Honors @ Georgia Southern

University Honors Program Students and Staff

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Honors in Albania
From The Director

International experience and global perspective are critical components of a college education today. Recently, the University Honors Program sent seven students and two professors to Albania and several other locations in the Balkans. This site was chosen because it provides an excellent opportunity to examine the ways in which people address healing in post-conflict and post-communist societies. Like any post-conflict society, Albania grapples with how to approach its past. Our students explored that past with Albanian university students, NGOs and with people who experienced these troubled times. There is a proud tradition of honors education at Georgia Southern University. For the past thirty years, hundreds of honors students have been challenged by their professors and by their talented peers as well. I am proud of this tradition of excellence. In recognition of this milestone, we will host the “Thirty Years of Honors” reunion event October 20 and 21, 2012. Details about the event are included in this issue and more details about how to register are on the honors website. I hope to see many of our students, our alumni, your families as well as our current and retired professors at this event. It promises to be a great occasion to renew old friendships and to start new ones.

As always, I hope you enjoy this issue of Honors @ Georgia Southern.

Sincerely yours,
Steve 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 world-wide perspective through academic courses, study abroad opportunities and co-curricular experiences.

Cover Photo: Elijah Anderson emerges from a communist-era bunker in Albania.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dr. Steven Engel
Director, University Honors Program

Kelsey Keane
English, 2014
Co-Editor
Writer
Photographer

Paola Robelo
Graphic Design, 2014
Co-Editor
Design and Layout
Photographer

Contributors
Natalie Demarko
Journalism, 2013

Molly Laughlin
Political Science, 2011

Jordan Logue
Biology, 2013

Colleen McNally
Journalism, 2014

E. Feagin Oliver
English, 2015

Taylor Tyson
Writing and Linguistics, 2015

Dr. Steven Engel
Director
University Honors Program

Dr. Francis Desiderio
Associate Director
University Honors Program

HONORS @ Georgia Southern

STAFF

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Balkans. The landscape of mountain travelers—their home on wheels—Albania’s capital city, Tirana, students after getting acquainted with Montenegro, and the Greek island of Corfu.

found in four countries, including Kosovo, immersed themselves in Albanian culture long history of once-closed Albania and Lori Amy. Students were introduced to the gram of its kind in the region. Students Eli of Albania. It is believed to be the first pro

journeyed on a three-week trip based out seven University Honors Program students journeyed on a three-week trip based out of Albania. It is believed to be the first pro-
gam of its kind in the region. Students Eli-

Andersen, Ashley Boyer, Cad Ennis, Kelsey Keane, Molly Laughlin, Chelsea Me-
deiros, and Feagin Oliver took two courses during their travels. Politics of Ethnicity in
narrative, memory, and self-determination. The stop in Gjirokastra, located in the southernmost region of Albania, was particularly memorable because stu-
dents were able to see the intersection of politics, ideology, and urban development. Students met with the Gjirokaster Develop-
ment Project staff, a group of professionals dedicated to the historical preservation of the “city of stone.” Students were able to see the communist-era tunnels that run under the city’s mountains. Exploration of these tunnels provided the entire group with tangible evidence of the mindset of those living in communist Albania from 1976 to 1991 during the time of Dictator Enver Hoxha. Rarely seen by even Alba-

nians themselves, the tunnels are an eerie reminder of a traumatic history much of Albania struggles to forget. In addition to the tunnel networks, the entire country is peppered with several hundred thousand communist-era bunkers which were built to provide protection in case of an invasion. “Built in a paranoid fervor these bunkers and tunnels serve as a living reminder of Albania’s communist

and isolationist past. I was absolutely terrified when we went underground into a tunnel, and it definitely provided me with a memory I will keep with me the rest of my life!” sophomore Elijah Anderson said.

Dr. Amy’s class on narrative memory explored many of the challenges regarding how people grapple with the trauma of the communist era. In fact, it can be argued that the communist pow-
ers did not just tell people what to believe; rather, they altered their thought process used to interpret the world. The students realized the current effects and implications of this worldview as they discussed the past with Albanians during their visit.

While much of the trip was spent in official class related activities, the group also had a few opportunities to re-
tax, including spending a luxurious two days on the Greek island of Corfu. This time was spent debriefing from the lecture topics and swimming in the icy wa-
ters of the Adriatic. The trip to Corfu also facilitated interesting class lectures by Dr. Wiegand concerning the nature of inter-
national borders and national identity.

