Spring 2009

Honors @ Georgia Southern

University Honors Program Students and Staff, Georgia Southern University

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When the University Honors Program was created in 1998, an ethic of service was built into the Program from the outset. Furthermore, the motto chosen for the program, “Humility before Honor,” emphasizes the priority of service to others. Today, the service requirement has evolved into an experiential learning requirement where students can apply their knowledge and learn at the same time in a variety of different settings. While the requirement has been expanded, many honors students still choose to engage in a variety of service-learning projects each year. This issue of Honors@Georgia Southern contains a few of the many examples of the ways in which students exemplify the ethic of civic responsibility that we take as one of our four foundations.

As our students enter a world increasingly influenced by advanced technologies, we know that to effectively become leaders in their professions and communities, our students must also develop an ethic of civic responsibility. Through meaningful work with community members, faculty, staff and their fellow students, our honors students are developing the habits of the heart that will allow them to flourish in their lives and in their careers.

In addition, this issue contains a variety of other stories of the great work of the honors community at Georgia Southern. Also, updates of some of our alumni are included. As always, we would love to hear from more of you. Drop me a line and stay in touch.

Sincerely yours,
Steven Engel

Mission Statement

The University Honors Program provides a small college atmosphere in the context of a large comprehensive university. The program is designed to foster the development of a critical sense of inquiry, a spirit of creativity, a global perspective and an ethic of civic responsibility. A hallmark of the program is the emphasis on bringing ideas to life through undergraduate research, experiential learning and service-learning opportunities.

The University Honors Program at Georgia Southern University rests on a foundation of the following ideals that are inspired by the institution’s emphasis on engaged learning.

Critical Sense of Inquiry
Honors students will explore a variety of approaches to research designed to foster the pursuit of knowledge. Students will develop the ability to question with a healthy skepticism toward accepted opinion. The culmination of the undergraduate experience is an independent research or creative project designed to exemplify a critical approach to inquiry.

Spirit of Creativity
Honors students will embrace the idea that creativity is a virtue that should be experienced by all students, regardless of discipline. This spirit involves a respect for different ways of knowing and an openness to intellectual discussion and challenge.

Civic Responsibility
Honors students will demonstrate an ethic of civic responsibility and exemplify the motto of the program, “Humility before Honor.” Students will be challenged to use their abilities and talents for the advancement of humanity and the pursuit of a greater good. The primary vehicle for the expression of civic responsibility is through service both to the university and the community.

Global Perspective
Honors students will develop a perspective which allows them to approach their chosen discipline from an international point of view. This outlook involves the critical exploration of global concerns and generation of proposed solutions to international problems. Honors education provides this worldwide perspective through academic courses, study abroad opportunities and co-curricular experiences.
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Each year, honors students provide thousands of hours of service to the communities in which they serve. In the process, they develop a variety of skills and perspectives through meaningful interactions with others. Meaningful experiences like these are an integral component of the honors experience at Georgia Southern.

Cultivating an Ethic of Civic Responsibility
Georgia Southern University honors student Jessica Sparrow has been awarded an Honorable Mention for the Morris K. Udall Scholarship. Sparrow, a Biology major and University Honors Program student, received this distinction based on her record of work on environmental issues and her promise as a future leader in environmental science.

The Morris K. Udall Scholarship was created by the United States government in 1992 in recognition of the life’s work of Representative Morris K. Udall. This award is given to college juniors who have demonstrated a commitment to careers related to the environment or Native American tribal public policy. Because only 80 scholarships and 50 honorable mentions are given each year across the country, Sparrow is in elite company.

“I feel extremely honored to be recognized on a national level for my achievements. I am indebted to Dr. Steve Engel and Mr. Bob Frigo of the Honors Program for their support through this application process,” says Sparrow.

Since arriving on campus in 2006, Sparrow has been active in promoting environmental awareness and sustainability at Georgia Southern. She has served as President of the Student Alliance for a Green Earth (SAGE) and organized the University’s Earth Day celebration in 2008. She has been active in the Student Government Association, leading the effort to collect data to determine whether Georgia Southern should implement a Green Fee to support sustainability.

According to Dr. Lissa Leege, Director of the Office of Sustainability in Georgia Southern’s College of Science and Technology, “Jessica Sparrow’s leadership, in particular through SAGE, has clearly had an impact, and it reaches from the ground level all the way to policy. She is as comfortable changing out incandescent lightbulbs for CFLs as she is speaking with the administration of Georgia Southern to encourage our participation in the President’s Climate Commitment. I am so proud of her accomplishments and I know that she is just at the beginning of a long road of service and leadership that have already had a tremendous impact.”

In addition to her advocacy work, Sparrow will be conducting an undergraduate research project this summer with Dr. David Rostal on the loggerhead sea turtle population, a threatened species.

After graduating from Georgia Southern University, Sparrow plans to attend graduate school to earn a degree in environmental science and plans to follow that with a career in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service working to promote environmental protection on federally owned lands.

“My passion for the environment stems from my love of volunteering and improving my community,” said Sparrow. “To me environmentalism encompasses a broad range of topics not just saving the planet but educating people about the issues, social justice, and empowering others to make a difference. Environmentalism fulfills me because not only do I help improve the state of the environment, but in the process I network with others to better our community. Our lives are dependent on the environment and natural resources provided by nature; therefore, we need to work together to ensure the planet’s and mankind’s future.”
Ryan Pickrell Named Boren Scholar

Georgia Southern University honors student Ryan Pickrell has been awarded the prestigious National Security Education Program (NSEP) David L. Boren Scholarship. Pickrell, a History major who is a University Honors Program student and Ruffin Scholar, will use the award for study at Huazhong Normal University in Wuhan, China during the 2009-2010 academic year.

