Honors @ Georgia Southern

University Honors Program Students and Staff, Georgia Southern University

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Honors students excel both in the classroom and outside of it. The stories in this issue address a wide range of outside-of-class activities that enhance a student’s education. We call these “experiential learning” projects and each honors student is expected to participate in at least one per year. Many students still participate in service projects to satisfy this requirement but more and more are taking advantage of study abroad, study away, and internship opportunities.

The cover story for this issue highlights the first honors-only study abroad experience to Egypt. Dr. Krista Wiegand of the Political Science department led a small group of honors students off the beaten path to explore modern Middle Eastern politics and culture. Little did they know that ten days after their return, Egypt would be consumed by protests and that within a month regime change would have occurred. This issue contains many more examples of students participating in transformative experiences.

As in the previous few years, several honors students have attained national recognition for their work. Katherine Mincey is the first Georgia Southern student to receive the Goldwater Scholarship—the most prestigious award for undergraduate research in the sciences. All in all, it has been another great year for honors at Georgia Southern University.

Sincerely yours,
Steven Engel
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EGYPT 2011
12 honors students traveled to Egypt this past January, and while visiting the pyramids, seeing the mummies, and taking a boat ride on the Nile were all on the itinerary for the first-of-its-kind study abroad trip to Egypt, little did these students know that they were on the eve of Egypt’s participation in protests that would soon grip several countries in the region. As they returned home and saw newly familiar streets and squares packed with protesters, they could apply the lessons they learned over in Egypt during classes and tours led by Dr. Krista Wiegand.

The 12 students, Dr. Wiegand, and her husband, Michael Jordan, spent almost two weeks exploring Cairo, working on a service project, camping in the desert, and learning about Egyptian Politics. While in Cairo, they stayed in a local hotel, dined on local cuisine and volunteered at Health and Hope Oasis, a holistic treatment center for children who have been diagnosed with cancer. They also immersed themselves in the culture.

“My favorite experience was our service experience in Wadi al-Natroun, a small town a couple hours north of Cairo, where we worked side by side and shared several meals with local Egyptians, working to clear land for a playground for children with cancer,” said Dr. Wiegand. “It was immensely rewarding not only to volunteer for such a good cause, but to spend time in the fresh air away from crowded Cairo in a non-touristy environment, talking to our Egyptian hosts about their lives under the now defunct Mubarak regime.”

For some of the students, getting to know the locals was one of the highlights of the trip.

“One thing I loved about being in Egypt was talking and being with the local Egyptians,” said Accounting major Stephen Mayfield. “I enjoyed talking to them about their everyday life and anything that came up in conversation. During the protests, I still kept in contact with a few people I met when I was in Egypt.”

While the students were in Egypt for 12 days, their experience was part of a three credit-hour course available as political science credit or as an elective. Studying in Egypt provided an experience far different from what one would have had studying in a Western European country. Egypt, while ahead for its region, is still an industrializing country. By not staying in the tourist destinations, these students were able to experience a different way of life that made some rethink their priorities upon returning to the U.S.

“While we were in Egypt I felt that the problems we had in the United States were quite minuscule,” said Music major Michael Palmese. “Voter fraud and government corruption was at an unimaginable level and nothing compared to what we accuse our elected officials of here. On top of this was the constant anxiety and nervousness among the populace of living in a police state.”

History major Kristen Grantham agreed, “Once the protests started, it made complete and total sense as to why the citizens were rebelling against the Mubarak regime: they were tired of being afraid of their government and couldn’t bear the thought of Mubarak’s son taking over and beginning a ‘dynasty.’”

“Every day I was reminded how blessed I am to live in such an awesome nation that tries to take care of its citizens,” Grantham said. “The poverty and corruption in Egyptian society was apparent, and gave me compassion for these individuals who struggle with it every day. Traveling abroad was eye opening, and my return to Georgia Southern has made me more aware of those around me and thankful for the opportunities I have every day.”

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**Egypt Diary by Katie Brookins and Kelsey Decker**

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**January 5: Day 1  Travel**

We all met at the Hartsfield-Jackson Airport to embark on the daylong journey from Atlanta to New York to Istanbul to Cairo. For six of the twelve students, this was their first trip abroad, and while long, the flight did not disappoint us. Well, at least until the end when more than half of the students found out their luggage did not make it onto the last flight. (It did arrive by the next day.) The first impression many of us had involved seeing all the sand. We were not in the desert—Cairo is very urban—but there was still sand everywhere.

**January 6: Day 2  Food**

Egyptian food is a delightful combination of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean with noticeable Western influences as well. We had the opportunity to experience traditional Egyptian food, including the national dish, koshari, which combines rice, noodles, lentils, onions with a tomato sauce. At Café Riche, we dined on international fare including calamari, meatballs, french fries, and rice. Near the market, we ate Egyptian pizzas, which come in both sweet and savory varieties. Our Western experience consisted of going to McDonald’s a couple blocks from the hotel, where a few of us tried the McArabia sandwiches. In the desert, we ate kneeling or sitting on cushions at low tables for family-style service. The best part? Food in Egypt was about a quarter of the price we pay in the U.S.
January 7: Day 3  
**Pyramids**

Going to the pyramids was probably the most touristy thing we did the entire trip, but of course we all needed to have pictures of the pyramids and the Sphinx. The downside is it is something the Egyptians have picked up on too, and we were constantly asked to buy postcards or hats, take camel rides or if we needed a tour (we did not). It was neat to walk around the site and see the Egyptian children to whom the pyramids just seemed like a playground to visit daily. After we returned, as tourists fled the escalating violence, we read that the pyramids appeared abandoned and those families who relied on its tourists for their livelihoods found themselves struggling to eat.

January 8: Day 4  
**Religion**

Egyptian Christians, called Copts, separated from the rest of Christianity even before the Eastern Orthodox-Roman Catholic split which accompanied the breaking apart of the Roman Empire, and have developed independently and in relative isolation since around 400 A.D. Their language, lost now except in writing and the recitation of prayers and hymns, is the same language spoken by the pharaohs. On our fourth day, we wandered through the narrow stone streets of Coptic Cairo, visiting small churches containing relics of saints known only to Copts as well as to all Christianity. For example, the first church we went into was dedicated to St. George, dragon slayer and patron saint of England. We also visited a church built over the cave where Jesus and the holy family are believed to have once taken refuge, as recorded in the Bible. Because Copts make up only about ten percent of the population, we found many more people, but fewer tourists, when we visited several mosques. To show our respect, the women in our group covered their heads with scarves in the mosques and everyone took off their shoes.

January 9: Day 5  
**Class on the Nile**

Our fifth day in Egypt, we took the metro to the presidential palace, crossed the Nile, and paid a guard to enter the palace gardens. Sitting by the rose bushes, overlooking the Nile, we had class, discussing President Mubarak (then comfortably in power), Egypt as a police state, and the Muslim Brotherhood. Soon, we noticed we had gained an audience. Two men stood talking nearby, watching us, and listening to our conversation. After half an hour or so, they began to take turns walking through our group. Twenty minutes later, a man in a burgundy dress shirt arrived, sat down a little further away than the two men had been. The newcomer looked remarkably like a man wearing a police jacket who we had seen pass by in a police boat ten minutes before. He remained, attentive but unobtrusive, as class continued and the other two men left. When one of the original men returned forty-five minutes later, he went straight to the man in burgundy. After a brief conversation, the first man took to walking through our group every two to three minutes. We believe all three men were plainclothes policemen, probably not so interested in us as in any Egyptians we might have been meeting or perhaps Egyptians who might have been near enough to overhear us. Still, we were only talking about the recognized facts of Egyptian politics and had the protection of our American passports. Foreign journalists who arrived to cover the protests some weeks later were not so generously treated by the police.
Being in Egypt right before the protests provided the students with a unique perspective as they began the new semester at Georgia Southern, and many of them watched the protests not simply as an activity happening somewhere else in the world but as a world-changing event that also affected them on a personal level.

"I was so excited for the protests in Egypt, especially since I was just there a week before," said Grantham. "Being able to experience the environment Egyptians lived in allowed me to understand their actions and want to support them. I followed the news constantly and was ecstatic when news about Mubarak stepping down was announced."

Political Science major Molly Laughlin agreed, saying it was because of the people that she felt connected to the protests. "The humility and humanity of the Egyptian people affected me the most because so many times we wrongly characterize people who live in that region of the world," she said. "The people are so resilient and friendly, so it made it very difficult to watch the protests because I feared that the violence would get out of control. However, the protests were necessary so that the people have the opportunity to experience the same types of political and social rights we have in the U.S."