Several days after the stop in Corfu, the group had traveled all the way to the Northern border of Albania and crossed into neighboring Kosovo. Having only gained independence in 2008, Kosovo is one of the youngest countries in the world and in some areas still exhibits the tensions that played out so violently dur-
ing the ethnic genocide of the late 1990s. The lasting impact of that era was especially evident in the city of Mitrovica when the students, accompanied by local Kosovar journalists, witnessed the illegal blockade of major roadways. Dr. Wiegand’s class directly addressed relevant issues of nationalism and territorial boundaries as these blockades are used to separate eth-
ic Albanian populations from the Ser-
bian ones that still reside in Kosovo. The case of Kosovo provides a perfect case study on nationalism and territory as it endured ethnic conflict over questions of sovereignty and self-determination. After the NATO intervention in the 1990s, and the deployment of NATO peacekeeping forces in Kosovo, the country achieved a degree of independence, but is still only recognized by half of the world’s countries.

The ethnic Albanians in Kosovo were the most compelling part of the ex-
xperience as senior Ashley Boyer recounted. “The people of Kosovo are the most resilient and kind people I have ever met,” she said. “Every single person in Kosovo was affected by the Milos-
"..."
Balkan Diary
by Kelsey Keane and Molly Laughlin

May 17th
Dinner with Peers

Upon arrival in Albania, we were treated to outstanding food and hospitality. Albanian architect Tomor Luzati provided an insightful tour of Tirana. In the evening, we participated in a forum organized by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), “A Cross-Cultural Dialogue between Albanian and American Students about Education, Employment, and Prospects for a Better Tomorrow.” We shared a meal with students from various universities throughout Tirana pursuing degrees ranging from economics to public health. Our discussion was facilitated by NDI representatives and covered a wide range of topics including educational opportunities, family values, and the dreams of both Albania and the United States. It was a fascinating night.

May 19th
Created Histories—Museums in Kruja

Accompanied by the Director of the United Nations Development Project Brain-Gain Program, Bernard Zenelli, our group visited several museums in the Kruja area. While the tours of the museums were interesting, it was particularly fascinating to learn more about the history of the museums themselves from Zenelli. Several museums were constructed during the communist era under Hoxha, and we were shocked to learn that one of the principal museums we had just visited contained essentially no original artifacts. The collection had been comprised primarily of replicated pieces that had been used by the communist party to create a common historical narrative of the country’s Illyrian heritage. The revelation facilitated much discussion about the power of narrative and helped us better understand the obstacles Albania must overcome in order to remove itself from the grips of communist thought.

May 23rd
A World Under the Mountains—Gjirokastra

After a brief meeting with the Gjirokastra Development Project staff, one of the leading architects took us for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Walking just a few minutes up the mountain, we soon came to an entrance into the communist era tunnels that run under the city. We bundled up to keep warm and began our walk into the dark tunnels. The tunnels lead to many different cells, each one dedicated to specific government offices and workers. It was as if we had taken a step back in time and could feel the paranoia of the communist regime in the air around us. All of the offices were still fully furnished, ready to be used in the case of a foreign attack against the regime. Our time today in the tunnels was absolutely one of the most fascinating parts of this entire trip so far.

May 27th
Kosovo

In Kosovo we were able to witness the region’s tension firsthand in the city of Mitrovica. Accompanied by Kosovar journalists, we stopped in two locations of the city where the major roadways had been blocked by alleged Serbian gangs using piles of rubble. With foreign forces located throughout the area, we never felt threatened; however, we could sense the tensions that led to the ethnic genocides during the late 1990s and which are still very much a part of everyday life in the young country of Kosovo.
**May 30th**
**Traumatic Narratives**

In the Albanian city of Shkodra, we had the opportunity to visit with members of the Association of Ex-Political Prisoners and Persecuted Families. It was an emotional visit as hundreds of pictures of those imprisoned and killed under the communist regime lined the office’s walls. The men in the organization shared their personal stories of the atrocities committed in the name of communism and state control under Hoxha. We discussed how the country cannot ever truly heal if there is no one left to accept blame and apologize for the traumatization of the country’s population, the destruction of its infrastructure, and the corruption of its national identity.

**June 1st**
**A Day at the Dig**

Today we met with American students who are also spending their summer here in Albania. Their time has been spent primarily completing archaeological field work in the Shkodra area. Their instructor, Michael Galaty of Millsaps College, invited us for a day at the dig site and we soon found ourselves working alongside both archaeology experts and students. The site was far from what any of us might have expected as we were literally working in the middle of a local farmer’s fields, but the group was hoping to discover ancient gravesites. It was a great opportunity to learn about cultural preservation efforts in Albania, along with the various techniques that archaeologists use in the field.

A college homecoming is an event usually reserved for alumni, but in the case of three University Honors Program students, attending Georgia Southern as an honors student has been a sort of homecoming as well. Three University Honors Program (UHP) students—Alicia Channell, Michaela Lariscy, and Kristen Tillman—have followed in the footsteps of their parents, all of whom were part of the Bell Honors Program (BHP) in its early years. Quite a bit has changed in honors education at Georgia Southern since their parents were students, but one constant remains: it is still a challenging atmosphere providing motivated students an intellectual home.

