularly motivated to change their habits.

Mondongo Soup

This afternoon, while hiking up the mountain to Chiquián from Carcas, a family eating lunch by the road invited me to join them and offered me some delicious mondongo soup. After a few cautious sips, I asked what the main ingredient was and then nearly turned green when I heard the answer – sheep intestines. A few more sips later, I complimented the mother on her wonderful cooking, thanked her for her generosity, and expressed my disappointment that unfortunately I couldn’t eat any more because I felt so full.

Meeting el Presidente

Today I’m in Lima for a Peace Corps conference. The American ambassador and his wife invited us to their home for a delicious buffet lunch. The guest list included former Peace Corps volunteers and the president of Peru, Alejandro Toledo, a Stanford graduate.

President Toledo spoke about his admiration for the different perspective that Peace Corps service gives his people. He took the time to ask each of us where we were living and how we were enjoying our stay in his country.

So far my Peace Corps experience has been extremely challenging. Two years seems like forever to be away from the comforts of familiar food, a heater (it gets pretty cold at 3,300 meters), hot showers, and television. I often wake up in the middle of the night because my bug bites itch so much. So I try to take things day by day.

I’ve already given two educational talks about self-esteem—one to a group of madres cuidadores (day-care nannies) and one to a group of new and expectant mothers. I also taught my first English class yesterday to some of the staff in the health center, plus a few others. We spent a good amount of time trying to pronounce “th,” which is difficult for Spanish speakers. I’m also conducting a survey to assess the health knowledge of local women, so we can figure out where to fill in.

On Friday I’ll teach another nutrition lesson to some school kids, and then on Sunday it’s back to Carcas for a lesson about vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, calcium, and iodine. The women in Carcas also want me to teach them how to cook some healthy dishes. Since the Peace Corps is theoretically about sustainable development, I’ll train the local health promoters to give these health lessons. In theory, this training will last the two years I’m here, so that when I’m gone, they will be able to give the lessons themselves.

I guess I’m doing all right now. I didn’t sign up for this job because I thought it would be easy. At least I’m eating better, and I’m more immune to the cold. (There have been nights when I’ve had to sleep in my 15-degree, goose-down sleeping bag with four wool blankets layered on top).
Parikh Wins Deans’ Award for Hormone Research

Victoria Parikh, a senior in the Program in Human Biology, was one of ten undergraduates awarded the 2005 Deans’ Award for Academic Accomplishment. The award, now in its 18th year, is given to undergraduates for outstanding academic work. Nominations are submitted by faculty and staff members who work closely with undergraduates in their academic endeavors. Selection is made by a committee established by the deans of the three schools that offer undergraduate degrees: Earth Sciences, Engineering, and Humanities and Sciences.

Parikh was honored for her work on the role of endocrinological responses in behavioral coping strategies. Through the HB-REX program (see sidebar), Victoria joined the laboratory of Professor Russell Fernald in her sophomore year, learning a wide variety of techniques to answer questions about how the internal physiological state and the external environment interact to produce the social status in the fish, *Haplochromis burtoni*.

In collaboration with Dr. Tricia Clement, Parikh linked endocrinological processes to behavior. In this study, she found that when a fish is socially challenged by a video image of another fish, there is a measurable change in the fish’s circulating hormones.

Victoria presented her work at two national meetings and is co-author of a paper published in March 2005 in the leading journal in this field, *Hormones and Behavior*. She is the first author in another paper that has been submitted. She is now completing her honors research measuring the levels of gene expression in response to social challenges.

Professor Fernald writes: “She is one of the top three honors researchers I have had the pleasure of advising. Vicki has been working at the level of a graduate student for some time and richly deserves a Deans’ Award as recognition of her initiative and success.”

What is HB-REX?

The Human Biology Research Exploration (HB-REX) program allows some 40 Human Biology majors to begin research early in their undergraduate careers under close faculty mentorship. Associate Professor Anne Fernald, the program director, leads the effort to find mentors, to secure funding, and to match interested sophomore students with summer research projects. This unique opportunity allows undergraduates to immerse themselves in a subject, gaining real world experience in the process of inquiry, investigation, and discovery that is at the heart of Stanford’s Program in Human Biology.

