

**For release May 14, 2008**

**Contact**

Kirsten Atik  
Public Information Specialist  
Undergraduate Academic Affairs  
206-221-6130  
[katik@u.washington.edu](mailto:katik@u.washington.edu)

**Third UW Common Book Focuses on Immigration**

*UW freshmen to read *The Devil's Highway**

**SEATTLE**—*The Devil's Highway: A True Story* by Luis Alberto Urrea has been selected as the third UW Common Book by the University of Washington's Undergraduate Academic Affairs. The UW Common Book project aims to introduce freshmen to the University's academic community through a common reading experience and opportunities to engage in campus discussions and activities around the book.

*The Devil's Highway: A True Story* follows 26 men who in May 2001 attempted to cross the Mexican border into the desert of southern Arizona, a landscape dubbed the Devil's Highway. Of the 26, only 12 men survive. Through this reporting, Urrea tells the complex story of life on the US border, bringing humanity both to those who enforce border policies and those who attempt to enter the United States. UW sophomore Hang Nguyen says, "Urrea elegantly weaves immigration history into a contemporary journey of striving men. Prepare yourself to endure the thirst, desperation and heat as you embark on Urrea's journey."

Luis Alberto Urrea is a highly acclaimed writer of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. He is the recipient of a Lannan Literary Award, an American Book Award, a Western States Book Award, and a Colorado Book Award, and he has been inducted into the Latino Literary Hall of Fame. *The Devil's Highway* was a finalist for the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction. Currently a professor at the University of Illinois, Chicago, Urrea has also taught at Harvard and University of Southwestern Louisiana at Lafayette among other institutions. His most recent book is the novel *The Hummingbird's Daughter*.

"The UW Common Book is about challenging freshmen to examine important subjects and build community around significant issues," says Ed Taylor, Dean and Vice Provost of Undergraduate Academic Affairs, the department overseeing the UW Common Book project. "Immigration stands among the significant matters that our community and world will face. We look forward to engaging students with the University of Washington's substantial teaching and research talent around these complex issues."

Taylor and Jill McKinstry, director of Odegaard Undergraduate Library, co-chaired a selection committee of 15 UW faculty, students, and administrators representing varied disciplines and units on campus.

Drawing from agreed upon criteria for choosing a book that would develop community focused on intellectual inquiry, the committee recommended *The Devil's Highway* from a narrowed list of more than 20 selections.

"This book is a masterful piece of investigative journalism," says McKinstry. "Using a wide range of rhetorical skills, Urrea exposes the complexities of immigration in the United States today in a very direct way. We hope that reading this work will stimulate discussion among the freshman and the community and bring a human perspective to the difficult issues of immigration policy and enforcement."

Students will receive the book at their summer advising and orientation session with the expectation that they read it before fall quarter begins September 24. The exact number of books to be handed out depends on final UW admission numbers. Last year, more than 5,400 freshmen received books.

### **About the UW Common Book**

Undergraduate Academic Affairs initiated the UW Common Book in 2006 to welcome new students to the University's intellectual community and to be a catalyst for engaging in experiential learning. Centered in Undergraduate Academic Affairs at the UW Seattle campus, UW Bothell and Tacoma may also choose to incorporate the book into their campus curriculum. The UW Common Book is implemented with the partnership and support of the University Libraries, University Bookstore, and UW Alumni Association.

#### Selection history

2006: *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World* by Tracy Kidder

2007: *Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change* by Elizabeth Kolbert

2008: *The Devil's Highway: A True Story* by Luis Alberto Urrea

### **About Undergraduate Academic Affairs**

Undergraduate Academic Affairs (UAA) shapes, advances, and stewards a world-class undergraduate academic experience for students at the University of Washington. We deepen and enrich the learning experience for all undergraduates, recognizing and supporting the unique learning path of each individual student and the commitment of each academic program to excellence in teaching and learning. The programs UAA provides administrative support and oversight for include: the University's Honors Program, Center for Experiential Learning, and the Teaching Academy.

###