Honors education first began at Georgia Southern in 1982, when Dr. Hew Joiner led several faculty members in offering the first honors classes to a select group of outstanding students. The program, known as the Bell Honors Program in honor of benefactor Orell Bernard “Red” Bell, served as a national model for honors education and provided a challenging traditional liberal arts education to Georgia Southern’s best students.

The BHP would select only 18 exceptionally gifted, creative, and well-prepared students from among its pool of applicants. Outstanding test scores, exemplary high school academic records, and evidence of unusual academic potential and creativity were all requirements to be considered for the program. Classes were team-taught and emphasized discussion and independent activities. The last BHP cohort graduated in 2007.

Today’s current program for honors students, the University Honors Program, started in 1998. Founded by Dr. Fred Richter, the program was designed to create honors experiences for more students while still maintaining the rigor of the selection requirements. Now the program includes over 450 students in all disciplines across the university. Continuing to challenge and support hard-working and intellectually curious scholars, the program offers a research-focused curriculum complemented by experiential learning opportunities. All graduates of the program complete an Honors Thesis/Capstone Project, an intense research project mentored by a faculty member in their major discipline. Students emerge from the program ready for the challenge of a career, graduate school, or professional school and with both a sense of civic responsibility and a global perspective.

This year marks the thirtieth year of honors education at Georgia Southern. In honor of this anniversary, Honors @ Georgia Southern talks to three mothers and their daughters who have all shared in the tradition of honors education at Georgia Southern. The experience was transformative for the mothers, and their daughters continue the honors legacy.

**Two Generations**

Families in Honors
Kelli Lariscy graduated in 1991 with a degree in education and an emphasis in Spanish. Little did she suspect that 20 years later her very own daughter, Michaela, would follow in her footsteps. Michaela is currently a sophomore early childhood education major and a member of the University Honors Program. While Kelli continues to apply the lessons she learned through the Bell Honors Program, Michaela is just getting started.

Originally from Pennsylvania, Kelli was raised nearby in Savannah, Georgia. When it came to decide on college Georgia Southern was her first choice. “It was at the top of my list and really was where I wanted to go,” Kelli said. “My parents thought a lot of Georgia Southern and they helped steer me to make the right decision.”

Today, Kelli teaches Spanish to grades nine through twelve at South Effingham High School in Guyton, Georgia. She believes her experiences in the BHP contributed to her success in her career today. “I think the program helped a lot to develop me into who I was at the time and who I am now,” Kelli said. “I hope my students feel like they can talk to me the way I felt like I could talk with my honors professors.”

Kelli also was one of the first student members of Georgia Southern’s chapter of Professional Association of Georgia Educators as well as a resident assistant in Winburn Hall. Kelli also met her husband, Jeff, while attending GSU. Now with Michaela studying at her parents Alma Mater, there is a family joke of GSU becoming a family tradition. “[Michaela] had her heart set on Georgia Southern so that’s where our tradition. “[Michaela] had her heart set on Georgia Southern so that’s where our tradition. “[Michaela] had her heart set on Georgia Southern so that’s where our tradition. “[Michaela] had her heart set on Georgia Southern so that’s where our tradition.”

Kelli Lariscy
1991, Education &
Michaela Lariscy
2015, Education

systems in struggling countries.

Like Kelli, Michaela agrees the University Honors Program has provided many opportunities. In the coming months, she will be assuming several leadership positions on campus including the familiar role her mother held as assistant resident (now known as community leader). Michaela will be a Southern Orientation, Advisement, and Registration (SOAR) leader this summer and a peer leader for a First-Year Experience class in the fall. “The Honors Program has just opened so many doors, including doors to the community as well,” Michaela said. It has been through the University Honors Program that Michaela has become involved with Keep Bulloch Beautiful and Statesboro’s Averitt Center of the Arts. Michaela has already experienced the same positive interactions with professors her mother experienced years ago. Michaela agrees her favorite part of the program is the small class sizes that allow a one-on-one connection with professors. “The classes are so small that you really get to know the professors and have a great connection,” Michaela said. “I had Dr. [Alan] Downs for U.S. history, and he knew each and every one of us by name.”

Kelli feels this connection extends to all the staff of the University Honors Program. She encouraged Michaela to use Dr. Steven Engel, the director of the program, and Dr. Francis Desiderio, the associate director of the program, as resources in a time of need. “They are really there for you. That’s how I remember Dr. Joiner and my professors,” Kelli said. “They want to be used as a resource to make your experience more powerful.”

