

UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM UPDATE

Fall 2010 Edition

Greetings from the Honors Office:

From the Interim Director:



The students, faculty, and staff affiliated with the University Honors Program have been extremely busy this semester.

First, in consultation with the Provost, we have added a number of new members to the Honors Advisory Board (HAB), so that each of the colleges is represented by three members. Please welcome the following members: Dr. Summer Arrigo-Nelson (Eberly College of Science and Technology), Dr. Paul Hettler (Eberly College of Science and Technology) Dr. Craig Fox (College of Liberal Arts), and Dr. Ayanna Lyles (College of Education and Human Services).

Also in the realm of personnel, we have two active search committees. The first, chaired by Dr. Gregg Gould, is in the midst of the search for our permanent Honors Director. The second, which I am chairing, is still collecting C.V.'s and other pertinent information in hopes of landing our first even Honors Composition Postdoc. If you know of anyone eligible for this position, please do not hesitate to recommend them to us.

Second, a number of our Honors students have already gone on trips this semester. Dr. Aune took nine of our students to the National Collegiate Honors Conference in Kansas City. Two of our students – Desiree Helterbran and Sarah Legerski – presented posters at the conference. The remainder drew on their conference experiences to create a variety of program-related materials including a video record, a report on conference planning strategies, and a guide for future attendees of NCHC.

Dr. Kelton Edmonds also took 14 Honors students on the fall excursion in association with HON 340: The 1960s. The excursion focused on the Civil Rights Movement in the South. Students went to Greensboro, Atlanta, and Birmingham. Among the places that they visited were North Carolina A&T, the site of the first sit-in movement; the Birmingham Civil Rights Center and Museum; the 16th Street Baptist Church; the International Civil Rights Center and Museum; and the Martin Luther King Museum and Memorial.

In addition, Miriah O'Connor and Kathryn McAndrew earned scholarships to attend the PASSHE 2011 Honors Trip to Bermuda. Alana Lacey and Austin Good were selected as alternates. All of the portfolios were truly exceptional, and the sub-committee – Dr. Arrigo-Nelson, Dr. Aune, and myself – had a difficult time ranking the candidates.

(continued)

UHP Update Staff:

Berajah Jayne
Writer

Caroline Kibbe
Writer

Rachael Merlo
Writer

Matthew Warren
Editor/Writer

We're always looking for fresh writers, ideas, and photographers! If you would like to join the UHP Update Team, contact Kim at Orslene@calu.edu!

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Looking forward to next semester, we sent out the Intersections “Call for Papers” earlier this month for the April 15th undergraduate research conference at Cal U that we will co-host with Robert Morris University. Please plan to present at the conference and/or help organize it. Nearly a dozen students also submitted proposals for the National Collegiate Undergraduate Research conference scheduled for March 30th to April 2nd at Ithaca College in upstate New York. We should know by early next year how many of our students will be attending.

Third, the Student Honors Advisory Board (SHAB) is actively functioning. Our students held successful elections earlier this month. Going forward, we hope that the SHAB will have increased participation and input into HAB functions, student social events, conference planning, and program visibility.

Fourth, we held our annual Honors Open House on Saturday, November 13th. Nearly 100 guests attended. This year we adjusted the focus of the Open House so that it would focus on our students, their experiences and accomplishments. I want to specifically thank Jeanne DiNovis, Ashlyn Koval, Matthew Warren, and Bridget Rogan for representing our program via a student panel and the SHAB president, Rachael Merlo for coordinating the

afternoon “Meet and Greet”. In addition, I owe many thanks to the plethora of honors students who went to lunch with our guests, attended the “Meet and Greet,” and opened their rooms up for residence hall tours. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Lyles, Dr. Arrigo-Nelson, Dr. Aune, Dr. Hug, and Dr. Gill for volunteering their Saturday to spend time with our prospective students and their families.

Finally, in the realm of equipment and infrastructure, the Honors Program has just been blessed with a new set of computers (much, much faster than the old ones) as well as some new laptops. In addition, Dr. Aune and I met with Cal U’s architects and engineers to discuss some needed renovations to the Honors office area. These renovations are aimed at making the area more student friendly and providing our commuter students with some additional resources.