"What impacted me the most about the trip was how surreal everything was in Egypt when I was there and when the protests occurred," said Mayfield. "It seemed to hit close to home when the protest were occurring only blocks away from where the group walked weeks before. I felt connected with the Egyptian people when the protests were happening."

In April, a couple months after returning from the trip, three students—Kelsey Decker (Journalism), Kristen Grantham and James Zimmer-Dauphinee (Anthropology and Mathematics)—presented their papers at the statewide Middle East Student Symposium in Milledgeville, Georgia. Dr. Wiegand, who was the symposium’s keynote speaker, said she was really pleased at their contribution.

"Presenting at the conference was a great experience for them and many others told me how much they enjoyed hearing from the students about their recent experiences in Egypt since they had such a unique perspective," she said.

As part of the class all of the students were required to research some aspect of Egyptian politics, and the impact the tumult in a place these students had recently been had a noticeable effect on their work.

"All of the students who studied abroad were much more interested in the turn of events than anyone else and certainly more than they probably would have been if they had not just been there," Dr. Wiegand said. "The chance of such political change happening when they were writing research papers about Egyptian politics is extraordinary, and it was clear in the papers that real world events influenced their thoughts about Egyptian politics."

Kelsey Decker and Katie Brookins
January 11: Day 7
Garbage City

The inhabitants of Garbage City, a relatively small suburb of Cairo, sort the millions of tons of trash produced by the city, recycling almost everything. For the first time, we were away from business and more tourist-focused areas of Cairo. This was clearly visible in the bags of trash piled several stories high against apartment buildings and the donkeys and goats eating organic garbage in the street. Slowly, the tour bus picked its way along the narrow, crowded streets, driving us toward a paper-making factory where women and young girls are employed to recycle scrap and soiled paper into new, hand-made pages one sheet at a time. They also wash and cut fabric into strips used for quilting and weaving. In the shops, we bought hand-made items, including purses which designer Mark Jacobs has ordered by the thousands to incorporate into his fashion line.

January 10: Day 6
Wadi al-Natroun

Wadi al-Natroun contrasts Cairo in nearly every way imaginable. Where Cairo is urban and bustling, Wadi al-Natroun is mostly desert and serene. The site of our service project, Health and Hope Oasis, provided a refreshing change of pace from downtown Cairo. Health and Hope Oasis is a care center for children with cancer that aims to provide a holistic approach to the treatment. The center was not yet open while we were there, so our group’s task for the day we volunteered was to clear ground area that would eventually become the site of a playground for the children. The work was exhausting but rewarding and by the end of the day we could see the difference we had made in the area. It was a humbling experience to take part in the founding of a place that will provide care and support for children and their families not only through assistance for the child’s cancer but also through providing nutritional information and work opportunities while the families are there. Health and Hope Oasis is also a farm that, incidentally and among other things, grows delicious tangerines that we all enjoyed. As we learned a few weeks later, Wadi al-Natroun also played host to political prisoners, including Muslim Brotherhood members and seven of their top leaders who escaped, or were released, during the unrest, giving Mubarak’s government an excuse to crack down on the area.

January 12: Day 8
Human Rights Institute

Little did we know that just a week after we returned to Statesboro, the people in the nondescript, low-key building we visited would be playing an active role in the protests that fundamentally changed Egypt. But that is what the people who work from the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies are there to do, and we learned from the staff there what it was usually like to try to make any political headway in Egypt. With the corruption, it was difficult, but the weeks of protests prove that one success can make every prior struggle worth it. She also joked that there might be six Jews in Egypt. We compared that knowledge to the empty-looking synagogue within sight of our hotel, guarded twenty-four hours a day by police with blast shields, barricades, and guns. On the way back to our hotel, we walked down a long avenue with grass and palm trees in planters dividing the road. By the time of our first post-trip class lecture, videos of masses of protesters running from tanks had flooded the internet.

January 13: Day 9
Desert

Our last night in Egypt, we camped in the desert. After a full day of off-roading, being thrown around seatbelt-free four-wheel drive vehicles, traveling through the black and grey deserts, we were glad to stop in the white desert, so named for the white chalk formations carved by the wind and yellow sand of the Western Desert. Once a sea, this area contains sharks teeth and shells embedded in the chalk while petrified wood litters the ground. We watched the sunset together from atop one such formation, and then walked to our campsite, one among the eight campfires we could see around us. We sat talking in a circle while our dinner cooked over coals from the fire. As the temperature dropped, Wadi al-Natroun is mostly desert and serenity. The site of our service project, Health and Hope Oasis, provided a refreshing change of pace from downtown Cairo. Health and Hope Oasis is a care center for children with cancer that aims to provide a holistic approach to the treatment. The center was not yet open while we were there, so our group’s task for the day we volunteered was to clear ground area that would eventually become the site of a playground for the children. The work was exhausting but rewarding and by the end of the day we could see the difference we had made in the area. It was a humbling experience to take part in the founding of a place that will provide care and support for children and their families not only through assistance for the child’s cancer but also through providing nutritional information and work opportunities while the families are there. Health and Hope Oasis is also a farm that, incidentally and among other things, grows delicious tangerines that we all enjoyed. As we learned a few weeks later, Wadi al-Natroun also played host to political prisoners, including Muslim Brotherhood members and seven of their top leaders who escaped, or were released, during the unrest, giving Mubarak’s government an excuse to crack down on the area.

January 14: Day 10
Heading to the Market

Shopping in the market in Cairo can be interpreted in several ways: excitement to haggle with vendors and to be in the energy of the crowds, or contentment at people watching, or utter terror. However, for the experienced haggler the market is the perfect place to find everything imaginable there from food and henna to belly dancing clothes and stuffed toy camels. We spent hours walking the winding lanes and packed streets, attempting to bargain with various people, and quickly learned some of us were definitely better than others at making a deal.
Six honors students went to camp over Spring Break this past March. They were part of a team of 16 Georgia Southern students and two faculty members who worked as counselors at Camp Twin Lakes. Brandon Black (Information Technology), Megan Brock (Psychology), Amanda Elmore (Nursing), Claire Goodwin (Athletic Training), Caroline Greene (Child and Family Development), and Jack St. Jean (Pre-med Biology) joined their fellow students in helping out as Camp Twin Lakes hosted Camp Blue Skies, a week-long program for adults with disabilities.

Camp Twin Lakes provides camp experience to children and adults who face serious illnesses, disabilities, and various challenges. They host partner organizations, like Camp Blue Skies, and work with them to provide a week of fun activities and experiences.

This alternative break experience included two pre-trip workshops, one on campus and one at the camp, and one post-trip meeting. The students were led by Dr. Jerri Kropp and Dr. Brent Wolfe and by Camp Twin Lakes Director, and Georgia Southern alumnus, Dan Matthews. Both Dr. Kropp and Dr. Wolfe are professors in the College of Health and Human Sciences, and they drew upon their respective classes in Child and Family Development and Therapeutic Recreation to recruit students to the experience.

During their full day of orientation at Camp Twin Lakes in February, the students and their professors toured the camp and took to the two-level, wheelchair accessible tree house to learn how to work with people with disabilities. This orientation was important so students could learn about both the camp and the campers, and it also gave them a chance to think about the role the camp plays in the lives of the campers.

The students and faculty returned a month later during Georgia Southern’s Spring Break for what proved to be an unforgettable experience. “I had never worked with adults before, only children. I thought I would be nervous but I wasn’t. The students would probably say the same. We are all just people, they are just a little bit different from us,” said Dr. Kropp.

Dr. Wolfe echoed Dr. Kropp’s sentiment, “Spring Break 2011 is one that I will always remember because of its many firsts. This was my first time participating in an alternative spring break trip. This was the first spring break when I wasn’t traveling with my family. This was my first week spent at a camp in decades. This was my first time really getting to know several Georgia Southern students. All of these firsts made for a tremendous week of service and learning.”

The staff members from both Camp Twin Lakes and Camp Blue Skies were very impressed with the work of the Georgia Southern students. Liz Golembeski, the program director at Camp Blue Skies, said, “The GSU students played a critical role in creating our camp community, supporting the campers, and taking on leadership roles in programming. Our camp was improved in so many ways by the GSU involvement.”

Dr. Kropp heard similar sentiments directly from the counselors. “They thought our students were fantastic,” she said. “The women on their staff said, ’I’ve been so impressed. When I heard college students, I thought they would all be on their cell phones and iPods, and talking in clusters the whole time.‘ I never saw a cell phone.”

Dan Matthews was equally impressed and said, “The campers, their families and Camp Blue Skies have raved about the experience that was provided for the campers. We could not have done it with the students’ devoted service.”