Now with Michaela attending Georgia Southern, Kelli has made it a priority to come and visit often. She has made an effort to volunteer a couple times a month with the university as well. “I see Michaela growing so much, and I’m so proud of the woman she is becoming,” Kelli said. “I feel like I owe so much to Georgia Southern and to the honors program for everything that she seems to be getting.”
Molly (Barksdale) Channell
1988, Broadcasting
& Alicia Channell
2012, Nursing

When Molly Channell’s high school guidance counselor told her about the Bell Honors Program, a then-new program at Georgia Southern, she took the chance and applied. Upon visiting campus, she said she “immediately fell in love with Georgia Southern.” She felt the doors were open for her in higher education, but little did she know how many more open doors would follow as a result.

Molly entered Georgia Southern College in the fall of 1984 to study broadcasting as a member of the third class of the Bell Honors Program. When she discusses her experience now, she can still remember “a lot of very good professors” that made her time in Statesboro so meaningful. That list begins with Dr. Hew Joiner, the founding director of the Bell Honors Program. “Dr. Joiner really had a vision for what he wanted to do with the group; making it top notch, “ Molly said. “We went through first 2 years of core classes all together. We got to be really close. We had a little house right on Highway 301 that was the Honors House for studying and holding class sometimes,” Molly said.

She has recently reconnected with some classmates thanks to social media. “Facebook has been amazing because I hadn’t been in touch with them for 15 years. After graduation, we tried to hit the annual reunions, but everyone started having children. Since I joined Facebook, I have looked up those people, and I’m seeing where everyone is now.”

Molly currently lives in LaGrange, Georgia with her younger children and husband, Jim, who she met while in college. When it came time for their oldest daughter to apply to colleges, they did not push Georgia Southern overtly. “My heart was Georgia Southern, and I did want to give her the opportunity to explore that, but I really tried hard not to limit her. She applied to lots of schools and didn’t want her to feel like she had to follow in mom’s program.”

Alicia said she originally agreed to interview for the 1906 Scholarship only to humor her mom. That was her plan right up until they toured the campus and she fell in love with the “friendly environment.”

The recent nursing graduate said she knew her calling since she was three. “Anatomy classes and biology classes solidified that I wanted to be in medical field,” said Alicia. She credits her aunt who works as a nurse in Statesboro as her role model. “They remain close today by attending church together on the weekends (the same church Alicia was baptized in) and are currently both working at Statesboro Gastroenterology.”

Although Alicia graduated in May 2012, the family legacy continues on. “Alicia’s next sibling Drew is freshman. We went through same process with him, leaving all the doors open, and GSU was the one that out shone the rest. The third child, Alex, begins at Georgia Southern this coming fall,” said their mom, and he, too, will join the University Honors Program.

This bonding over education is nothing new for their family. Molly home-schooled all of her five children and passed on her passion for knowledge. As for the two youngest, Molly said, “Who knows where they will go? But odds are in GSU’s favor.”

Whenever in town for a visit, Molly said there are the usual picnics at Sweetheart circle, reminiscent walks through campus by the lakes where Molly and her husband used to meet on dates, to Paulson Stadium, and to Snooky’s Restaurant before it closed this year. “GSU football! Of course that is a highlight and a special memory I can share with Alicia and my other children when we return to Statesboro,” Molly said.

Molly recited a story of the first time of the first time Alicia visited campus with the mindset of going to college. Seeing Anderson Hall, her old residence hall, as an Administrative Building came as a bit of a shock. “We had lived in dark ages, with no air conditioning, only hall phones, and hall bathrooms. We went upstairs in what now is an office and a

students hanging around. That’s the kind of people they were,” Molly said.

She also credits her fellow scholars for the close-knit community feel of the program. She graduated with 11 other Bell Scholars in 1987, although Molly was originally one of 18. “We went through first 2 years of core classes all together. We got to be really close. We had a little house right on Highway 301 that was the Honors House for studying and holding class sometimes,” Molly said.

The most memorable class was American government with Dr. Sabia in the spring semester of her freshman year. “He was my favorite professor. Alicia’s favorite professor was for a subject outside of her major, because it wasn’t the content but the passion of the professor that inspired her. “American government with Dr. Sabia in the spring semester of my freshman year was great. She taught me about passion in my life, and that I need to be passionate about everything I do. It got me more involved in the community,” she said.

Alicia has also experienced the sense of a tight-knit community through her fellow 1906 Scholars just as her mom did with the BHP students.

“It has been so great for building friendships because I didn’t know anyone coming into it. They were the first people I met. When we had the first meeting and stayed together in dorms, we started friendships, and I am still friends with most of them now,” Alicia said.

Beyond her involvement with the UHP, Alicia has served as president of the Student Nurses Association and volunteered at a variety of places including the local Hearts and Hands Clinic. In other words, it has been challenging four years.