As I promised last spring, I will continue to be a good steward of the program and sincerely look forward to working with each and every one of you and serving you in the best manner possible. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at honors@calu.edu or 724-938-4535. Until then, *Appetamus communiter ad futurum* (Let us strive for the future together)!

From the Interim Assistant Director:

Students new to the program have heard about the hedgehog and the fox. For those of you who have not, the philosopher Isaiah Berlin used the hedgehog/fox metaphor to describe two different ways of understanding the world. Berlin was interested in comparing the novelists Leo Tolstoy (fox) with Fyodor Dostoevsky (hedgehog). The metaphor, which he adapted from the Greek poet Archilochus, roughly suggests that the hedgehog knows one big thing while the fox knows many little things. The next question is: which are you? Stop by my office door to see a list of famous foxes and hedgehogs. In the future, keep an eye out for a quiz that will reveal which you are.

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From the Honors Secretary:

Hello everyone! My name is Kim Orslene. I'm happy to say that I have been the Honors Program Secretary for the past 12 years at Cal U and have experienced a lot of changes since I started working here in 1998. I have been blessed with the opportunity of working with such terrific students, faculty and staff! Our Honors Program has so much to offer our Honors students so, please always take the time to get involved in your UHP. I am, of course, always eager and ready to help our Honors Students with any questions, problems or concerns.

We are encouraging all of you to stop by our offices and get acquainted with our facilities, faculty, students and staff. I'm also up for a visit, if you ever want to stop by the UHP offices. We are located in Residence Hall A, Rooms 171, 172 and 169.

Warmest Regards☺!

Kim Orslene
Orslene@calu.edu
Honors Program Secretary

Honors Work-Study Students

We're your first line of information for the Honors Program. Got a problem with the program? Ask us first! We're always available to help, so stop by the desks in the office with your questions. If we can't answer it, we'll find someone who can.



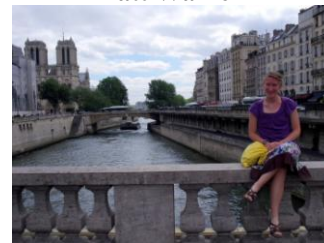
Rachael Merlo



Bridget Rogan



Matt Warren



Laurie Hall



Amanda Wilson and Ashlyn Koval

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An Update on the Student Honors Advisory Board (SHAB)

By: Rachael Merlo

For those readers who do not know, SHAB, or the Student Honors Advisory Board, was started again this semester. So far, we have been very busy laying down the logistics of the Board, but we now have all of our members, officers, and have ratified a constitution. That being said, we still have a long way to go.

There are many projects that we have begun to work on that we hope will make a better Honors community for our students. A committee has been started on organizing social events, and we hope to hold our first event early next semester. In addition, we will soon be working closely with the Honors Advisory Board to make changes to the program that will benefit students. We are also working on spending money on the Honors' Library, creating a fund for honors organizations on campus that do not receive SAI funding, setting up a mentoring program inside the Honors program, and helping to organize the Intersections Conference in the Spring.

Overall, we are very busy! We have a lot to accomplish, but I am confident that we can accomplish our goals and make a better Honors Program!

Interested in joining the SHAB? Contact Rachael Merlo via e-mail at MER0989@calu.edu for information on how you can help with the SHAB.

Thesis Pieces: Changes in the Capstone Course

By: Berajah Jayne

From day one in the Honors program, students hear rumors of their eventual fate. Information on the dreaded eventuality known only as the ominous "Honors Thesis Project" is usually given in the form of grimaces, allusions to hanging, and short yelps followed by retreating footsteps. Some people simply collapse at a mention of it, others suffer from ulcers, and, in some unrecorded cases, there has been mention of cardiac arrest.

Dr. Craig Fox, a recent and welcome addition to the Honors team, hopes to put a stop to this madness. Since Philosophy is his area of expertise, he understands a thing or two about mindset and plans to change a few conceptions about the course to put an ease on the acquisition of stress while maintaining the quality of student projects.

Thesis is taken by a variety of majors with a multitude of talents, so setting limits is a difficult thing to do. Dr. Fox hopes that he can make things less open-ended while maintaining the freedom that defines the Honors program.

He hopes to institute a clearer list of instructions that outline exactly what is expected; hopefully, raising awareness of the specifications that need to be met will reduce stress during the production of the project.