The students thoroughly enjoyed working with their faculty advisors during the weeklong experience. “Dr. Kropp and Dr. Wolfe were great mentors and examples. They laughed with us and cried with us, and were excellent examples of great professors who are also great people,” said Claire Goodwin.
From left to right: Claire Goodwin, Amanda Elmore, Brandon Black, Caroline Greene, Megan Brock. Front Row: Jack St. Jean.
"Working with the Georgia Southern students at Camp Blue Skies really showed me the quality and caliber of students who comprise our community here at GSU. The students were motivated, they took initiative, they put the campers before themselves, they were agreeable, and ultimately, they made a tremendous difference in the lives of the campers whom they served this week," said Dr. Wolfe.

The connection the students had to the camp and the campers was deep, even before they arrived. In the student applications, Dr. Kropp shared that it was the students' personal interest and motivation, including having a family member with disability, which made this such a great group of students.

"I choose to go on the trip because I wanted to spend my spring break doing something that is not part of the normal college spring break experience. In addition, my brother has cerebral palsy, so I have grown up around children with mental disabilities. I wanted a chance to see in a more in depth way what working with adults with mental disabilities was like, while also gaining experience working with people who are different from me," Goodwin said. "Even in everyday conversation, this week helped enforce to me that people are people, no matter the differences. We all want to be talked to, listened to, and laughed with."

Each day began with breakfast at 8 a.m., and students were constantly on duty until lights out at 10 p.m. "They were long days, hardly any breaks, plus they are living in the cabins with the campers, but everyone was smiling and happy all the time," said Dr. Kropp.

After dinner every night was a slideshow with pictures from the day's activities. The list of activities was endless and included fishing, tie-dying, singing in a song-writing session, learning about nutrition through making healthy snacks like smoothies and pizza, zip-lining, climbing wall, roasting s'mores at a bonfire, making ceramics, panning for gold, dancing, and playing kickball in the Wacky Olympics in costumes.

"It's so hard to pick a favorite activity. My favorite part was how proud I was of the GSU students," said Dr. Kropp.

"My least favorite part was saying goodbye. I met some of the most inspiring and uplifting people in the world, and I was sad to watch them go," said Goodwin.

While it was hard to leave, the dance on the last night was especially memorable to junior psychology major Megan Brock. "Everyone came out and danced the night away. It was the perfect ending because it just reminded me of high school homecoming, and I realized that they probably didn't even feel comfortable when or if they went to their high school prom. They felt completely at ease and I had as great a time as they did," she said.

Brock's motivation for volunteering ties in to her career goals. "Basically, I chose to attend because I hope to end up working with children with developmental disabilities and wanted experience with an older crowd outside of the typical setting. I felt that I could not only see what it would be like to work with that population but also found that we had more similarities than differences."

While the focus of the week was on the campers, each student left with just as many new friends and memories.

"I have never had so much fun in my life! I can't say that statement enough. These campers that became my friends throughout the week were my age. They had the same desires and dreams that I do. However, people don't take the time to listen to them or get to know them," said Caroline Greene.

"On Monday, I had a camper who was about 30 years old. She was terrified to do the zip line. So was I. So, thinking she would never do it, I said, 'If you do it, I'll do it.' Well, after a lot of tears and cheering on, she did it! I was so freaked out. This meant I had to do it. Next thing I knew I was harnessed in. I got to the top and I told them that I was going to close my eyes, and they could push me. The next thing I knew I was suspended over the lake about 50 feet in the air! It was amazing! This one act of spontaneity allowed me to be open the whole week and experience anything that was thrown my way!" Greene said.

Beyond their individual experiences, the students gained a deeper understanding for their role as members of the Honors program.

"During my FYE class last semester, Dr. Engel expressed to us that the purpose of Georgia Southern University's Honors Program was to help you be successful both inside and outside the classroom. The program is a way to give you an experience that takes what you learn in the classroom and applies it to life, and in turn, the experience gives you a chance to learn from life, your real world classroom. This is what this week was for me, a 'real life' classroom," said Goodwin.

"It has definitely helped me understand the purpose of requiring some type of alternative break or volunteer trip. I have always been one to desire to give back to the community and serve others, but I see that the honors program aims at shaping me not only into a student with a great GPA and education, but also focuses on improving me as a person and opening my mind up to new experiences," said Brock.

Jack St. Jean said, "It allowed me to realize the tremendous impact I can have on an individual's life."

"I would greatly encourage this trip to other Honors students. We can all learn something, and even if you are a little afraid to take the leap to work with others with disabilities, remember that they are just as nervous to meet you, and you will get more out of it than you put into it. This trip was very rewarding," said Goodwin.  Colleen McNally
Andres Montes is working to bring affordable health care to Bulloch County.
Never say never. Recent Georgia Southern University Honors Program graduate Andres Montes, who was a pre-med Philosophy major, learned to never doubt a dream as his vision of establishing a free healthcare clinic in Statesboro, Georgia came to fruition. As his idea moved into action, he was able to enlist collaborators and supporters and the goal quickly turned into a college- and community-wide effort to provide health care to the uninsured of Statesboro and Bulloch County.

Born and raised in Savannah, Georgia, Montes grew up in a medical household. His credits the influence of his father, Ismael Montes, a general and cardiothoracic surgeon who was raised in extreme poverty in Mexico, along with the national discussion on health in shaping his view on affordable care.

“It was a combination of my father’s teaching and the 2008 Presidential election which presented the idea anyone can bring about a change that really inspired me to pursue my idea,” said Montes. During the election both candidates called for some kind of change, and Montes realized he wanted to act, not just talk. “I thought, well why not see if I can affect health care in some way or another by providing service for those who don’t have insurance,” said Montes.

Currently, there are close to over 50 million people who don’t have access to health care in the United States. In the state of Georgia alone, 1.9 million or about 20 percent of the population lack this service. “Growing up in a household of a doctor,” said Montes, “I have some idea of the need for care for those who don’t have insurance.”

Hearts and Hands, Inc. is a primary health care clinic that offers medical, dental, and vision care to uninsured patients. “We also have a specialty referral network just in case we have a few patients who need care beyond just primary care,” said Montes.

Potential patients must fill out an application and submit to a screening process to determine eligibility. To qualify for care, patients must be 18 or older, possess no health insurance, are not on Medicaid or Medicare, and fall into the category of income guidelines at 200 percent of the poverty line. “The entire goal is to reach people in the gap, meaning those people who make enough money that they aren’t on Medicaid and those who don’t make enough to buy their own insurance,” said Montes.

Montes explained he feels many people create somewhat of a stereotype of the people who do not possess health care. Instead of thinking people truly cannot afford care, it is commonly believed they are just lazy and attempt to live off government programs.

According to Montes, “The majority of the people seen are actually hard-working people who just can’t afford health care or who have just been let go of a job. It is quite a shame. The stories we hear everyday are quite sad.” Many people walk into Hearts and Hands injured or sick or in severe pain because they just cannot afford to go to a doctor. “So that is where we come in, just to provide a place where they have care,” said Montes.

Building a free health care clinic from the ground up is not an easy task, but Montes, along with several other Georgia Southern students, got the process started with an announcement at a University Honors Program event and further reached out to the community through a Facebook group. “I started getting a lot of students interested in wanting to help out,” said Montes. “Our team knew we needed to start taking each step carefully to hopefully end up establishing something.”

One of the first steps Montes and his team took was to find physicians. Since his father is a doctor, Montes asked if he would mind coming from Savannah to see patients in Statesboro. His father and his close friend, Dr. Fernando Perez, who is an ER doctor in Statesboro, both agreed to help with the project.

The next step was to find a place for the doctors to work, and finding a location became a multi-step process. “Because we lacked funds we approached some of the churches in town,” explained Montes. “One church organization offered us the location of their downtown office, so that is where we started.”

As the clinic began to develop Andres and his team realized they did not possess the expertise required to permanently establish Hearts and Hands into the Statesboro community. “A few of us in the group started searching for organizations that help start clinics. We stumbled upon an organization called Volunteers in Medicine Inc. (VIM) which is a national nonprofit corporation,” said Montes.

VIM has over 80 clinics all over the nation. The purpose of the organization is to provide advice on start-up procedures and sustainability for clinics. Hearts and Hands Inc. became the first undergraduate student-founded clinic to be advised by VIM.

“When we contacted VIM they explained to us that we were the first group of college students they were going to take a chance with. They had been approached by college students before but they had turned them down. They felt that we had the ability to succeed so they decided to take a chance,” explained Montes.

The very first instructions given by VIM to Hearts and Hands team were to incorporate and become a nonprofit organization. With the help of a marketing major at GSU, the name of Hearts and Hands, Inc. was drafted along with the slogan: “Taking Our Hearts and Using Our Hands to Give Hope.”