At the end of their projects, HB-REX participants share their research results with the Stanford community. Last year two HB-REX participants were awarded Stanford’s Firestone Medal for Excellence in Undergraduate Research. The first was Kara Elizabeth Bischoff for her research on “Asx Maintains Anterior-Posterior Fate in the Drosophila Wing Through Regulation of Ubx.” and the second was Yohko Murakami, on “Children’s Sensitivity to the Expertise of the Speaker When Learning New Words: A Cross-Cultural Study.”
Research Report: Exploring Emotional Regulation in Children

Kateri McRae (Human Biology and Drama ’02) is working on a brain imaging project exploring how children develop the ability to control their emotions. The project, headed by John Gabrieli and James Gross (Department of Psychology at Stanford) and Kevin Ochsner (Department of Psychology at Columbia University) is using fMRI (functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) to answer questions about the development of an important interpersonal skill: emotion regulation.

No one is surprised to see an infant burst into tears when hungry, or to see a toddler have a temper tantrum, but such unregulated displays of emotion are rare in adults. What parts of the brain must develop to enable such control? One key brain region is the prefrontal cortex, which doesn’t fully mature until early adulthood, and has been found to be crucial in regulating emotional responses in adults. McRae and the rest of the team are curious about whether children use the prefrontal cortex to the same extent (or as effectively) as adults, when attempting to control their emotional reactions.

The current study focuses on the development of this ability in healthy children ages eight and older, using slides to elicit emotion, and instructions that direct children to decrease the emotions they feel. Initial findings suggest intriguing age differences in emotion regulation ability. Because many psychological disorders involve a deficit in emotion regulation skills, future studies in this research program will include children and adults with particular difficulty regulating their emotions.

McRae first paired with Gross, Gabrieli, Gross, and Ochsner in 2001 when she began to work on her Human Biology honors thesis.

“The honors thesis was an incredible introduction to the world of neuroimaging,” McRae says. “I was exposed to the research process from start to finish, and was able to contribute to each phase of the project – which is rare in an undergraduate research experience.”

More important than acquiring the data acquisition skills she now uses on the project, McRae credits the Human Biology program with instilling in her the critical thinking that is necessary for good science.

“When you’re using a complex method like fMRI, it is necessary to carefully examine each of the links between the initial hypothesis and the final conclusions, in order to be sure that the science is as strong as possible.”

For details on this or related projects, contact Kateri McRae at kateri@stanford.edu.

Corrections
Our apologies for omitting Nathan Seldon’s (’86) Dinkelspiel Award in our last newsletter. Selden adds, “HumBio has profoundly shaped my professional career and touched my life in so many ways.”
Alumni News

Srinivasan Joins Haas Center

Alumna Srija Srinivasan has been appointed associate director of the Haas Center for Public Service, a new position that was created to enhance the center’s operations and increase its effectiveness in linking the public service of Stanford students with academic programs.

Srinivasan, who received from Stanford a bachelor’s degree in human biology (1990) and an MBA (1995), was selected following a nationwide search. She has more than a decade of public service experience, including leadership roles in government, nonprofit and philanthropic organizations.

She also holds a Certificate in Public Management from the Graduate School of Business, where she was presented with the Ernest C. Arbuckle Award for her work within the school. After receiving her MBA, she served as a John Gardner Public Service Fellow in Washington, D.C., at the U.S. General Accounting Office.

Most recently, she served as a program officer at Peninsula Community Foundation, helping direct more than $9 million in grants to nonprofits serving the Peninsula and Silicon Valley.

The associate director position is part of a new leadership model for the center, now in its 20th year. According to the center’s director, Professor Len Orteiano, “The newly created associate director position will allow us to enhance the center’s operations and increase its effectiveness in linking the public service of Stanford students with their academic programs.”

Comings & Goings

Henry C. Tung, M.D. was named corporate vice president of Global Surgical at Bausch & Lomb.

Rebecca A. Klein was named managing partner of the national law firm of Loeffler Tuggey Pau-erstein Rosenthal LLP’s Austin office.