“This is both an amazing and a critical opportunity. Now, rather than the distant tomorrow, is the time to attempt to make a difference in the world. Hopefully, by trying to connect the cultures of America and China, I can be a part of that difference,” said Pickrell.

While in China, Pickrell will take courses in Chinese history and culture, as well as further his study of Mandarin through a sequence of intermediate and advanced Chinese language classes. In addition, he will conduct research on Wuhan’s economic and political development for his Honors Thesis.

In addition to his studies, Pickrell is well aware of his responsibility as a citizen ambassador. “The decisions we make now will define the future, and I intend to be a part of the movement to foster positive relations between the United States and the People’s Republic of China. I plan to work as hard as I can to ensure an optimistic future between our two countries,” said Pickrell.

Recipients of the Boren Scholarship are obligated to work in the federal government in a position with national security responsibilities for a minimum of one year. The Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, State or any element of the intelligence community are priority agencies.

The University Honors Program serves as the campus clearinghouse for nationally competitive scholarships and fellowships and is committed to helping prepare all Georgia Southern University students for awards such as the Boren.

“I am extremely grateful for all the assistance and support I received from both the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and the University Honors Program. Without the guidance of individuals such as Dr. Olivia Edenfield, Dr. Steven Engel and Bob Frigo, I would not have been presented with this extraordinary opportunity,” said Pickrell.

After graduating from Georgia Southern University, Pickrell plans to return to China for graduate school where he will pursue a degree in International Relations. He is ultimately interested in using his educational background and language skills to work with the Department of State.

Boren Scholarships are funded by the National Security Education Program (NSEP), which focuses on geographic areas, languages, and fields of study deemed critical to U.S. national security. NSEP draws on a broad definition of national security, recognizing that the scope of national security has expanded to include not only the traditional concerns of protecting and promoting American well-being, but also the challenges of global society, including sustainable development, environmental degradation, global disease and hunger, population growth and migration, and economic competitiveness.
Cultivating Civic Responsibility

GSU STAND combats genocide

No one should stand idle while injustice takes place. This ethic of public service inspired Melanie Barron, David Robeck and dozens of other Georgia Southern students to form a local chapter of Students Taking Action Now Darfur (STAND).

“We are a student organization that focuses on a pretty big global crisis. It’s an anti-genocide coalition focusing mainly on Darfur, but also conflicts in Burma and other places,” GSU STAND Publicity Director David Robeck said.

Robeck said that he became involved with GSU STAND when the university organization’s founder, Melanie Barron, approached him about the creation of the group.

“It was an issue that we all cared about, so we put the organization together,” Robeck said.

“The idea started from an event, Five Days for Darfur, that we did back in Spring 2007 and it launched from there.”

According to Robeck, funds for the organization are raised through spaghetti dinners and benefit concerts. The money raised goes to the Genocide Intervention Network, which is the parent organization of STAND. The Genocide Intervention Network gives the money to refugees in Darfur as well as the police force protecting citizens there.

According to the Genocide Intervention Network, the organization “empowers individuals and communities with the tools to prevent and stop genocide.” The organization also says that there are more than 800 STAND campus chapters at colleges and high schools across the United States.

GSU STAND members at the talk delivered by Lt. Gen. Romeo Dallaire, former head of the UN operation in Rwanda, February 2009.

Winger interns for Majority Whip

Kristi Winger, an honors student who is a Political Science major and Writing and Linguistics minor, is one of 30 students from Georgia currently interning with the General Assembly in Atlanta during the Spring 2009 semester.

Winger is working in Majority Whip Jan Jones’s office along with other members of the Republican leadership. According to Winger, her responsibilities as an intern include creating and delivering the Whip’s report each day during sessions, assisting in legislation, and attending committee meetings.

“Before session began in January, I requested that House Services assign the absolute, most top-notch college intern to the Majority Whip’s office. No one in the Whip’s office was experienced, including me, and I knew we would need superior support,” said Rep. Jones. “After session began, it became immediately apparent my request had been honored with Kristi Winger. She’s mature, bright and exceptionally capable. In fact, I can’t imagine how we will operate smoothly without her when she returns to Georgia Southern after session ends.”

“I am one of the few in an honors program here,” Winger said. “When meeting and talking with representatives and senators on education issues, I am ‘fluent in GSU.’ I know all of our statistics and what the University Honors Program offers our students, so when they hear about Southern, they will think about what I have told them.”

Bailey spends semester on Capitol Hill

Melissa Bailey, an honors student who is a senior Political Science major, spent the fall 2008 semester in Washington, D.C., gaining hands on experience with the United States House of Representatives.

Bailey was an intern in the office of Georgia’s 11th District Representative Phil Gingrey. While there, Bailey’s responsibilities included drafting legislative correspondence to constituents, giving tours of the U.S. Capitol, researching legislation for Gingrey and assisting in scheduling for the Congressman.

“It was absolutely one of the most amazing experiences of my life,” Bailey said. “I learned so much from being surrounded by so many intelligent minds.”

Bailey also added that she gained a new perspective on the work of the United States Congress, including the great responsibilities that all 435 members of the House of Representatives have to hold every day.

Bailey said, “I realized just how large of a responsibility is placed on every member of Congress and how imperative it is that they surround themselves with capable, knowledgeable people in order to be successful.”