Due to confusion of the location and lack of space, Montes moved to look for a more permanent location for the clinic. Luckily, Pastor John Long of Son’s Light Fellowship Baptist Church was more than happy to offer some extra space for the clinic. Son’s Light Church is located in what was once an old motel. The structure contained several empty motel rooms that, after some work by Denis Nelson and his team at American General Maintenance, were transformed into exam rooms.

As the clinic was shaping up, the idea of expanding services into dental care was raised when Montes was attending a meeting on campus where a local dentist, Dr. Jarret Walden, a graduate of
GSU spoke. "Dr. Walden had just graduated from dental school, and I thought maybe he could expand the clinic," said Montes. "I approached him about the idea, and he said that if we could get it off the ground he would love to help!"

Within a few months Montes’ team had over 11 dentists who were willing to volunteer, and because dental equipment is extremely expensive they were able to work an arrangement with the dentists. The patients would be screened at Hearts and Hands, Inc. every third Thursday of each month and then sent to the dental offices.

"It was amazing to work this out," said Montes. "It started up in July of last year. Ever since July they have given over $37,000 in free dental care for our patients."

The medical portion of the clinic was more difficult to establish. Nevertheless, Montes and his team continued working diligently and the clinic now runs second and fourth Tuesday of every month. Montes explained that Hearts and Hands is working to one day be open every Tuesday of the month.

The current staff of Hearts and Hands, Inc. includes over 30 non-medical volunteers, 11 physicians, 11 dentists, one nurse practitioner, four nurses, and several paramedical students from Ogeechee Technical College. "If you come out on a clinic night most of the volunteers are GSU students performing different tasks for Hearts and Hands," said Montes.

As CEO, Montes works to provide the vision for the organization every day. He explained he works on providing a "strategic vision" and executing it. One of his most recent accomplishments includes becoming more involved with MedBank, a non-profit organization formed to assist uninsured and underinsured citizens with obtaining prescription medication free-of-charge.

"We are forming a wonderful partnership with Med Bank, based out of Savannah," said Montes, "We are hoping they will help us get low cost medication for our patients in a matter of 10 days."

In addition to working with MedBank, Hearts and Hands has also recently been given a $120,000 grant from the Georgia Baptist Health Care Ministry. Montes believes this grant has helped solidify the clinic in the community.

After being open for quite some time now, Hearts and Hands, Inc. has touched the lives of many people in the city of Statesboro. "Dentists have told us stories of people who have sat down in their chairs to get their treatment and who have started crying because they never believed they would be able to get care to rid the pain," said Montes. He explained it can be challenging for him at times because he is not necessarily always at the forefront, but it is "giving people's lives back that is important."

In the future, Montes sees Hearts and Hands Inc. expanding. Working out of only two exam rooms can be extremely difficult. "Hopefully in the next four months we will be drafting plans to expand our current location," said Montes. He expressed having a backup of applicants which need to be seen. Having more space and being open more frequently would offer an opportunity to see more patients.

Montes believes there will always be room for improvement of the clinic. "Of course, I have learned a lot when the clinic was getting established. We have lessons learned and we will continue to better ourselves in the future," he said. "Growing is definitely our next step."

Currently, Montes is preparing to apply to law school. He plans to start making transitions of some of the positions at the clinic so his role will be taken care of while at school.

 Knowing that Hearts and Hands, Inc. has been a collaborative effort is one thing that Montes is most proud of. "What is amazing to me is that so many people have come together, people of different backgrounds, of different ethnicities, people from the college and the community have all come together to connect hands to help people in our community who had no place to go before we opened," said Montes. Natalie Demarko

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Ryan Lewis Will Fix the Economy

Accounting major Ryan Lewis is seeking solutions to the current economic crisis, and his focus is on the derivatives market. “There’s a lot of regulation to bring derivatives under government control,” said Lewis. “It’s an interesting time to be in a regulatory field, and I’d like to place myself in a leadership role there.” Lewis will soon have time to explore this field at Harvard Business School, but first he will have a chance to start work this summer as he begins his career at DRW Trading Group in Chicago.

Lewis has already gained a wealth of experience in the field during recent internships at Microsoft and KPMG. He thrived on the competitive process applying for these prized internships, and brought that same energy to his work. Microsoft gave Lewis “real work,” hiring him on the external management team of capital markets, governing the entire company’s investments.

“It’s not a stapling papers kind of internship,” he said. “My big project for the summer was finding a manager—a management firm—to manage about $250,000 of capital. That’s just a percentage of their total capital, but for a college student, that’s a lot of money.”

During the twelve week internship in Seattle, Washington, Lewis also helped conduct European-based market stress tests to gauge the resilience of certain markets. He and his boss presented their findings to their superiors as well as to the chief economist at Deutsche Bank.

“You don’t get the time of day with that kind of person....I had access to all the top Wall Street banks and was able to hear their opinions on the market and where we were,” Lewis said.

In fact, Lewis so impressed his employers that Microsoft offered to hire him, even without a graduate degree. “The manager I selected is still managing the portfolio and the models I created are still in place,” Lewis tells proudly. The knowledge that Microsoft wanted him, though he turned them down, encouraged him greatly.

Nominated by Georgia Southern for the Rhodes Scholarship and Marshall Scholarship, Lewis applied to study financial derivatives in the financial economics program at Oxford University. Lewis made it through a rigorous review and interview process on campus leading to his nomination but, unfortunately, was not one of the 32 recipients picked this year for the Rhodes, nor was he chosen for the Marshall.

Undaunted, Lewis has been accepted to Harvard Business School, where he will commence studies in 2013, after deferring acceptance to work for two years with DRW Trading Group in Chicago. “Harvard is one hundred percent case-based, so I will learn from real live cases, after spending two years in the working world,” said Lewis.

Lewis is quick to note the tremendous support and encouragement from his Georgia Southern professors and advisors, who have been vital to his current prospects. A mutual interest in derivatives brought Lewis to Dr. Karen Hamilton, who calls Lewis, “One of those students every professor is excited to work with.”

Together Lewis and Dr. Hamilton studied the Basil III, a regulatory framework for banks which would force banks to hold more money and give out less in loans. That research was further developed into his Honors Thesis, “Financial Crisis: Mitigating the Effects of Index Futures and Equity Price Divergence.”

“There are many things about Ryan that make him a good student to work with, but the two biggest benefits are that Ryan is self-motivated and creative. He put a lot of thought and effort into his project and worked diligently to bring his ideas together into a research paper that brought some new ideas to the table. We would discuss how to revise the paper and Ryan listened and incorporated the ideas quickly and appropriately,” Dr. Hamilton said.

In thinking what the future will bring to American markets, Lewis says, “I don’t know how things will change or what will change, but the markets will be completely different. I’ll be able to shape that change. Things are changing daily, and I want to be the one pushing it.”

Katie Brookins
Students take internships to gain experience and knowledge within their chosen field of study, and many of them also use the opportunity to see what the workplace will be like. Last summer, Mathematics major Danielle Ripley came away from her internship with the National Center for Education Statistics thinking of a change in career plans.

The National Center for Education Statistics is a section of the United States Department of Education that collects and processes data dealing with education in the United States of America and abroad. The officials working in the Center report their findings to their superiors, and that information is then used to help determine U.S. education policy.

Ripley is a senior mathematics major who, after graduation, plans to attend Georgia Tech to earn her master's and doctorate degrees in mathematics. Before she went to D. C. she had planned on becoming an educator; however, after the internship she is now considering working in an office setting. Her experience in Washington was both insightful and exiting; enough so for her to change her career plans.

"I never imagined I would enjoy living in a large city. The environment was amazing; I felt very connected to what's going on in the country. And only in Washington D.C. can you have a picnic at 2:30 a.m. on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial!" she said.

She enjoyed the work: "I worked in the international section so we focused on international assessments, such as PISA and TIMSS. While there, I worked on a website for children, formatted tables for future publications, and reviewed potential questions for future assessments. TIMSS is short for Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, which keeps track of American 4th and 8th grade students' achievements in math and science while also comparing these achievements to that of other nations' students. PISA is short for Programme for International Student Assessment, which gives international standardized assessments to 15-year-old students around the world.

Ripley really enjoyed her time in Washington D.C., and may one day work there. When asked if the honors program had helped her with this internship and career goals, she said, "I'm pretty certain that the presence of '1906 Scholar' with a short description on my resume helped me stand out" and also "the ability to study abroad, have internships, and participate in undergraduate research all helped prepare me for my future career. Each opportunity caused me to learn my limits and stretch them." Nicholas Hoad

Kayla Whaley knew she wanted to work with non-profit organizations in her career, but after her internship last summer with the Georgia Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, she became more convinced of this path. Whaley, a Political Science major, is no stranger to the difficulties of living with a disability, as she suffers from muscular dystrophy. However, living with this disease has given her a passion for helping others with disabilities.