“I’m ready to finish schoolwork but I’m not sure if I’m ready to leave college scene, although I’m still planning to go to medical school,” Alicia said just before graduation. She looks forward to returning with family to visit her two younger brothers on campus.
Kristen Tillman is another freshman who has followed her mother’s footsteps to Georgia Southern and an honors experience. In fact, both of her parents earned degrees from Georgia Southern, and her mom was also part of the Bell Honors Program.

“Both my parents went to GSU. That was an incentive to look here. I looked at other schools, but I felt most at home here and, just like the saying goes, I liked the small-fee,” Kristen said. “I didn’t want to go just because my parents did. I wanted to make it my decision.”

Her mother, Brenda Tillman, shares this opinion. It is just one of many things the two have in common. Brenda was a member of the second class of BHP scholars from 1983 to 1987. The women have bonded over their similar campus involvement, including Alpha Delta Pi sorority and the Wesley Foundation. However, it is important to note distinctions between mother and daughter also.

“Kristen is really independent and she has always been. I knew none of her decisions would be because of what her parents did,” said Brenda.

A basic distinction between the two is their areas of study. Brenda majored in finance with an emphasis in banking and said she “stuck out like a sore thumb” in the program as she was actually the first business major to graduate from it. She went on to work for many years at Wachovia before devoting all her time to her family. Her daughter Kristen is now exploring a passion for educating children and spends her summer vacations as a camp counselor.

Being a Bell Scholar helped Brenda form her great relationships to other students. She said that cohorts of BHP students took their core class together. “It was just the 18 of us, all taught with two professors for every class for the first two years. That was the key to getting comfortable on campus.”

“It was really great to become part of a smaller group, so campus didn’t seem so big. That’s probably funny to part of a smaller group, so campus didn’t seem so big. That’s probably funny to...”

Kristen described this as watching her mom interact with her “little family.”

“Hands down, my favorite class the whole time was philosophy with Mr. Brasons. He challenged me to think far outside of any box I had thought of before,” she said. “And Dr. Joiner was not only one of our professors but a mentor to all of us, and I remember getting a hand written note from him every quarter when I made Dean’s List, just thanking me for my hard work.”

Such relationships are not just a thing of the past for the Tillmans. Brenda was able to catch up with many old friends during the Honors Homecoming celebration last fall.

“I felt very lucky to look back up with Dr. Joiner and Dr. Richter, and I think it meant a lot to Kristen that 25 years later there were still great professors to reconnect with,” Brenda said.

Kristen described this as watching her mom interact with her “little family.”

“It was fun to see mom get excited about it again. I’m looking forward to do those things too,” Kristen said.

Although Kristen has been a student for only a year, she is experiencing the beginning of such connections for herself. Her favorite class thorough the Honors Program was her First-Year Seminar. She said she has enjoyed the small size of only about 15 students, a size which “is supposed to be the incentive and what the Honors Program is all about.”

Taught Dr. Padmini Shankar, the course introduced incoming students to college research with a themed seminar about the chemistry of food, nutrition, and healthy eating. “We went to a food lab one day, and we each picked a different country and each made a different meal for a party,” Kristen said.

New this year was the course’s connection to a spring semester Global Citizens course which allowed the 15 students to stay together. Outside of the classroom, events like Homecoming and football games are a favorite memory for the Tillman women. However, Brenda remembers having a very different experience as a student.

“We got there at the beginning of the football program, so we were there for part of all the excitement with Erik Russell and the first two National Championships during my junior and senior years,” Brenda said. “My freshman year, the team played at Statesboro High School because we didn’t have a stadium yet. My first date with my husband, Keith, was homecoming freshman year. The stadium was built during my sophomore year, and we were there for all the games. All of that is really important to all of us, and has been really exciting to watch the team come back again.”

Kristen enjoys hearing how things have changed while traditions have remained at her school. “My parents are very happy with how much Georgia Southern has grown and how campus has expanded. They are happy there are still traditions with the football games, like the yellow school buses,” she said.

When Brenda speaks about her college years and specifically as a BHP scholar, it is with true appreciation. “I know without a shadow of a doubt that the experiences with the Honors Program helped prepare me for life after college,” Brenda said.

Meanwhile, Kristen said she is looking forward to the opportunities available to her, such as completing a capstone project. She especially hopes to go on an alternative break trip or study abroad - something neither of her parents did - and leave some footprints of her own.

By Colleen McNally and Natalie Demarks
Dr. McGibony encourages her students to participate in research experiences as undergraduates and said of her work with Crooke: “I was fortunate that Stephen chose me and my collaborator Dr. Christine Whitlock as his research mentors. Stephen is one of the most hardworking students I have ever met in my fourteen years of higher education.”

“Other scientific experiments do not work out properly the first time you set them up. Stephen will keep making alterations to the experiment until he gets a result; he is interested in understanding everything he can about chemistry and biochemistry,” Dr. McGibony said.