Of her personal experience, Bailey said, “I don’t think anyone can ever really appreciate the work that our elected officials do until they are placed in a situation where they see them in action on a daily basis.”
Katye Carter, a sophomore Business major in the University Honors Program and 1906 Scholar, proves that an honors student can juggle a rigorous course load with community involvement and do so with dedication and compassion.

The 1906 Scholars are a select group of students that exist within the University Honors Program. These students participate in a series of interdisciplinary courses taught by the University’s most distinguished professors. Dr. Phyllis Dallas’s Freshman Seminar on Literacy is a model that intertwines civic engagement with the academic rigor of an honors seminar. Carter was not a tutor to university or K-12 students, but to a group of adult GED students. For her service-learning project, she tutored Georgia Southern employees who were part of the GED program that the Physical Plant coordinated with Ogeechee Tech’s Adult Literacy services and the Statesboro Regional Library’s Family Literacy Program.

During the fall, spring and summer semesters of her freshman year, Carter worked with the same six students to build their knowledge in math and reading, also acting as a mentor when the students needed encouragement.

“[The students] were tested every two months [to record] their progress [as] was mandated…. The progress is very slow in adult learners, especially those learners with the lack of [educational] foundation, [and] the frequent testing was very discouraging for the students,” says Carter, “they would see their results with little or no progress and wonder if they could ever [improve].” It was then, Carter says, she had to become counselor as well as tutor.

The time Carter spent as a GED tutor provided an opportunity for her to see an alternative lifestyle to her own; one which is not easy, but filled with persons who are willing to persevere in their search of a high school equivalent diploma. Such persons, Carter found, were willing to sacrifice their time to work toward an end most college students take for granted.

On time spent with her students, Carter states, “I developed relationships with the students and miss seeing them on a regular basis. They are good people that haven’t been dealt the best cards in life, but are doing something to better themselves. [Four of the] students work all night on their shift cleaning before coming to class in the morning. One student works nights, takes care of her daughter’s child during the day, and maybe gets four hours of sleep during the day while the child sleeps.”

According to Dr. Dallas, “literacy as a topic has been a good fit for the service-learning projects required in the honors seminar. With this topic, students have worked at the Boys and Girls Club, with the Statesboro Bulloch County Parks and Recreation Department’s after-school programs, with the Center for International Studies at Georgia Southern, and with the Statesboro Regional Library. As the 1906 Scholars begin their new literacy ventures in the university, the seminar has offered them the opportunity to reflect on the familial, social, cultural, and economic factors that have given them the literate foundation that they need for success in their chosen fields.”
Cultivating Civic Responsibility

Anthony Setari to Teach for America

Upon graduation from Georgia Southern University this spring, one University Honors Program student will be helping students advance their education at the high school level.

Anthony Setari, a senior Writing and Linguistics major, will teach high school English in Baltimore, Maryland with the Teach for America program. Before beginning his job, Setari will spend approximately one month in training at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Setari said that he heard about the Teach for America program through a presentation offered by the University Honors Program. Wanting to learn more about it, Setari conducted additional research into the program.

Setari said, “If they [UHP] had not mentioned it, I probably never would have known that the program existed.” Additionally, Setari will also pursue a Master of Arts in Teaching at John Hopkins University while working.

Teach for America’s mission is to “end educational inequity” by “enlisting our nation’s most promising future leaders in the effort.” Setari will help accomplish this mission by teaching in a low-income area of Baltimore and giving students there a chance at an education that they may have not had otherwise.

To be chosen for this position, Setari completed an application, participated in a phone interview, and met with Teach for America officials in Atlanta for an interview where he had to teach a five-minute activity in which he had to prove that the students actually learned something.

According to Setari, it has not yet been determined which school he will be working at in August, but he said that over the next few months that he will be talking with principals of various schools.

“I’ve always thought the idea of teaching was something really interesting to me and I’ve enjoyed the teaching I’ve done in the past when working with pre-schoolers and tutoring,” Setari said.

Setari said that the community he originated from was not a wealthy one and sees his work with Teach for America as a way to give back.

He said, “I thought it would be a wonderful thing to try to give back to that sort of community since that was the type of community I had come from.”

Setari credits the University Honors Program and professors at Georgia Southern for his success in being selected for Teach for America.

“The Honors Program has been a great help to me,” Setari said. “Georgia Southern and the University Honors Program have given me a lot of opportunities that a lot of other schools wouldn’t have.”

During the 2008-2009 academic year, Construction Management students have been working to provide mapping and layout for the historic Deep Creek Cemetery in Jenkins County. This project has been led by honors students Jeremy Daniel and Jesse Bentley.

Because many of the plots in this cemetery date back to the 18th century, tracking the location of certain plots was becoming a challenge for the limited means of the caretakers at the Free Will Baptist Church. Daniel and Bentley, along with their fellow students, spent the fall semester surveying and creating a site plan for the cemetery. In the spring semester, they have been using AutoCAD to create a site plan and map. When the project is complete, the students will have saved the cemetery staff over $5,000 through their volunteer efforts.

(l-r) Hunter Beall, honors student Jeremy Daniel, H. Derek Metts, John Hurst, Chris Baker, honors student Jesse Bentley, Dr. Gustavo Maldonado, Construction Management Honors Sequence Coordinator.
Over 1000 voters registered by honors students

As the fall semester began and students starting buzzing around campus, the presidential election for 2008 was creating a buzz of its own. Seeing the magnitude of the excitement in regards to the election, students in the University Honors Program created a project called Statesboro Votes 2008 to register voters for the general election in November.