Whaley's internship with the society involved serving as the sole employee for one of the directors at the Society. She found the experience to be very rewarding.

"Oh my gosh, it was amazing! I was not sure what to expect, but the MS Society makes an effort to ensure that interns actually make a difference," she said.

In her duties, she met with senate staffers, went to conferences, and worked on a major project for the Society. This project, the most memorable thing she did with the Society, resulted in a booklet filled with stories from MS patients. The booklets' target audience was Georgia legislators and was designed to inform them what life with MS is like. The booklet comprised two to three stories from each of the 13 districts of Georgia.

Whaley's job with this booklet was collecting the actual stories. MS patients registered with the Society were surveyed to gauge willingness of participation, and those willing were called by Whaley. She had 10 to 45 minute conversations with them, recording these stories for the booklet.

She had never worked with people like this before, and doing so confirmed for her that she wanted a career involved in helping others. Upon graduation this spring, Whaley will stay at Georgia Southern University to earn her Master's in Public Administration before she embarks on a career with non-profit organizations.

Nicholas Hoad
Two Honors students were honored by the Barry M. Goldwater Foundation this past spring. Biology major Katherine Mincey won a Scholarship for her research into the relationship between plants and insects, and Chemistry major Stephen Crooke was recognized with an Honorable Mention by the foundation.

The Barry M. Goldwater Foundation provides scholarships to undergraduate students who are developing promising research in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). The Foundation made 275 awards to sophomores and juniors from the United States out of a pool of 1,095 applicants. The scholarship awards up to $7,500 over up to two years to cover the cost of tuition, fees, books, and room and board.

Bret Danilowicz, Dean of the Allen E. Paulson College of Science and Technology, said, "Katherine and Stephen's awards also reflect the quality of the instruction and mentoring they have received from their supervisors and other faculty in the College. Given that these awards are the most prestigious honor an undergraduate science, technology, engineering or math student can receive, we cannot help but be proud and inspired by their achievements."

Mincey, a 1906 Scholar who is majoring in biology, is researching whether plants can be used to draw potentially harmful metals from the soil without having a negative effect on the ecosystem.

"My current research is to determine the effects of the nickel levels in certain plants on caterpillars' growth and reproduction. The purpose of this research is to determine if using these plants as a method to clean up heavy metal pollution is an effective yet safe technique. The caterpillars are the first step in the food chain and we want to make sure that the nickel will not be passed to other species in the environment," Mincey said.

Last summer, Mincey participated in a National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates at the University of Virginia. On campus, she works closely with Dr. Bill Irby. She plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Evolutionary Biology and research and teach in a university.

Crooke is a Paulson Scholar and his research is focusing on a more efficient and cost effective way of creating certain chemical compounds in synthetic sponges that have the same properties as sea sponges. His research will be used in the fight against cancer.

"The natural products that have been isolated have displayed a promising amount of activity in biological testing, and my research lab will eventually be sending our synthetic "natural" products to the National Cancer Institute for testing as anti-cancer treatments," Crooke explains.

He works closely with Dr. Christine Whitlock and Dr. Michele McGibony and already has a published one paper as a lead author in Molbank, a peer reviewed journal. He intends to pursue his Ph.D. in Biochemistry and work in the pharmaceutical field.

Crooke says Georgia Southern's strong support of research by undergraduates has been key to his success. "I feel that my close relationships with my advisers helped in progressing my research through the years."

Mincey agrees, "For me, the guidance and support of Dr. Risa Cohen and my mentor Dr. William Irby, as well as many other professors, have been influential in my accomplishments and were important in my success."
Katie Brookins, 1906 Scholar and Ruffin Scholar travelled in October 2010 to the Library of Congress to be one of three undergraduates chosen to present at the first joint meeting of the National Conference on Undergraduate Research and the Council on Undergraduate Research, “Recognizing Tomorrow's Possibilities: Celebrating a New Era of Undergraduate Research.” She journeyed again to D.C. this past February to be a panelist at the 2011 Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWWP) Annual Conference and Book Fair. At both events she discussed the research and writing behind her latest short story, “Battle Soot.”

At the Library of Congress, Brookins, a Writing and Linguistics and History double-major, was able to talk about her innovative research process in developing the story, and she received numerous requests for copies of the story. She also spent some of her time meeting legislators and policy-makers and was able to argue for supporting undergraduate research. Brookins defies research norms by creatively incorporating social media with a passion for history and writing, her two majors. Like most college students she can easily navigate websites like Facebook and YouTube. But unlike most college students, Brookins saw these sites as rich and meaningful sources for academic work. The result is her 18 page fictional short story, “Battle Soot,” which focuses on a real person, a soldier in Iraq whose best friend was killed on a mission she lead. Brookins found her inspiration in a *New York Times* article for an assignment for Laura Valeri’s writing class.

“As Katie developed the story, I read through several of her drafts, some of which we discussed in class. Katie was really amazing at how much she absorbed, how much research she did, and how many times she revised. She was really very steeply immersed in the story and the results show it,” said Valeri.

And those results also received much positive feedback at the AWWP Conference where Brookins participated on a panel with Valeri, Georgia Southern Writing and Linguistics professor Sonya Huber, and Honors alumna Jessie Thiemann.

The story, written in first-person narrative, past tense style, is full of heavy emotion and addresses themes of guilt, regret, women in leadership roles, and respect. Brookins said the writing process required much imagination, although she tried to find as many facts as possible to get the shape of the story.

“Research allowed me to pursue this creative endeavor,” Brookins said. “I learned so much about sources and current situations. It’s amazing what you can find in the public domain.”

For the autobiographical narrative, she searched through photos tagged on Facebook and watched YouTube videos for insight. “I could see what it looks like when a rocket-propelled grenade goes off. They talked about getting ice cream, and then an improvised explosive device (IED) goes off. They talk about Wii and Facebook, and everyday things that I worked in to the narrative,” she said.

“I think that we have to make use of what we have. I don't think you'll find a scholarly article that describes what an IED looks like when it explodes. As writers we have to be creative about how we approach our research and find authoritative sources. In this case, I think that the YouTube video was quite authoritative,” said Valeri.

The young writer said one of her biggest challenges was finding the characters’ voices. “I heard her speak in YouTube videos, but these are clipped and fast paced. It’s hard to create the diction for a real person that you don't know,” said Brookins.

Another challenge for Brookins was she the fact she was writing a story about a real person. “I worried that is might not be okay ethically,” she said. Brookins resolved to find the main character on Facebook and messaged her regarding the story.

“The line between truth and fiction is a difficult question to answer and one that every writer must grapple with over their career, especially now when privacy no longer has such clearly defined boundaries. The subject of Katie’s story put her life on the Internet for everyone to see, but that does not give anyone license to appropriate it, necessarily, or at least not without some important caveats. I am glad that Katie was really mature and sensitive about the issue and contacted the person herself and showed her the story and obtained permission for it. She did the right thing,” said Valeri.

The story became Brookins’s Honors Thesis/Capstone project, and she continues to work on it and develop her characters. Colleen McNally
Political Science major Allison Beasley spent her final semester of college working in the Georgia Senate, an opportunity made possible through the Georgia Legislative Internship Program.

“I was at the point where I was ready to put what I have learned into practice,” Beasley said. “It has been an adjustment, but a good change. Being a political science major, it has been a great experience seeing what I learned.”

Allison interned in Sen. Buddy Carter’s office. Carter is a Republican Senator of District 1, which includes Bryan, Chatham and Liberty counties, and is the chair of the State Institutions and Property Committee. Beasley faced different tasks every day, ranging from answering phones to sitting in committee meetings and taking notes for the senator when he could not attend.

While Beasley has worked with Habitat for Humanity, done service work in China, and has been involved with Oxfam in recent years, she said she has not had much work experience in the political field and therefore was not quite sure what to expect at first. Now, however, she has developed a confidence in the senators’ attitudes towards their work.

“Through my interactions with the State Senators here as well as the discourse I have heard on the floor of the Senate, I have been able to see a great deal of passion on the part of our senators regarding the work that they do here,” she said. “I feel more confident as a citizen of Georgia that I can trust this process and the senators that we have elected to serve us at the state level.” - Kelsey Decker

Honors Community Scholars: Enhancing Service-Learning and the Honors Experience

Dr. Francis Desiderio, Assistant Director of the University Honors Program, met with the directors of several local organizations to find out what projects they had on the back burner that needed a team of volunteers to complete. “One of our goals was to increase the capacity of these organizations. What could a group of students committed for a full academic year do for them?” he said.