Lloyd Leanse was named vice president of business development and sales at GridIron Software, a developer of grid computing solutions for desktop software applications.

Director’s Message

Our lecturers come from many different backgrounds. We offer an outstanding education in human evolution, behavior, physiology, nutrition, neuroscience, environmental and health policy, and pre-medical training. Collectively this provides students with a knowledge base and set of problem-solving tools that will help our society cope with disasters yet to come – from climate change to emerging diseases to global healthcare.
Margaret “Minx” Fuller to Fill Reed-Hodgson Chair

Margaret T. Fuller, PhD, professor of developmental biology and of genetics, has been named to the Reed-Hodgson Professorship in Human Biology. This year Fuller coordinated the Cell and Developmental Biology module of the Human Biology Core.

Fuller’s research investigates the mechanisms that regulate and mediate male gamete differentiation using the laboratory fruit fly Drosophila as a model system. A central focus of her work also concerns the mechanisms that regulate stem cell behavior. She is also chair of the Department of Developmental Biology.

Prior to joining Stanford in 1990, Fuller was a member of the University of Colorado faculty. She received a PhD in microbiology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and then trained as a postdoctoral fellow in developmental genetics at Indiana University.

The Reed-Hodgson chair was established in 1973, through a gift from the late Richard Hodgson and his wife, Geraldine Coursen Reed, together with funds from a Ford Foundation grant to the Human Biology program.

Hodgson, who died in 2000, served as a corporate senior vice president of the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. until 1980. He was also a co-founder and director of Intel Corp. as well as several other technology companies. He received an AB in engineering from Stanford in 1937, and his wife, Geraldine, received an AB in philosophy from Stanford in 1938. The couple were strong supporters of Stanford, and other members of their family are also Stanford alums.

The Reed-Hodgson chair is the second to be established in the interdisciplinary Human Biology Program, which draws together six departments: biology, sociology, psychology, psychiatry, genetics and pediatrics and human development. §

Schulman named Rhodes Scholar

Sarah B. Schulman, a senior majoring in human biology and education policy, was one of 32 American students chosen as a 2005 Rhodes Scholar. She will enter the University of Oxford in England in October 2005.

Scholars were selected from 904 applicants, who were endorsed by 341 colleges and universities. The Rhodes Scholarships were created in 1902 by the Will of Cecil Rhodes, British philanthropist and colonial pioneer.

Since coming to Stanford, Schulman has taken an intense interest in clinical and social-science research. She joined the Medical School’s Division of Adolescent Medicine to work as a research assistant and study coordinator. And she spent last summer as a research assistant in the Office of the Assistant Surgeon General in Washington, D.C.

She has also won awards for her work in biology and received national recognition from the American Cancer Society. She founded a national nonprofit consulting firm, and was named the Young Philanthropist of the Year by the National Fundraising Executives.

At Oxford, Schulman plans to work towards a D.Phil. in Comparative Social Policy. §


Teaching Science in the Inner City

When Emily Bobel graduated from Stanford’s Program in Human Biology ('03), she faced a difficult career decision – to take a lucrative job at a pharmaceutical company or to pursue her passion for teaching by joining Teach for America.

“The teaching position sounded ten times more challenging and fulfilling than the office job, so I took it,” says Bobel, who is currently teaching eighth grade science in New York City.

Teach for America (TFA) is a non-profit program that sends promising new graduates to teach for two years in some of the poorest rural and urban schools. Accepting only about 13% of its applicants, TFA looks for new graduates with strong academic and leadership qualities. New recruits receive five-weeks of intensive training to prepare for placement. Then in the fall, each TFA teacher is paid a beginning teacher’s wage, plus a $4,725-a-year scholarship for graduate studies.

Bobel chose to work at the Star Academy Middle School (MS-201), located in an industrial area of the South Bronx. It’s a “Title I” school, where more than 98% of students qualify for the free school lunch program.

She started under a difficult set of circumstances. Her incoming 175 students missed most of the seventh grade science curriculum, because their science teacher quit the first month of school. This left the class under the tutelage of a substitute teacher with no science background.