The project ran for 4 weeks and students registered over 1100 voters in Bulloch County. Many students, faculty and staff members found the table a valuable resource to not only register to vote, but also gain valuable information regarding the election process. In addition, students provided information about how to apply for an absentee ballot and helped debunk misinformation about voting and elections.

In the process, students gained valuable experience and helped encourage civic awareness and responsibility directly in the campus community. After the first week of the project, students had registered over 300 voters and Statesboro Votes volunteers were immediately surprised by the scale of the response of the campus community.

Statesboro Votes 2008 volunteer and honors freshman International Studies major Gustavo Rodriguez stated of his experience that “Statesboro Votes 2008 let people know that they have a voice and their opinions are important. I am certain that without this voter registration project many of these individuals would have decided not to vote in November. Working by registering voters in a bipartisan manner made us into a civic awareness force on campus. We were an outlet to many students who would have otherwise found it more difficult to participate in this democratic transition of power.”

Many individuals are not aware of their rights and the election process. This project allowed accessibility to information and convenience of registration for the campus community. Without this table, many may have not registered to vote in this election.

As freshman International Trade major Phillip Buelterman said, “It felt great to help so many people get registered to vote for such an important election.”

In addition to working the registration table, several students on the project also worked closely with the Bulloch County Voter Registrar’s Office. Working at this office students engaged in activities ranging from filing applications to helping mail out absentee ballots. Inside the Voter Registrar’s Office, students were able to see firsthand all that is involved with the registration and voting processes.

This project also allowed students to actively engage themselves in their community, gain a sense of civic responsibility, and really take part in the election process.
Students educate public on issues in 2008 election

Students in Dr. Debra Sabia’s Honors American Government class were able to learn about the forces acting in the government of the United States and serve the community through election forums during the Fall 2008 semester.

Sabia worked with the University Honors Program to add a community service component to the course. According to Sabia, after multiple sessions with honors administrators, the idea for a non-ideological election forum was developed.

“My experience in the past around election cycles is that our Young Democrats and Young Republicans often offer at least one forum, but the forums that I have been to have been so incredibly ideological,” Sabia said. “I really thought this would be a far better opportunity to try to get young people involved in the process and try to do a little research before they came and offered positions by the candidates.”

Students in Sabia’s class were first separated in pairs to discuss a candidate’s particular issue. For example, a group of two students were required to research John McCain’s environmental policy. Groups researched various policy positions for McCain, Barack Obama, and Libertarian candidate Bob Barr.

The students then presented their information at three election forums held at the Russell Student Union, Kennedy Hall, and the Nessmith-Lane Continuing Education Center.

Each group had approximately three minutes to present their policies before taking questions from the audience. The sessions lasted approximately an hour and had high attendance rates at each event.

Besides the election forums, Sabia taught her course based on the Elite Theory of government. While some concepts were new for the students, Sabia thinks that the honors class provided a better environment for discussion.

“What I was able to do with the honors section was to be able to spend more time talking about a lot of the concepts and issues and provide more opportunities to debate and ask questions,” Sabia said. “That’s very hard to do in the very large sections of American Government that I teach.”

Sabia said that her biggest reminder to students is to come into courses with an open mind.

“When I first entered the class I was a bit skeptical because of the Elite Theory that she [Sabia] teaches,” said Sophomore Mackenzie Rowland, who is a dual major in Construction Management and Civil Engineering Technology. “But as the class went on, even though I didn’t agree with many of her viewpoints, I came to enjoy the class.”

Lumpkin on leadership council for SADD

Allyson Lumpkin, a freshman broadcasting major, has been helping students throughout the United States make the right decisions by serving as a role model on the national level.

Lumpkin currently serves on the Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) National Student Leadership Council. The Council consists of 20 students, each coming from a different state.

According to Lumpkin, her work with SADD has allowed her to travel across the country to Phoenix, Arizona, Boston, Massachusetts, and Washington, D.C. while on official business for SADD.

“SADD is an inclusive organization that offers ways to help students deal with the destructive decisions they face on a daily basis,” Lumpkin said. “I travel to various high schools to spread the mission of SADD and share ideas with other chapters on how to increase active membership.”

Lumpkin has been involved with SADD since high school, where she said that the local chapter had been dormant for nearly 20 years. According to Lumpkin, she was able to revive the organization in Bainbridge, Georgia, where she served as President of the Bainbridge High School chapter for two years.

While Lumpkin gave lectures and warned students about the dangers of destructive decisions, she also participated in roadblocks and other activities.

“I have helped to conduct roadblocks to monitor reckless driving among teens and I have provided workshops and lectures on the dangers of reckless and drunk driving,” Lumpkin said.

Lumpkin said that she will be traveling to the 2009 SADD National Conference in Washington, D.C. this summer. According to Lumpkin, the conference will culminate with a rally on Capitol Hill “in order to gain more political support to make a positive difference in the lives of young people.”
During the week of St. Patrick’s Day, while the Irish Prime Minister and Northern Irish First Minister and Deputy First Minister were in Washington, D.C. meeting with President Obama and members of Congress, a group of six honors students were in Northern Ireland and Ireland representing Georgia Southern University.

The trip was centered around students working alongside some of the most famous contemporary European muralists painting today – The Bogside Artists. In 1994, brothers Tom and William Kelly and friend Kevin Hassan joined together as The Bogside Artists. The artists personally experienced the unfolding of ‘the Troubles’ during their lifetimes and ultimately united to express the story of the Bogside community through the medium of murals. The Bogside area of Derry was the scene of a 1972 protest that turned violent when protesters were fired on by the British military, an incident that became known as Bloody Sunday.