The students formed four teams and worked with Keep Bulloch Beautiful, the Hearts and Hands Clinic, Habitat for Humanity, and Boys and Girls Club. Early in the fall semester, each team met with their community partner, mapped out projects for the year, and began work.

Anni Rainio and Jessica Cain, who worked with Keep Bulloch Beautiful, both appreciated the team approach. Jessica Cain said, “We were able to discuss our experiences and brainstorm about different aspects of the project.”

To ensure these projects were running smoothly, the students met with Dr. Desiderio every two weeks to discuss their projects and how they were proceeding. These meetings, the Honors Colloquium in Service-Learning, were a place to discuss issues faced on the projects, trade best practices, and discuss some of the underlying ideas and theories in service-learning and community building.

Lauren Ryan, who worked on the Boys and Girls Club Project, said, “My favorite part of the colloquium was the opportunity to discuss our project with the other students. The discussions helped me gain a better understanding of my role in the community.”

With successful projects like a college preparatory program for at-risk youth in the Boys and Girls Club afterschool program and a new home owner’s manual for Habitat for Humanity, marketing pamphlets and fund raising concepts for Hearts and Hands Clinic, and events planning and execution with Keep Bulloch Beautiful, the students completed quite a bit of work over the course of the year. Dr. Desiderio hopes to continue working on these projects next year with another group of Honors Community Scholars.
University Honors Program student Tiffany Simmons has won several nationally competitive scholarships to support her upcoming year-long study abroad trip to Japan. The Fine Arts major from Newnan, Georgia will be spending her entire sophomore year in Japan’s prestigious Nagoya University with the generous support from the Benjamin A. Gilman Foundation, the Freeman Award for Study in Asia, and the Fund for Education.

“I’ve wanted to go to Japan since middle school,” she said. “I’m hoping to get my minor in Japanese language.” She said the Georgia Southern University's Japanese program was a major part of her decision to attend school here.

The total amount from the three awards, along with a study abroad scholarship from the University Honors Program will cover her expenses for the trip, which she estimates will cost around $16,000. These scholarships are awarded through a competitive application process, and Simmons credits the University Honors Program a great deal for providing so much information on scholarships that support studying abroad. “There are just so many scholarships out there, and the Honors Program gives you everything you need to apply for them.”

Simmons will be fully enrolled in classes at Nagoya University for a year. She will be taking many language and culture classes and says she is trying to find a host family. She plans on spending a lot of her free time traveling the country and taking in the sights. The Tokyo Museum, the Mount Fuji Rock Festival, and the International Student Festivals are a few of the events she hopes to attend in Japan. “Nagoya University is about two hundred miles from Tokyo in one direction and one hundred miles from Osaka in the other, so I hope to see both of them a lot.”

She should leave for Japan sometime in August or early September of 2011. The exact details of her trip have been slightly delayed because of the tragic events surrounding the March earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan. Simmons, however, remains optimistic and still fully intends to spend next year at Nagoya University. “I’m still very confident about going. Even though it was a huge tragedy, the whole country did not shut down. Everything will be fine, even if it’s not right now.” Jordan Logue

Students Present at Southern Regional Honors Conference in Little Rock

Four honors students and Assistant Director Dr. Francis Desiderio traveled to Little Rock, Arkansas to attend the Southern Regional Honors Council annual conference.

International Trade major Annemarie Hall presented research based on her Honors Thesis in a paper entitled, “Curing Monolingualism: Rethinking Foreign Language Education in a Multilingual World.” In her well-received paper, Hall asks questions about foreign language education in the United States and makes the argument for earlier inclusion of language classes in elementary education.

Political Science major Victoria Thomas presented her research, “Honor Killings: A Product of Patriarchal-Dominated Societies,” which also became her Honors Thesis. Thomas said she received a lot of positive feedback from her audience and enjoyed the exchange of ideas with honors students from around the southeast.

Marketing major Anni Rainio and Political Science major Rachel Rozier joined Dr. Desiderio on a panel discussing service-learning and Honors Community Scholars (see story page 22). They discussed the inaugural year of the opportunity and the projects that they worked. Afterwards, audience members asked Rainio and Rozier how they balance their studies with their work in the community.

“I was proud to present my experience with Honors Community Scholars,” said Rozier. “I gained a greater respect for Georgia Southern and what we are doing in the Honors Program.”

This was the first off-campus conference for all students, and each of them said the experience of presenting and exchanging ideas with their colleagues was very valuable.
Honors@GeorgiaSouthern Receives National Award for Best Magazine

The University Honors Program at Georgia Southern won first prize for best honors program magazine/newsletter in a competition sponsored by the National Collegiate Honors Council. The magazine was chosen best in the faculty-administrator-student produced. Accepting the award at the National Collegiate Honors Council annual conference in Kansas City was Dr. Steven Engel, Director of the University Honors Program.

While the magazine fell under the category of faculty-administrator-student published, Honors@GeorgiaSouthern is primarily written, photographed, and produced by the students. “We have some very talented writers and photographers among our 450 students,” says Dr. Engel. “And it is great to be able to rely on them to design and layout the magazine as well.”

The idea for an honors magazine started in 2007, with the primary purpose of keeping honors alumni connected with the activities of the current students and faculty in the University Honors Program. “Once we heard from folks about the quality of the publication and what it had to say about the program, we started using it for recruitment of new students as well,” said Engel. Published in the spring of each year, the distribution of each issue includes over 2000 alumni, students, parents, and friends of the University Honors Program.

Alyssa Oravec is joining the Peace Corps

Alyssa Oravec wants to make a difference in the world. Oravec, a Management major with an emphasis in Human Resource Development, has taken many steps towards accomplishing that goal during her time at Georgia Southern.

During the summer of 2010, she studied abroad in Botswana. While taking classes in Microfinance and Sustainable Development, she also aided Somarelang Tikologo, a non-government organization, with projects such as developing marketing plans for local entrepreneurs and assisting planting community gardens for that area.

The experience of working with a local NGO in a foreign country piqued her interest in global activism, and convinced her to apply to the Peace Corps. She was recently accepted and is assigned to work in Zambia with its fishing industry.

Once in Zambia, Oravec will help improve their business operations through marketing, strategic planning, and employee development projects. She plans to eventually work in the management side of non-profit organization, and feels that her future work experience with the Peace Corps will give her invaluable insight into the ground operations of such organizations as well as experience in the business sector of a non-profit organization. Jim Moss

Kadisa Johnson Wins Award for Best Undergraduate Paper

Information Technology major Kadisa Johnson recently took first place in the undergraduate student paper competition at the Forty-First Annual Meeting of the Southeast Decision Sciences Institute. Under the mentorship of Dr. Cheryl Aasheim, she wrote a paper titled “Are IT students more ethical when it comes to behaviors related to IT?”

Johnson’s interest in the topic derives from the fact that ethics is a key trait used by employers to select IT personnel. As stated in the abstract of her paper, “Because the internet has made information more accessible, it is easier for students to plagiarize, and thus perform less ethical behaviors as a result. The goal of this paper is to determine whether IT students are more ethical with regards to IT situations than non-IT students.”

Dr. Aasheim helped Johnson in the development of both the paper and the powerpoint presentation. In fact, she said, the IT faculty as a whole supported this research study by allowing their students to take the survey and helping to export the data from Survey Monkey.

“This would not have been possible without the support of the IT faculty, and most of all Dr. Aasheim who oversaw this project from start to finish,” she said.
New Honors Office and Lounge in COBA Building

In 2009 the University Honors Program moved its administrative offices to Eidson House. Now, the program has an extension office in the College of Business Administration (COBA) building. When the new addition opened at the end of fall 2010, the oasis proved to be an instantly popular spot for honors students of every discipline, especially the more than fifty enrolled in COBA.

All honors students can access the lounge and can enjoy coffee and tea, crackers, fruit, and a variety of magazines and literature while lounging on three sofas or enjoying the private study room with a computer, white boards, and desk. The new office saw a lot of traffic in the Spring 2011 semester as it was constantly used for group meetings, a quiet place to study, and even somewhere to eat lunch in-between classes.

Finance major Kayte Carter said, “It is such a fantastic space for honors students in every major. It is wonderful to always have a quiet place to go where we do not have to search for a computer to use or reserve a room to study in. I only wish it was opened when I first started in the honors program.”