“I knew these students would have a difficult time passing the competitive New York City high school entrance exams without 7th grade science,” says Bobel, “so I got the principal’s permission to add life sciences into their curriculum.”

Recognizing the challenge of making earth sciences relevant in an urban environment, Bobel borrowed the module approach used in the Human Biology Core, teaching units on health issues applicable to the community setting, such as HIV and substance abuse.

For example, she paired a module on the brain with a unit on how drugs affect memory and cognitive functions. Drawing on her interdisciplinary Human Biology background, she designed a unit on cholera that complemented the social studies curriculum.

Bobel also signed her class up for the U.S. Department of Energy’s Minority Outreach Initiative and orchestrated a class visit by Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, David Garman. In preparation for the visit, Bobel’s students built fuel-efficient model cars and created posters on hydrogen fuel cells.

During his visit, Garman discussed the department’s vision for hydrogen-powered cars and the need for the U.S. to reduce dependence on foreign petroleum. He also brainstormed with the students on what it would take to market these cars to American consumers. Students, using their own model cars as examples, proposed that manufacturers make these cars “look cool.”

In addition to teaching full time, Bobel is pursuing a Master’s of Science in Education through online and summer classes. Like
Storey House Residents Get a Clue

It was a dark and stormy night at Storey House, a stately white mansion on Stanford’s tree-lined Mayfield Ave. In the shadowy light of the entryway, beyond a ribbon of crime scene tape, visitors could see the outline of a body on the stairs. There was an oddly placed candlestick in the Billiard Room. And a mysterious note tacked up on the wall that said, “Professor Plum will never get tenure.” All of which raised the question, “Whodunit?”

“It all started when the Stanford channel broadcast a CSI marathon,” said Devon McGee, a HumBio junior and Storey House resident. “Before long, most of the residents were huddled around the TV, hooked on this forensics show. And when it came time to decide on an academic focus for residents of the house, forensic science seemed to be a popular choice.”

Storey House is the Stanford “theme house” that 45 students, mostly Human Biology majors, call home. Located on the prestigious “Row,” next to the Braun Music Building, it’s where students with a shared passion for human biology sleep, study, hang out, and dine.

“The great thing about this house is that it self-selects for people who are curious by nature and who are attracted to the interdisciplinary aspects of Human Biology,” says Tyler Dumm, a Hum-Bio senior.

Each year, residents organize in-house seminars related to Human Biology. Past sessions have covered stem cell research, HIV/AIDS cocktails, Romanian gypsies, and African exploration. In addition, students must deliver at least one academic presentation to residents during the year. They also invite inspirational speakers, such as Sherri Fink, the humanitarian physician and author of War Hospital.

As part of their exploration into forensic science, residents visited the Coroner’s office to observe an autopsy, watched a lab simulation of forensic science in action, and learned how anthropologists use forensic science to unearth clues on ancient cultures. They also heard from a district attorney about the details of a local murder investigation and listened to a documentary producer talk about infamous failures in forensics science.

Laura Fowler, a student who lived in Storey House from 2002 to 2003, added, “Storey House is a great asset to the Human Biology Program. It inspires students and increases the opportunity for academic success.”

Teaching Science continued from page 10

most of the Teach for America participants, she anticipates that she’ll stay in education for the next few years.

While teaching in an inner-city school can sometimes be frustrating, Bobel says, “When I can take a group of kids who’ve never been exposed to science, and show them the world in a new way, sharing those little moments of discovery, then I know I’m really making a difference.”

Anna Magdalena West ('02)

>>For more:
Teach for America
http://www.teachforamerica.org/

Emily Bobel, teaching in the Bronx
Human Biology Donors List
Jan. 2003-May 2005

On behalf of everyone involved in the Human Biology Program, we thank these valued donors for their continued generosity. Their support helps Human Biology and the School of Humanities and Sciences attract the best students and faculty available.

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Our alumni, students, and faculty are a community focused on making a difference in the world. Your contributions to our research, education, people, and programs help make Human Biology graduates a driving force in tackling the many problems facing humanity. You can help build on this tradition with contributions and the sharing of your inspirational stories. Contributions: Linda Barghi lindab@stanford.edu

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