While the group continues the Northern Irish tradition of using murals as vehicles for social and political commentary, The Bogside Artists stand alone in their efforts to utilize the mural to advance the peace and reconciliation process among Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland.

Students worked with the artists on a project designed to intertwine art and reconciliation. This project will brighten the exterior of a community center in the town of Limavady where Protestant and Catholic children can come together to engage in dialogue and activities that foster mutual understanding. This collaborative project involving the students and The Bogside Artists is intended to have a lasting impression on the Limavady community. “Working with The Bogside Artists was a very unique cultural experience because we had the chance to see not only how the past troubles of Northern Ireland affected people on a personal level, but also the steps that have been made toward creating peace and understanding in Northern Ireland,” stated Beth Cooper, honors junior Philosophy major.

When not working on the project, students had the opportunity to participate in activities which allowed them to gain a greater understanding of the culture, history and politics of Northern Ireland. A black taxi tour of the Catholic Falls Road and Protestant Shankill Road provided insight into the division between the two communities, as the two areas are separated by a peace line consisting of concrete, steel and barbed wire.

While touring the Shankill, students had the opportunity to leave their own messages of peace on the dividing wall, adding to the thousands of notes left by local residents and international visitors. “Despite the progress of the peace process, I was disturbed to see that there are still walls separating Protestant
and Catholic neighborhoods. There seems to be much work to be done before the issues in Northern Ireland are completely resolved,” said Ashlin Reid, honors freshman Chemistry major and 1906 Scholar.

The group also met with Dr. David Russell, Head of Communications and Education at the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC). At present, the NIHRC is developing a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, one of the key provisions of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement yet to be implemented. Students had the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with Russell to learn about the finer points of enacting this historic piece of legislation which is designed to create a framework for a fair and just peaceful society.

“This experience embodies the mission of the University Honors Program in that it allows students to develop an understanding of the problems that confront humanity and consider how their future careers may lend themselves to crafting solutions to these problems,” said Bob Frigo, assistant director of the University Honors Program.

The Bogside Artists and Georgia Southern University have a unique partnership dating back several years. Working with The Bogside Artists, the Georgia Southern University Museum, along with faculty curators from the Center for Irish Studies and the University Honors Program, have developed a traveling exhibition entitled “From Protest to Peace: Murals by The Bogside Artists of Northern Ireland.” The exhibition features murals created by The Bogside Artists along with a series of interpretative panels that provide a balanced presentation of the history and politics of Northern Ireland. The exhibition recently returned from an engagement at the Yager Museum of Art and Culture at Hartwick College in New York. For more information on the exhibition, please visit http://www.protesttopeace.org/.

The Honors Alternative Break series was created to provide students with an opportunity to participate in a cultural immersion experience while providing service to a local community. “Conversations with the Northern Irish people about politics revolved around the economic crisis and the role of the United States in the current situation. Honors international opportunities such as these are giving me a better perspective on the ways in which America affects attitudes around the world,” said Ava Conger, honors junior English major and 1906 Scholar.
Exploring happiness on a barrier island

Happiness. What does the concept entail? More importantly, exactly how does one find it? Dr. Trey Denton, Professor of Marketing, teaches an Honors Freshman Seminar where he challenges his students to grapple with the philosophy of happiness in a society driven by the marketplace.

While Denton uses the classroom as a venue to explore the topic, most of the true student learning in the course happens in a place about as far from civilization as possible – Ossabaw Island. Accessible only by boat, Georgia’s third largest barrier island is a national treasure “only [to] be used for natural, scientific and cultural study, research and education.” As a result, most people will never visit the island in their lifetime.

“Ossabaw offers the perfect place to get away from all the complexities and distractions of modern life,” says Denton. While on the island, students participate in activities led by Georgia Southern faculty and administrators as well as individuals from the Ossabaw Island Foundation. Denton states, “The love of learning that these individuals share with the students is, in my opinion, the most valuable part of the trip.”

Students explore centuries of history and archeology with Dr. Brent Tharp, Director of the Georgia Southern Museum. Also, Dr. Ray Chandler and Dr. Michelle Cawthorne lead the students on night hikes to explore the wildlife of...
the island. While Chandler has been known to wrangle armadillos and snakes, he is best known for his ability to call owls from across the island and have them appear in trees surrounding the students. Jodi Middleton, Assistant Director of Student Leadership and Civic Engagement, coordinates activities that encourage students to examine their leadership attributes and aspirations.

"Along the way, we have a great deal of fun and just enjoy each other's company. Students return from the trip sharing an incredible bond and it becomes easier to see what is important in life," says Denton. Some of that fun was spent enjoying the scenery as well as stargazing in a sky unobstructed by city lights. "Going to Ossabaw Island was a once in a lifetime trip…. The landscape was gorgeous and being able to see the stars in that magnitude was a real highlight…. [The trip to Ossabaw] will always be one of my most treasured memories of my freshman year here at Georgia Southern," states honors freshman, Kelly Corallo.

Honors freshman Anna McGaughey, summed up the experience for her class in stating, "I would say that going to Ossabaw will be one of my favorite memories. It was amazing how peaceful I felt after returning from the island, and helped me realize how important it is to preserve untouched nature."
Honors student plans free health clinic

Andres Montes, a junior honors student who has a double major in Philosophy and Chemistry, is helping people without health insurance by opening a free health clinic in Statesboro in August.