Though things may be changing a little, the spirit of the course will remain the same; Dr. Fox hopes to, above all, reduce the intimidation factor. Narrowing things down can be comforting, but he understands that too many limits won't do anyone any good, and wishes to keep the feel of the program responsive, as opposed to imposing.

Dr. Fox's advice, to no one's surprise, is that students take philosophy classes; thinking is key to creation, and nothing teaches you to think in so many ways like a good dose of philosophy. And he's not worried, after all, the student work that he's seen so far has been nothing but reassuring, and he knows that no matter what the course looks like, the students will always be capable of great things.

A Time for Talk, a Talk of Time

By Caroline Kibbe

This coming spring Dr. Swarn Gill will be teaching an honors class on Time. Well, time is a very broad idea so what is the class going to focus on specifically? This course intends to look at the evolution of time from being cyclical to its current widely-accepted form, linear. It will address how our thinking is affected by how we measure time. The class will progress to understanding time and why it seems to be linear as opposed to the old cyclical view where they looked at time in a cycle of seasons.

The class will be taught based around two ways of looking at time: the scientific evolution of time and the increasing accuracy of time measurement and the philosophical. Why is the cyclical view not popular with some societies? Is there a connection between time measurement and discoveries of the macro and micro worlds around us through telescopes and microscopes? It will bring into focus a form of measurement that does not really exist, but that our society takes for granted. In the class students will

develop a new system for telling time and discuss the impacts a new system would have on society. Students entering the class are expected to be creative and have initiative. Also, students must be willing to shed their preconceived notions about how time works and expand their mind to allow for new ideas.

Dr. Gill was approached by the honors department and asked to teach a class about whatever he was interested in. He chose to not focus on his main subject – meteorology – and instead use this class as an opportunity to explore himself with his fascination for time. He's really excited about the message he is trying to get out through the class and hopes his passion for learning will be evident. Dr. Gill's usual subjects are filled with a lot of uncontested theories and he plans to use the course to discuss more controversial topics than his other courses usually do. Dr. Gill believes a person should "never stop learning."

NCHC Trip Report:

"We're Not in Kansas anymore. No, really. We're in Missouri."

By: Matt Warren

From October 20th to the 24th, Dr. Aune and nine student representatives of the Honors Program attended the National Collegiate Honors Council conference in Kansas City, Missouri. The theme, "Rhythms and Currents," focused on music, and was an appropriate theme in a city so famous for its jazz. It was a unique and wonderful experience, both in terms of the conference and the city itself, and there was always something new to explore. These are the highlights of the trip.

"Hey, guys, look! They've got Tornado Shelters in the airport!"

It was clear that many of us had never been to the Midwest before, and the first three or so hours of the journey involved shocked comments about the lack of hills and the tornado

shelters in different places. Being able to look out over the flat land and see so much further than anywhere in Pennsylvania was cool enough; being able to see approaching rain showers and storms up to half an hour before they hit us was even cooler. And that was just the surroundings.

The city itself garnered a lot of praise from the Cal students, commenting on how clean and inviting it was. Even those who didn't like cities agreed that Kansas City was a clean, safe-looking city throughout, though things did have a penchant for closing early during the week.

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“Some of you might get a little lost – That’s terrific!”

The main presenters at this conference were Desiree Helterbran and Sarah Legerski, both of whom presented posters at the second of two poster sessions at the conference. For those of you who don’t know what a poster session is (or, like me, had the wrong idea), a poster session involves everyone setting their posters up in a huge room and then having people walk around and ask questions about them. As both Desiree and Sarah can attest to, you get all types of people asking questions, from curious, uninformed passers-by to conference organizers to experts in the field of whatever the poster was on. Even though the theme of the conference centered on music, the variety of subjects represented by the posters was absolutely staggering. Here’s just a small sample of the subjects covered by at least one poster I, personally, saw while there: forest preservation, gender pay gaps, Walt Whitman, cancer treatments, courses of Rome, Gettysburg, Joan of Arc, Lady Gaga, and restaurant planning. From what I’ve seen at this conference, my suggestion to any student who wants to present, but may not be ready to give a paper in front of an entire group, may consider doing a poster presentation, since you’re often only “presenting” in front of a small group of a dozen or less people at one time, and you can get a large amount of suggestions in a relatively short amount of time.