In addition to the work with his mentors, Crooke said that his participation in the Honors Program was a major influence on his undergraduate career at Georgia Southern.

“The Honors Program’s encouragement of undergraduate research led me to become involved with my research early in my academic career, and I am thankful for that. Collaboration with my professors and the Honors Program allowed me to accomplish much during my time at Georgia Southern, primarily culminating in this award. I cannot thank the Honors Program and my advisors enough for all of the mentoring and guidance that they have provided me over the years.”

By Kelsey Keane

Attending college for many students requires a move away from home. For four years, the campus becomes their new, if temporary, home. However there are some students who change locations again, and take the initiative to spend one of those years abroad. Modern languages major Jennifer Keyser is just such a student. She is spending her senior year away from Statesboro and in Germany, studying at the University of Kassel with support from the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) scholarship.

The DAAD scholarship, also known as the German Academic Exchange Service, is a nationally competitive scholarship in the United States that is awarded to undergraduate students who wish to study in Germany. Additionally, Keyser has been honored as being the first Georgia Southern exchange student at the University of Kassel under a new agreement between the two universities.

Keyser first became interested in studying modern languages when she was in high school. After reading an inspiring article about the disappearance of foreign language education in her Latin class, Keyser recognized her passion. “This article is what really inspired me to study modern foreign languages,” Keyser said. “I believe it is important for people to learn other languages and about other cultures. We are in an increasingly globalizing world and it is important to recognize that and respect it.”

By Natalie Demarko
Simmons was a student at Georgia Southern for a year before setting off to her home and host community. “I really am the self-designed projects for giving back to the community,” Simmons said.

With a smaller class sizes, the Honors Program definitely made my first year at Georgia Southern with the Honors Program a Year in Japan an adventure as she knew very little of the language. “Travelling to Japan has been an amazing experience,” she said. “Every day, there has been a million of cultural differences. Even my taxi ride from the airport was an ordeal. With lace on the seat covers, experiencing local holidays, speaking with native speakers, experiencing local restaurants, conversing with native speakers, Simmons shares her daily adventures—finding local restaurants, conversing with native speakers, and experiencing local holidays.

Her time abroad was an incredible opportunity to both observe and study the Fins’ sustainable utilization of natural resources. “Travelling to Japan has been an amazing experience,” she said. “Every day, there has been a million of cultural differences. Even my taxi ride from the airport was an ordeal. With lace on the seat covers, experiencing local holidays, speaking with native speakers, experiencing local restaurants, conversing with native speakers, Simmons shares her daily adventures—finding local restaurants, conversing with native speakers, and experiencing local holidays. Simmons stands at the entrance to the school she attended—her former traditional student apartment, replete with her translated shopping list. During the winter, Simmons was able to fulfill her dreams of studying abroad and receive any help from the faculty and receive any help from the faculty and receive funding from the University Honors Program.

Simmons is familiar with the faculty and receive any help from the faculty and receive funding from the University Honors Program. Program but was also honored in receiving funding from the University Honors Program but was also honored in receiving funding from the University Honors Program.
Members of the Honors Community Scholars (HCS) developed a second year of their college promotion and preparation program in a joint project with the Boys and Girls Club of Statesboro and Bulloch County. HCS participants Rachel Rozier, Ashley Boyer, Christina Belgé, and Feggin Oliver met at Eidson House (home of the UHP) with a group of middle and high school students once a week and provided them with activities to build skills such as test-taking, resume-writing, and decision-making. All in an effort to aid these students in creating opportunities for higher education and, eventually, prosperous, fulfilling careers.

Honors Community Scholars is a yearlong experience where honors students who want to learn more about community building organizations and university-community partnerships take on more intensive service projects in Statesboro and Bulloch County. They work as teams with specific organizations, and they meet as a group several times a month to discuss their projects and various topics related to service-learning, community partnerships, and community building.

The Boys and Girls Club College Promotion Program began the year with ice-breaker games and personality quizzes to help the students get to know each other. The mentors were able to bring in guest speakers and visit various offices on campus. One place they visited was the Career Advisement Center, where the students were able to think about potential careers and the college majors that might get them to their goal. The whole experience was designed to encourage the students to think more deeply about their skills, talents, and interests, and what they might want to do with them.

“I really enjoyed you all,” Statesboro High School tenth-grader Breanna Stidem said. “When you come here, you learn about college and you’re actually on a campus.”

During the spring semester, the focus of the meetings was directed toward test-taking skills, and the group completed practice tests to help prepare them for important, upcoming standardized tests such as the SAT and the graduation test. In the last few meetings, mentors walked students through the resume-building process, aiding them in outlining their career objectives, previous work and volunteer experience, involvement in extracurricular activities and clubs, and personal work skills.