The clinic, called Hearts and Hands Clinic, Inc: A Volunteers in Medicine Alliance, will be located at the Ogeechee River Baptist Association at 17 North College Street. The clinic will be open two Saturdays a month. According to Montes, the clinic will not be able to see patients until next year because some legal issues are still being worked out.

"Medicine is in this transitioning stage, trying to go back to this ancient art that it used to be: more humanistic, based on the sciences, so really the philosophy is a way to understand the psychology of the body and the psychology of the soul," Montes said.

Cross-disciplinary research involving Chemistry and Nutrition

Ann Onyenwoke, an honors student majoring in Nutrition and Food Science, is working on a project to make a healthy food even healthier.

With the help of an Honors Research Grant from the University Honors Program, Onyenwoke is creating a fruit and vegetable blend yogurt that is naturally fortified with Vitamin C. Onyenwoke said that she used the funding to purchase filters and chemicals central to her research.

"I need to extract a clear, reliable sample from my yogurt in order to perform spectrophotometry," Onyenwoke said. "This will allow me to quantify its vitamin C content of the yogurt."

Onyenwoke said that she has already made some attempts using a method called redox titration. Now she is using the spectrophotometry method, which she explains will analyze the retention of Vitamin C.

While Onyenwoke is not able to report any results as of yet, she has been working with Georgia Southern professors Dr. Helen Graf and Dr. Joelle Romanchik-Cerpovicz from the Department of Health and Kinesiology as well as Chemistry professor Dr. Laura Frost. She is participating in the newly formed Departmental Honors Sequence in the Department of Health and Kinesiology.

The results of this research have been published in the January 2009 issue of the Georgia Journal of Science.

Rose Sheehan wins Gilman to study in Japan

Honors sophomore Rose Sheahan has been awarded the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship. Sheahan, an International Studies major and University Honors Program student, is using the award for study at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies in Japan.

The Gilman award is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and the Institute of International Education. Sheahan is the fifth Georgia Southern University student recipient of a U.S. Department of State award in the past two years.

Growing up in rural Springfield, Georgia, Sheahan had dreamed of traveling to Japan. "I have always been fascinated with Japan's culture and language and wanted to learn more about this vastly different society," said Sheahan.

Sheahan is taking part in academic programs at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies that focus on Japanese language and culture.

As a requirement of the scholarship, Gilman recipients will also complete a project upon return to their home institution. Sheahan plans to initiate a tutoring program pairing Japanese exchange students with American students at Georgia Southern University. "I believe this program will not only have a positive impact on the Japanese students, but also on the American students who will learn more about the culture from those who live in Japan," said Sheahan. She also plans to assist the Center for International Studies with promoting study abroad opportunities, especially to students like herself from rural Georgia.

After graduating from Georgia Southern University, Sheahan plans to teach with the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme. JET, an organization that promotes grass-roots international exchange between Japan and other nations, offers positions assisting teachers of English in Japanese public school classrooms.
Four honors students attend inauguration

Four students in the University Honors Program were among those who attended the historic inauguration of President Barack Obama on January 20.

Junior Nursing major Sarah Anzjon, freshman International Studies major Tanya Ramnauth and sophomore Political Science majors Allison Beasley and Charles Minshew were chosen to go on the trip coordinated by Janna Pennington, Service-Learning Coordinator in the Office of Student Leadership and Civic Engagement.

The group stood on the National Mall, braving temperatures in the mid-20s and wind chills even lower, with an estimated crowd of 2 million people to watch the inauguration of Obama, the nation’s first African-American President.

According to Pennington, each student who was chosen for the trip showed great leadership on campus and in the community. Students had write an essay on why they thought they should be chosen to attend the historic event.

“The trip exceeded my expectations,” Pennington said. “It was really special to be a part of something huge.”

Pennington said that she and Bob Frigo, Assistant Director of the University Honors Program, had originally had an idea to show the inauguration to a large crowd in the Russell Union. But, as time went on, the plans also evolved into a trip to Washington, D.C.

As Frigo said, “There is a feeling across our nation that President Obama is placing the government back in the hands of the people. It was important that a group of Georgia Southern University students were on the National Mall on that brisk January day to stand and represent the 18,000 students in Statesboro who are inheriting this renewed spirit. These are the individuals who will soon rise to become the next generation of leaders in the United States.”

“It was an amazing privilege to be able to experience President Obama’s inauguration alongside millions of Americans hopeful and excited about the future of this nation,” Beasley said. “It was a day filled with both inspiration and promise that reminded us all of how blessed we are to live in a free nation that allows us the opportunity to see our greatest hopes and dreams become reality.”

Enrichment Seminar engages students over the 2008 election

The 2008 General Election provided an interesting backdrop for a University Honors Program Enrichment Seminar during the Fall 2008 semester.

Dr. Patrick Novotny, a professor in the Department of Political Science, conducted a seminar course during what was one of the most watched presidential elections in the history of the United States. This was after what some analysts called the longest primaries in election history.

Novotny is a veteran of honors classes, having taught different honors courses during his tenure at Georgia Southern. However, Novotny said that he let the students control some aspects of the course.

Novotny shared that challenges with the seminar included the concept of the Invisible Presidency, the idea that there are characteristics of a U.S. President that are not required by the U.S. Constitution, but instead the qualities that people look for in a president.

Novotny said, “I think the challenge was probably trying to get everybody on the same wavelength to understand what the Invisible Presidency concept meant, this idea that the presidency isn’t just defined by the wording of the second article of the Constitution.”