Sarah (above) and Desiree (below) present at the conference.



Though Sarah and Desiree were the stars of our trip, we all got a chance to participate in the City As Text session. The basis of City of Text was to mix everyone up with people from other schools and all over the country and then send them out to various parts of Kansas City, to meet the locals, to explore, talk to strangers, and, as organizer Bernice put it during the intro, to get a little bit lost. It was a unique and exciting way to experience a part of the city that we may have otherwise not seen during our short stay in Kansas City. Students at the conference went to almost a dozen different locations, including the World War I museum, the Toy and Miniature Museum, a walking tour of Kansas City’s famous fountains, Union Station and the Freight District, 18th and Vine District, the Guadalupe Center, and other sections of Kansas City. I, personally, explored the Crossroad Art District and spent the afternoon visiting small, independent studios, clothing designers, and galleries, seeing passionate artists working hard at what they loved to preserve their struggling sector of their city. The main point everyone took away from Kansas City is that there was much more to see than could possibly be seen in the short five days we were there.

“Did you memorize our map, Matthew? Can you lead us to dinner?” “Wait, what?”

As is the standard with any Honors trip, nightly dinners were paid for by the university. And, as per usual, the restaurants we ate at were some of the best Kansas City had to offer: a steakhouse, a swanky restaurant with a piano man, a Mexican restaurant, and a unique Mediterranean themed restaurant that served family-sized portions instead of individual meals. Our sojourns to and from the different restaurants, often at twilight, which showcased the Kansas City lights quite splendidly, were adventures in and of themselves. Wrong turns, poor map reading skills, and the “lost” reservation definitely made the first night the most exciting dinner-time excursion. And then I stopped being the keeper of the map and things went a lot smoother afterwards.

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“Hey! Anybody want to go to a haunted house?”

When all conference and dinner activities were completed, we were often given a free night to do with whatever we pleased. Not wanting to just hang around our hotel rooms, especially after the whole City As Text experience, we often looked for things to do. The first couple of nights, the conference had a few options for us to partake in, including the Welcome Reception and the student dance, but, especially later in the week, it was up to us to find our own fun.

The hotel offered a small gym and pool, but those were both closed shortly after ten. During the week, Kansas City’s businesses tended to close early, too, but then Chad and Angelina suggested something that I thought would be a hit. Two of the top ten haunted houses in the country were located in Kansas City, so we decided we wanted to go to the Haunted House. To my absolute shock, nobody else seemed to be enthusiastic about the idea, and almost everyone else went shopping at the various stores and boutiques along the main street next to our hotel.

So, in the spirit of Halloween, the three of us visited The Gates of Hell, easily the best haunted house I’d ever experienced at the time. It was so exciting that we went back the other night, visiting The Chambers of Poe (a must-see for any fan of Poe’s work) and The Beast, which, among other things, included a chase through the werewolf forest and a terrifying, four-story slide at the end of it (although the spiral, five-story slide at the Gates of Hell was even better). If you ever find yourself free in Kansas City, I recommend these haunted houses, all located within walking distance of each other.

Kansas City was a wealth of experience for all of us. Professionally, we attended and gained knowledge from one of the premiere Honors conferences in the country. Culturally, we experienced parts of the city that we had rarely even heard of, let alone seen for ourselves. And, personally, we made a lot of great memories, from dead end mirror mazes and headless horsemen chases to culinary mysteries and Sarah’s piano man friend.

NEXT ISSUE/NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

Thank you for reading the UHP Update! Starting next semester, instead of one, huge newsletter each semester, the plan is to start doing two smaller ones. In order for that to happen, we need more writers. Also, because I’m graduating in May, we’re looking for replacement editors, so if you’re interested in the position, e-mail either myself (War2314@calu.edu) or Kim (Honors@calu.edu) to let us know. More writers are necessary, too, as we only had three writers plus myself this semester. This is a perfect way to get some experience in writing, and even add a publication to your resume. Anyway, with that out of the way, here’s some of the articles we’ve got coming for the next issue, Spring Break 2011: Professor interviews, PASSHE updates and recaps, and an insider scoop on how you can study in Hawaii for the same price you’re paying here at Cal U.