This location was opened to bring the University Honors Program experience to a popular spot on campus while aiding honors students in their fellowship and education with one another. Dr. Trey Denton, a professor in the Marketing, Management, and Logistics Department and College Honors Coordinator in COBA, was thrilled to be able to take charge of the new honors office. With his long-term involvement in the University Honors Program and his energetic and warm personality, Dr. Denton was the perfect person for this position. His personal goals for the office include expanding the honors program within the business majors, gaining access to better equipment to aid students’ learning efforts, and to be able to give more money to faculty who guide honor students in research projects.

As one of the largest and fastest growing colleges on campus, COBA has teamed up with the University Honors Program to revitalize and intensify the experience for business honors students. At least six honors sections of business courses are planned each semester, and Dr. Denton also has plans to offer honors class credit to rising seniors who would like the opportunity to turn their Honors Thesis/Capstone Project into a course with their mentor. This is an attempt to give business students the aid and mentorship that students in other fields of study already enjoy.

Jessica Cain Wins Awards for her Research

Biology major Jessica Cain won two awards for her poster at the Southeastern Estuarine Research Society (SEERS) Meeting in Athens, Ga. Cain was presented with an undergraduate research award and an overall poster award for her poster titled, “Does alginate addition enhance Spartina alterniflora salt marsh recovery?”

Cain won both the “Best Honors Undergraduate Poster” and the “3-3 Award.” The latter award was based on the criteria that a person should be able to read and understand the poster in three minutes from three feet away. Everyone at the meeting was in competition for this award.

The poster explained Cain’s research project to develop a new method of providing nitrogen to smooth cordgrass transplants. “We are experimenting with providing an energy rich carbon source to bacteria that live in the root zone of smooth cordgrass. These bacteria utilize the carbon to fuel transformation of nitrogen into a form plants can use. This prevents nitrogen pollution of coastal areas while enhancing the growth of the transplants which are used to restore valuable salt marsh habitats,” she said.

This research project began under a scholarship from the NSF ASPIRES program in summer 2010. The program is designed to give undergraduate science majors research experience. Though the project started as just a summer long experience, it has evolved into over a year’s worth of research and will become Cain’s Honors Thesis Project. “After completing the writing aspect of the project in spring 2012, we (Dr. Cohen and I) intend to submit it for publication in a scientific journal,” she said.

In fall 2012, Cain will travel to Finland for a semester study abroad. “While studying at the University of Eastern Finland, I will be taking classes like “The Finnish Environment” and discovering first hand both the biological and cultural diversity of our world,” she said.
Measuring the impact a guest speaker can have on a campus is difficult, but in fall 2009 two such speakers changed Christina (Tina) Belge’s life forever.

Rebecca Lomax and Frank Weicks of the Southeast Asia Law Enforcement Training and Consultants visited campus to speak about human trafficking, cross-border migration, child labor, sex tourism, and human rights, particularly in Thailand.

“We were able to talk with them in an International Studies class,” said Belge, a Public Relations major. “In Thailand, it is not like America, where you automatically have citizenship. They don’t have any rights. That is what really intrigued me”

Belge talked to Lomax and Weicks about the possibilities of working to address this issue and found out about an internship opportunity. The cost for the trip was primarily funded by the University Honors Program, with additional assistance from a Leadership Impact Grant, and an Individual Request from the Student Government Association.

The flight to Thailand marked Belge’s first trip abroad, as well as the only time she was afraid or alone throughout her trip.

“A few days before I travelled, there were bombings in Bangkok. I was so scared on the way over,” she said.

Sarah McCormick, the Foreign Department Coordinator at the Development and Education Programme for Daughters and Communities Centre (DEPDC), said working with Belge was a true pleasure, from start to finish.

“She landed in Thailand during the height of the red-shirt political protests in Bangkok, when one-third of the country [including the area where DEPDC is located] was under a state of emergency with strict curfew. Her orientation was to include a red-light district tour informing her of the final destination of most trafficking victims in Thailand, which had to be done at 4:00 p.m. to accommodate the curfew! Not deterred, she arrived to DEPDC ready to work and ready to learn!”

After riding to the Centre, she would teach Art in the morning to a class of about 20 to 30 students. In the afternoons, Belge, or P’Suay, meaning beautiful, big sister, as she was known by the students, taught Hip-Hop Dance and English classes as part of the Border Youth Leadership Training Program (BYLTP).

Belge said she was especially moved by one 13 year old girl she taught who had been a slave since she was six.

“The most rewarding part of the experience is getting to know the children and youth in the Centre,” she said. “Especially for a young person, meeting people their own age who have such amazing talent and dedication, despite having almost none of the opportunities that young Americans take for granted, is an intensely humbling and deeply moving experience. The human connection is what touches us at the core - it transcends barriers of language, culture, and distance.”

McCormick agrees, “The most challenging aspect is related to the most rewarding: when we come to know that these social problems are so entrenched, complex, and intertwined. When we see children who, at age seven, have already faced war, hunger, and discrimination, we want to just remove all the barriers that hold them in place. But ethnic discrimination, statelessness, and poverty are big mountains that take a long time and a lot of hands to move. In our time at DEPDC, we will always wish we could do more for these children.”

In addition to teaching, Belge worked with fellow Georgia Southern student Mikey Curtis in hosting an hour-long daily radio show, creating PowerPoint slideshows, videos, and newsletters for fundraising, benefit dinners, and email contact lists.

“This experience will be shaping her as a student in ways both immediate and long-term,” McCormick said. “There are some things that might be able to be learned in a classroom, but they could never be understood in one. Her time at DEPDC showed her the complex reality of the social problems that push people in human trafficking, and just how difficult it can be. Statelessness, poverty, refugee issues will not just be vague concepts to her anymore, they have a form, shape, and texture now that she has travelled to Thailand’s northern most city to face them firsthand.”

Belge continues to work for this issue by both fund raising and talking to students with a goal of having Georgia Southern students go there on a regular basis. She believes studying abroad is something every college student should try.

Eventually Belge wants to follow the inspiration of that fall 2009 talk and have a career in human rights law, specifically focused on child labor in Asia. Colleen McNally
Clusters of plums blossom up and down her slender, sallow branches, some a faded scarlet gold, others black as purple can be, most that ideal shade of violet red.

The bloody blossoms, swelled into welts, shrink down to carpeted ground chased by bustling bees from the hive nestled in her white boughs.

Black shadows coat her trunk and branches, silence replaces bees’ hums, scent of slow decay overcomes ripened plums, and autumn auburn pales overcomes ripened plums, scent of slow decay. Silence replaces bees’ hums, her trunk and branches, shrunk down into welts, the bloody blossoms, swelled into welts, shrink down to carpeted ground, chased by bustling bees from the hive nestled in her white boughs.

Captured inside December’s icy grip her branches snap and a snow laden wind rips her from her roots tossing her backwards into the rich, brown earth.

Jordan Tompkins Attends Practicum in Advocacy at the United Nations 2011

Jordan Tompkins travelled to New York to be a delegate at the National Women’s Studies Association Practicum in Advocacy at the United Nations. Tompkins, a junior majoring in Anthropology with a minor in Women and Gender Studies, was encouraged to apply for the opportunity by Dr. Heidi Altman, and she was selected to be one of 20 twenty students chosen to travel to the United Nations.

“I was actually the only person from not only Georgia Southern University but also the entire Southeast,” explained Jordan Tompkins. “I travelled to New York and met other women from all over the country and from several different ethnicities.”

The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the National Women’s Studies Association (NWSA) and the Center for Women’s Health and Human Rights at Suffolk University (CWHHR) all sponsored the opportunity for Tompkins, and the other 19 university students, to attend the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meetings at the United Nations in New York this past February. The trip provided opportunities for student learning and exploring career opportunities in international relations and advocacy work.

While in New York, Tompkins participated as a delegate of the WILPF, and contributed to the official documentation of both official and informal meetings.

“As a delegate of WILPF, we each went to one United Nations (UN) event and took notes about what each country said they had done about the present topics,” said Tompkins. “The meeting was very official. There were headphones to broadcast all the different languages of the countries and everything.”

In addition to the one UN event, Tompkins attended Non-Governmental Organizational (NGO) meetings and forums and learned about the process of the United Nations and what was happening on this year’s commission on the status of women.

Tompkins explained it was the 55th session of the CSW with a focus on women and girls and their relation to education, science, and technology. The committee planned to discuss women’s access to education and jobs, as well as the barriers that hinder them and how those barriers could be broken.

“Our days were packed with going to several different types of events,” said Tompkins. “Generally, I attended the NGO events because it was an opportunity to learn about different organizations and countries and what they were doing to work on these different pressing issues.”

Tompkins sees a possible future in working with these types of organizations.