Novotny added that many of the class meetings were driven by discussions of the student’s general ideas and readings.

“It was a very good group to work with,” Novotny said. “We could keep it kind of informal, very conversational. I didn't give a single lecture in that class.”

According to Novotny, students created an original research project that explored the Invisible Presidency, noting that many of the students focused on the election, while some focused on presidential families and histories.

“In some respects, it was my deliberate decision to really insist that they direct the course discussion, in the sense that unlike a course where I might come in and talk for 20 or 30 minutes,” Novotny said. “In that sense, I think an honors course is really a partnership.”
When you flip through the glossy pages of the Honors @ Georgia Southern Magazine, you might find it hard to believe that a group of undergraduate students in the University Honors Program have been instrumental in its production.

Whether it is writing the stories that you read, taking the photos that you look at, or designing the magazine that you are holding, students were involved in every part of the production process.

“I am delighted that we are able to provide this professional development opportunity for our students,” said Dr. Steven Engel, Director of the University Honors Program. “We know that graduate schools and employers are looking for graduates who have the ability to apply knowledge in real world settings. Through our classes and experiences like this, we are helping our students prepare to achieve their goals.”

Morgan Donaldson, a sophomore Pre-Business major, is responsible for nearly all of the staff photos that you see in the magazine. Donaldson works with the writers to make sure that all of the proper photos are taken for each story.

In addition to her work with Honors @ Georgia Southern, Donaldson teaches dance at the Southern Dance Academy and spends time coaching majorettes at Statesboro High School. Donaldson is also a dancer in Southern Explosion, a dance team at Georgia Southern. Following graduation, Donaldson plans to combine the expertise developed from her business major and her love and experience with photography to open her own photography business.

“I’ve really enjoyed this chance to work on this project that brings together all aspects of the Honors Program. I’ve met and worked with amazing people that I would have never met without the magazine,” Donaldson said. “This experience of watching the magazine evolve and become what it is today has been amazing.”

Keith Warburg, a junior Graphic Communications Management major, does all of the design work for the magazine. From cover to cover, the design is all the work of Warburg.

In addition to his work for Honors @ Georgia Southern, Warburg leads a busy campus life. He currently serves as the Executive Editor of GSU’s Office of Student Media, a position that puts him as a leader of six different student publications with a staff of nearly 50 students.

Charles Minshew is a sophomore Political Science major and one of the staff writers for Honors @ Georgia Southern. Most of his time in the production process is spent contacting story sources, and compiling the information for the complete stories that you read in each edition.

In addition to his work with the magazine, Minshew serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the Southern Reflector Magazine, a student publication underneath the GSU Office of Student Media.

Minshew also serves as president of the Georgia Collegiate Press Association, which facilitates discussion between various student publications at schools such as GSU, Georgia Tech, and many others.

“Working with Honors @ Georgia Southern has allowed me to gain new insight on all of the work of the University Honors Program,” Minshew said.

“Through my work with the magazine, I’m able to share the things that I have learned with everyone who reads the publication.”
Students experiment with iPod in honors calculus class

Thanks to a grant from the Georgia Digital Innovation Group at Georgia College and State University and the Board of Regents’ Office of Information and Structural Technology, a Georgia Southern University professor is bringing Apple’s popular iPod Touch to the classroom.

James Braselton, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mathematical Sciences used the iPods in a classroom setting in the honors section of Calculus II. Thirty-one students received iPods as part of a pilot program.

The iPod is the responsibility of each student and they are allowed to use it for music, television shows, and other applications in addition to the main purpose of the device, replacing the graphics calculator for mathematical work.

“The iPod touch has so much more to offer than the traditional graphics calculator and even the computer lab in the sense of its portability factor,” according to Braselton.

However, at the end of the semester, the iPods go back to the Board of Regents.

“This is a pilot study so we’re pretty much just trying to learn what it can do in the sense that hopefully next year we’ll have more specific ideas of what to do with it,” Braselton said.

He added that the main goal of the project is to learn about the capabilities of the iPod Touch. Braselton expressed hope that one day, Georgia Southern students and faculty might be able to create their own applications for the device.

As of now, if there is something that the iPod cannot do, Braselton and his students are making a list of these tasks, so that in the future, an application might be developed.

Braselton said, “We’re learning about it, we’re learning what it can do, we’re learning what we would like to be able to do because our end goal is to write our own applications to do specific tasks that we want it to do.”

UHP signs with Georgia Perimeter College for seamless transfers

In the summer of 2008, the University Honors Program signed a memorandum of understanding with the Honors Program at Georgia Perimeter College (GPC) allowing a seamless transfer for honors students from GPC to Georgia Southern.

“We are seeing more talented transfer students coming to us, particularly from Georgia Perimeter College,” said Dr. Steven Engel, Director of the University Honors Program.

This is the first such agreement for the University Honors Program at Georgia Southern. After a recent visit to campus, the Director of the Honors Program at GPC, Dr. Jeff Portnoy said, “we were impressed by the campus and the atmosphere. I hope to send many talented students from the Honors Program to you in the future.”

In order to help attract more talented students from GPC, one scholarship has been designated for an eligible honors graduate from GPC to attend Georgia Southern. The first awardee of this scholarship is Rahim Mawji, a Business major originally from Kenya.

“GPC equipped me with the tools necessary to successfully transfer to the Honors Program at GSU; the Honors Program at GSU is intellectually stimulating especially with the required capstone project, which prepares me for graduate school,” said Mawji.