Keyonnia Whyte, an eight-grader at Langston Chapel Middle School and student in the program, said, “Well, I have learned that college has very interesting aspects, and there are a variety of things you can pick to do.”

“I really learned that you reflect a message by the way you dress and carry yourself. You don’t want to give the wrong message,” Stidem said.

While the objective of the program was to lead and teach young adults skills which will direct them toward successful and fulfilling educations and careers, it is certain that the interaction with the students also had a positive and lasting effect on their mentors.

“What you do now is important, it determines your future. It’s really important what you give to certain situations,” Stidem said.

By E. Feagin Oliver

University Honors Program student Leigh Sundem recently earned the outstanding score of a thirty-nine on the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). The average score of each MCAT administration is twenty-four, and Sundem’s results place her in the 99.1–99.4 percentile range of all who participated in the testing sessions of August 2011. As a non-traditional student, Sundem returned to school to pursue her undergraduate degree in Chemistry several years after graduating high school. She believes that coming to Georgia Southern University with such a different perspective than the traditional student has made her especially grateful for every opportunity she has received and motivated to do her very best.

Since beginning at GSU, Sundem has become highly involved academically, completing significant lab research, teaching as a Chemistry supplemental instructor, and shadowing five different organizations as the Hearts and Hands Clinic and Georgia Southern University’s Center for Addiction Recovery. Sundem participated in extensive academic lab research with Dr. Mohammed Shaikh of the Chemistry Department as they work to synthesize compounds they hope could one day be used as therapeutics for various types of cancers and Alzheimer’s disease.

“Leigh has strong convictions and an outstanding work ethic. I came to understand that, unlike countless other students, she did not consider her scientific course work just a stepping stone to her degree but an opportunity to explore a field she genuinely found interesting. I had the pleasure to meet a person who displayed such an interest for high-level work and an ability to grasp the intricacies of chemical concepts. She has a friendly personality and a positive attitude, which has certainly contributed to her being an excellent student,” Dr. Shaikh said.

Sundem entered the University Honors Program as a sophomore student at Georgia Southern. She believes that her hard sciences, which enabled me to be successful in the critical thinking necessary to succeed on the MCAT.

After receiving her Chemistry degree from Georgia Southern, Sundem plans to attend medical school and to then practice primary care in a rural setting. She also dreams of serving with Doctors Without Borders in Africa. “Wherever I am most needed, that’s where I’ll go.”

Through her accomplishments, Sundem has earned other significant recognition, being a Watson-Brown Scholar and a recipient of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health Service Award, as well as being named as an Outstanding Student in Organic Chemistry in 2011. This fall she will enter the University of Rochester’s School of Medicine & Dentistry.

By Kelsey Keane
Georgia Collegiate Honors Council

In February, five honors students, Paola Robelo, Kelsey Keane, Jordan Logue, Michelle Saucier, and Krystina Johnson, traveled with Program directors Dr. Steven Engel and Dr. Francis Desiderio to North Georgia College & State University in Dahlonega for the 2012 Georgia Collegiate Honors Council’s annual meeting. The two day event brought together honors programs and colleges from across the state, meet, present student research, and discuss approaches in honors education.

The first day’s events included panning for gold in the Dahlonega gold mines and hiking in the Blue Ridge Mountains, followed by dinner and a friendly game of intercollegiate trivia. The rest of the weekend was a little more formal, with research presentations ranging from alternative fuels to world hunger to modern music.

On the final day of the conference, Sophomore English major Kelsey Keane was elected Student Vice President of the Honors Council.

The 2012 conference is scheduled for November in Boston, Massachusetts. This year 72 students completed the requirements of the University Honors Program. The most demanding element of those requirements is the Honors Thesis/Capstone Project. Each of this past year’s graduates is listed along with the title of the thesis and faculty mentor.

Kristina Deaveux
Chemistry
Approaches toward a Furanyliden System Using a Commercially Available Beta-Keto Phosphonate
Dr. Karrelle Aiken

Cassandra Dierolf
International Studies
Democracy and Ola Nobunaga in the Historical Memory of Japan
Dr. Darin Van Tassell

Danielle Duncan
Chemistry
Analytical Examination of the Crystal Structure of Indole-6-Carboxylic Acid Using Computational Chemistry
Dr. Allison Amanette

Collin Enfinger
Biology
Effects of Position and Track Length on Spontaneous Alternation Behavior in Amphiluidium Woodlice in Mazes
Dr. Alan Harvey

Cate Faulkner
International Studies and Spanish
As American as Apple Pie, Baseball...and Xenophobia: How did a Nation of Immigrants Become so Anti-Immigrant?
Dr. Darin Van Tassell

Christine Foxwell
Psychology
The Detection of Unseen Staring with Changes in the Sympathetic Nervous System
Dr. Amy Hackney and Dr. Janice Stein