“That is what I think I want to do when I get out of grad school, possibly work with an NGO, so that is what I was most interested in while there,” said Tompkins.

Tompkins said that her group would discuss everything they learned in twice-daily debriefing sessions. Tompkins explained that everyone took notes on the proceedings and discussion, and that while some of the members in her group blogged of the experience, all of the notes were sent to one of the head members of WILPF to be compiled for that year’s report.

Tompkins was surprised that the UN was not what she expected. “I honestly underestimated how big the UN meetings would be. There were thousands upon thousands of people there,” she said. “I had no idea there would be so many people there from countries all over the world.”

While at the UN, Tompkins was able to network with students from schools all over the country as well as with delegates from countries all over the world. One of the most memorable people she met was a woman from the Middle East.

“At one of the UN events I met this woman and we began talking about the current uprisings. She was really interesting to talk to and she expressed how proud she was of the people involved,” said Tompkins. The two exchanged contact information and even spoke of Tompkins coming to work with the woman’s NGO in the near future.

Overall, Tompkins was more than pleased with her experience. “I was able to learn a lot about the United Nations and how it works. I learned about platforms of talking time and exactly how the meetings are run. I learned about efforts in other countries by individuals, countries themselves, and NGOs within those countries in order to improve the status of women,” said Tompkins.

Currently, Tompkins is still a member of WILPF. As for her future, she plans to go to AmeriCorps for a few years and then attend graduate school. After she completes graduate school she sees herself working with some type of activism.

“Going to New York was a really wonderful experience to see and meet other people and understand how the United Nations worked,” she said. “I would definitely encourage anyone to go at least once.”

Natalie Demarko
The Honors Undergraduate Research Fund provides financial support to facilitate student/faculty collaborative research projects. Thanks to the generous support of friends and donors, this year the University Honors Program was able to prove over $10,000 to support these valuable research endeavors.

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<td>Supplies for research project</td>
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Mentor: Dr. Robert Pirro

Honors Research Symposium

Each year, graduating seniors present the results of their Honors Thesis/ Capstone Projects at the Honors Research Symposium. This year, over 70 students delivered their presentations at the Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 symposiums.
Honors in action

Honors Research Symposium

John Di Pietro
On the Founders View of the President’s Role in Foreign Affairs
Mentor: Dr. Barry Balleck

Megan Donaldson
How Social Media is Changing the World of Marketing
Mentor: Dr. Dena Hale

Jonathan Downs
America’s Impact on World War One
Mentor: Dr. John Steinberg

Keely Duff
Infection Prevalence Rates in Ixodes scapularis from Iowa
Mentor: Dr. Lorenza Beati

Nathan Dunn
Mathematical Modeling of the Distribution of State Aid
Mentors: Dr. Hua Wang and Dr. Rui Sun

Whitney Geeslin
An Examination of the Rates of Risk-Taking Health Behavior in Urban and Rural America
Mentor: Dr. Bryant Smalley

Kristen Grantham
Breaking the “Brass Ceiling”: A History of Women Georgia State Troopers
Mentor: Dr. Michelle Haberland

Nina Griffin
Genetic structure of Ixodes scapularis (Ixodida: Ixodidae) and host association
Mentor: Dr. Lorenza Beati

Annemarie Hall
Curing Monolingualism: Rethinking Foreign Language Education in a Multilingual World
Mentor: Dr. Nancy Shumaker

Rachel Hermecz
The Impact of Excluding Red Meat and Pork from the Diet on Short-term Fitness Performance and Perception of Performance
Mentors: Dr. Amy Jo Riggs, Dr. Helen Bland, and Dr. Bridget Melton

Nicholas Hoad
The Pragmatic Empire: The Ottoman Policy of Pragmatism over Ideology
Mentor: Dr. Vernon Egger

Christian Holmqvist
Solving Word Puzzles Under Cognitive Load
Mentor: Dr. Amy Hackney

James Andrew Horne
Modern Manifestations: Dichotomy of Opposites in Contemporary Japanese Artforms
Mentor: Dr. Julie McGuire

Anna Idelevich
Propaganda Use in the Middle Eastern Crisis: a New Battlefield in an Old War
Mentor: Dr. Krista Wiegand

Hannah Jumper
Honors Programs Developing Leaders in Nursing Education
Mentor: Dr. RoseMary Gee

Suraj-Wilson Kolamkanny
Does SharePoint fulfill its Promises?
Mentor: Dr. Adrian Gardiner

Marcela Kuijpers
The Role of AQP1 in the GI Tract of Eels
Mentor: Dr. Christopher Cutler

Melinda Laughlin
America’s Untouchables: Can We Justify This Shame Society?
Mentor: Dr. Catherine Marcum

Jeremy Lavender
From Eden to Venus: Milton, C.S. Lewis, and the Hermeneutics of Paradise
Mentor: Dr. Hemchand Gossai

Patrick Lewis
The Epic of Geronimo
Mentor: Eric Nelson

Ryan Lewis
Financial Crisis: Mitigating The Effects of Index Futures and Equity Price Divergence
Mentor: Dr. Karen Hamilton

Natalie Logue
Among the Southern Pines
Mentor: Sonya Huber

David Jon McCurdy
Historical GIS: A Case Study of the Battle of Briar Creek
Mentor: Dr. Jonathan Bryant

Charles Minshew
Surfing Alone: The effect of social media use on the political participation of Georgia Southern University students during the 2010 election
Mentor: Dr. Patrick Novotny

Richard Minshew
The Effect of IFRS on Managerial Accounting
Mentor: Dr. Britton McKay

Kristin Mock
When the Biting Begins: The Challenges of Adolescent Romance in Stephenie Meyer’s Twilight
Mentor: Dr. Hemchand Gossai

Andres Montes
The Power of a Dream: A Political Case Study
Mentor: Dr. Hemchand Gossai
## Honors Research Symposium

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Thirty Years
OF
Honors

In 1982, Dr. Hew Joiner led several dedicated faculty in offering the first honors classes at Georgia Southern to a select group of outstanding students. The Bell Honors Program (1982-1997) provided a rigorous liberal arts education to Georgia Southern's very best students. The program also served as a national model for honors education. Today, the University Honors Program (1998-present) continues to provide challenge and support for hard-working and intellectually curious students.

2012 will mark the thirtieth year of honors education at Georgia Southern University. Alumni, students and friends can expect to hear more details regarding recognition of this milestone in the months to come.
The data provided on these pages provides an overview of the current state and recent growth of the University Honors Program.
2010-2011 by the numbers

Number of Honors Students

- Fall 2005: 265
- Fall 2006: 295
- Fall 2007: 306
- Fall 2008: 343
- Fall 2009: 406
- Fall 2010: 451

Honors 2010-2011 Data

- 451 Honors Students (39% men, 61% women) (84% Caucasian, 16% non-white)
- 399 Georgia residents (88%)
- 14 States represented
- 18 Countries represented
- 91% Freshman retention rate
- 95 Honors courses offered
- 5300 Hours of service and leadership
- 149 Faculty teaching honors courses or mentoring honors students

Honors Courses Offered

- 2005-2006: 47
- 2006-2007: 48
- 2007-2008: 56
- 2008-2009: 79
- 2009-2010: 85
- 2010-2011: 95

Honors Freshman Retention Rates

- Fall 2005 Cohort: 90%
- Fall 2006 Cohort: 90%
- Fall 2007 Cohort: 90%
- Fall 2008 Cohort: 94%
- Fall 2009 Cohort: 91%
Honors Students
By Academic College

- Science and Technology (COST) 158
- Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) 152
- Health and Human Sciences (CHHS) 56
- Business Administration (COBA) 49
- Education (COE) 18
- International Studies 18
- Undeclared 15
- Information Technology (CIT) 10

2011 Incoming Freshman Class Projections

- New freshmen: 145
- Georgia Residents (88%): 128
- States represented: 13
- Average SAT: 1265
- Average ACT: 28.6
- Average GPA (unweighted): 3.8

Program Applicants

- 2005-2006: 374
- 2006-2007: 419
- 2007-2008: 607
- 2008-2009: 713
- 2009-2010: 709
- 2010-2011: 733
Honors students excel both in and out of the classroom. More of our students are receiving national recognition for their accomplishments. Many of the educational experiences that transform these lives require costs in supplies, travel and time. Your generous support helps defray the costs for the growing number of outstanding honors students.

**Your investment can support:**

- Honors Study Abroad trips
- Research Experiences for Undergraduates
- Honors Alternative Break trips
- Travel to Professional Conferences to Present Research
- Honors Service-Learning Experiences

Donations are tax deductible. Their value is immeasurable.

To make a contribution, visit georgiasouthern.edu/honors and click *Invest in Honors*