“The supportive faculty, tranquil environment and state of the art facilities have made GSU a conducive environment for me to pursue my dream to get an exceptional education and develop to being a well-rounded individual.”
Jeanne Henry, a junior Art major with a concentration in Ceramics, has been working on what can be seen as a different Honors capstone project. She is not writing a paper or giving a lengthy presentation. Instead, she helped build a kiln.

Henry built the kiln as part of a class in which students constructed a wood burning kiln over the course of a semester, though she says they never had the opportunity to fire it.

"We never got to fire it that semester," Henry said. "So I decided there's something I've never done before and I thought it could be fun to do something I had never had experience with."

Approximately twelve people participated in the original class, and their responsibilities included planning the design of the kiln as well as the actual construction. Special requirements included using bricks that burn at high temperatures and the height of the chimney.

According to Henry, building a kiln is much more cost effective than purchasing a gas or electric kiln.

"You pay each time you fire a gas or electric kiln. When you fire a wood kiln, you're paying for the wood," Henry said, noting that costs might be much higher when using a gas or electric kiln depending on utility fees.

The process of making ceramics products is a time-consuming process that can take as many as 20 hours for one set of artwork.

"We start about seven in the morning and we can usually go home around five a.m. the next day," Henry said. "We put wood in about every five minutes. It's very labor intensive."

Henry said that the kiln has already been fired "two and a half times," saying that the first burning did not go as planned due to incorrect cones being placed in the kiln. The pyrometric cones did not properly measure the temperature inside the kiln. Temperature is important in the process, because the pottery could possibly blow up if the clay heats up too fast.

As to why Henry chose to do her capstone with a wood kiln, it is simple for her: it is interesting.

"It's research on something I have never done before. I thought that would be more interesting for myself and I have decided now that that's what I want to end up doing when I set up my studio," Henry said.

Besides being cost effective, Henry said that a wood kiln gives a piece of art more character than it could have had before.

"When people make ceramics, they handle it and glaze it, and once it goes in the kiln that's pretty much it," Henry said. "This creates a new depth to the piece and it's always interesting to open it up and see what came out, because you don't know. In the wood kiln, the ash from whatever wood you fire settles on the pots and it creates its own glaze."

Henry makes many different kinds of artwork but says that she prefers to make bottles and vases. She sells her work at the Club Mud art sale at the end of each spring and fall semester. According to Henry, her mother gets first choice at work that does not sell.

Henry plans to obtain a master’s degree in Education after completing her undergraduate work and hopes to teach middle or high school ceramics while operating her own studio. She then hopes to one day run her studio full time.

Alternative methods for ceramics project

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Honors in the ARTS

Clockwise, from top:

“Self-Portrait”
Jennifer Dukes, junior Art Major

“Unraveled Ambitions”
Elizabeth Debban, junior Art Major

“Enlightened Path”
Steven Roberson, sophomore Art Major
The first annual joint University Honors Program/Bell Honors Program Homecoming Celebration was held on November 7, 2008. Over 130 alumni, students, professors and friends of the Program came to celebrate the event. Those who were not able to attend were missed. Please plan to attend the 2009 celebration which will take place on November 13, 2009.
Alumni updates

Wendy (Key) Capstick  
(BHP, Accounting, 1987)  
is now the Associate Director at the  
Public Company Accounting Oversight  
Board (www.pcaobus.org). She lives in  
Littleton, Colorado with her husband  
Lincoln and daughter Madison.

Susan (Braxton) Davies  
(BHP, English, 1995)  
has been named Associate Vice  
Chancellor for Enrollment Services at  
Appalachian State University in Boone,  
North Carolina.

Bert Chandler  
(BHP, Chemistry, 1994)  
is Associate Professor of Chemistry  
at Trinity University in San Antonio,  
Texas.

Thomas Corbin Mullis  
(BHP, Chemistry, 1999)  
completed his residency at the University  
of Mississippi Medical Center in 2008  
and is currently in practice with Dublin  
Ear Nose and Throat Associates in  
Dublin, Georgia.

Michael Hardy  
(UHP, Political Science, 2004)  
is currently the deputy chief of staff for  
Bill Bolling, Lieutenant Governor of the  
State of Virginia.

Amanda Fischer  
(UHP, Biology, 2007)  
is currently in her second year of medical  
school and has been named 2008-2009  
GA-Philadelphia College of Osteopathic  
Medicine Student Doctor of the Year.

Jaclyn Kaylor (BHP, Sports Medicine, 2000)  
is the Athletic Director at Georgia Southwestern  
State University in Americus, Georgia where she  
is responsible for all of the daily operations of  
an NCAA Division II intercollegiate athletic pro-
gram. Jaclyn is the first woman to hold this posi-
tion at Georgia Southwestern.

Alum named athletic director at Georgia Southwestern

While at Georgia Southern she appreciated  
the challenge of the Bell Honors Program (BHP)  
and balanced it with participation on the Georgia  
Southern’s varsity softball team. About her time  
in the BHP, Jaclyn says, “there was as much of  
an education in ‘what we were learning’ as there  
was in ‘how we were learning’—encouraging stu-
dents to analyze details and to think at such high  
levels, set the BHP apart from the norm by leaps  
and bounds. My BHP medallion is framed and  
hangs on the wall in my office… [it] helps me to  
remember how I got here.” In her spare time, Ja-
clyn has found time for over 600 skydiving jumps  
and is involved in Jump for the Cause.
HOMECOMING 2009
Save the date: Friday, November 13, 2009