Renee Fritz
Biology
Low Salinity Affects Larval Development and Juvenile Production in the Sea Urchin Lytechinus variegatus
Dr. Sophie George

Ashley Boyer
Psychology
Being from Georgia: What are the Perspectives of Pregnant Women in Southeast Georgia
Dr. Steve Stepanek

Jordan Logue
Psychology
The Detection of Unseen Staring with Changes in the Sympathetic Nervous System
Dr. Amy Hackney and Dr. Janice Stein

The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) met last fall in Phoenix, and honors students Cate Faulkner, Ann Rainio, and Meg Roberts attended and made presentations. Cate presented her research during the poster session, and she joined Ann and Meg and Dr. Desiderio on a panel to discuss Honors Community Scholars. Dr. Engel also presented on the University Honors Program with particular focus on our requirements and the Departmental Honors courses. Writing and Linguistics Interim Chair Dr. Phyllis Dallas accompanied the group.

The students had an opportunity to explore Phoenix through the “City as Text” program and met honors students from across the country. Cate had a good number of visitors to her poster and received very useful feedback. The Honors Community Scholars panel session was well attended. Dr. Desiderio and the students talked about the programming and projects of the experience, part of which was funded by an NCHC Pertz Grant. Dr. Engel engaged conference attendees in a discussion about the UHP’s approach to supporting students in their Thesis/Capstone Projects and received some very positive feedback.

The 2012 conference is scheduled for November in Boston, Massachusetts.
Georgia Southern University is happy to celebrate the 30th anniversary of honors education at Georgia Southern. From the nationally innovative Bell Honors Program (1982-2007) to the current rigors of the University Honors Program (1998-present), Georgia Southern has for thirty years provided a welcoming home to motivated and high-performing students.

To celebrate this anniversary, the University Honors Program is planning the “30 Years of Honors” event to be held Saturday, October 20 and Sunday, October 21, 2012 on the campus of Georgia Southern University. This event will celebrate the achievements of our alumni and allow them to connect with our current students. Furthermore, current and retired faculty will be invited. This event is open to the families of all Bell Honors and University Honors alumni. The following page provides some of the details for the event. For more, see www.georgiasouthern.edu/honors/30years.
Saturday, October 20, 2012

5:00 pm - 6:00 pm
• Check-in: Nessmith-Lane Conference Center

6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
• Dinner: Nessmith-Lane Ballroom
  Entertainment by Dr. Michael Braz
  $35 per person/Business Attire
• Future Honors Scholars program (ages 4-14)
  in Nessmith-Lane Conference Center
  $10

8:30 pm - Late
• “Honors After Hours” Holiday Inn Statesboro
  Cash Bar

Sunday, October 21, 2012

11:00 am - 12:30 pm
• Brunch at Eidson House
  $15 per person

12:00 noon
• Dedication of “new” Bell Honors Oak

Lodging: Holiday Inn Statesboro
$79 plus taxes
reserve by September 20 to guarantee rates

For more details and link to registration go to:
www.georgiasouthern.edu/honors/30years
Honors Students by Academic College

- Science and Technology: 155
- Liberal Arts and Social Sciences: 148
- Health and Human Sciences: 47
- Business Administration: 19
- Education: 17
- Information Technology: 22
- International Studies: 15
- Undeclared: 4

2012 Incoming Freshman Class Projections

- New Freshmen: 147
- Georgia Residents (94%): 138
- States Represented: 6
- Average SAT: 1266
- Average ACT: 28.3
- Average GPA (unweighted): 3.76

Number of Honors Students

- Fall 2005: 265
- Fall 2006: 295
- Fall 2007: 306
- Fall 2008: 343
- Fall 2009: 406
- Fall 2010: 451
- Fall 2011: 456

Freshman Retention Rates

- Fall 2005 Cohort: 90%
- Fall 2006 Cohort: 90%
- Fall 2007 Cohort: 94%
- Fall 2008 Cohort: 94%
- Fall 2009 Cohort: 91%
- Fall 2010 Cohort: 91%

Program Applicants

- 2005-2006: 374
- 2006-2007: 419
- 2007-2008: 607
- 2008-2009: 713
- 2009-2010: 709
- 2010-2011: 733
- 2011-2012: 762

Honors 2011-2012 Data

- Honors Students (37% Men, 63% Women, 80% Caucasian, 20% Non-white)
- Georgia Residents (88%)
- States Represented: 19
- Countries Represented: 17
- Freshman Retention Rate: 91%
- Honors Courses Offered: 99
- Hours of Service and Leadership: 6725
- Faculty Teaching Honors Courses or Mentoring Honors Students: 152
Thirty Years of Honors  
Saturday, October 20, 2012  
www.georgiasouthern.edu/honors/30years