Honors @ Georgia Southern

Spring 2014

University Honors Program Students and Staff

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Aristotle says that philosophy begins in wonder. We seek knowledge and wisdom because we are curious—curious about human relationships, curious about the laws of nature, curious about how to improve our own life and the lives of others. In other words, the educational process always starts with questions that we are burning to answer. To investigate these questions, we must be methodical in our approach. This is why, in the University Honors Program, we place such importance on developing a critical sense of inquiry—it is the first of our four foundations (listed below). Just as important, however, (and particularly for generating new knowledge) is the spirit of creativity. We cannot answer our most pressing research questions without taking creative and novel approaches to both new and age-old problems.

I know you will be impressed with the research approaches of the 2013-2014 senior honors class. Also, you will read about many other interesting activities within the honors experience at Georgia Southern. I am particularly delighted in the national recognition attained by two of our students—Cameron Feriante and Kelsey Keane. And, I was especially happy to see my mentor and predecessor Dr. Hew Joiner be recognized as a Fellow of the National Collegiate Honors Council for his many years of service to the honors movement both nationally and at Georgia Southern.

As always, I welcome your comments and would love to see you when you visit campus.

Sincerely yours,

Steven Engel
Director, University Honors Program

Mission Statement

The University Honors Program provides a small college atmosphere in the context of a large comprehensive university. The program is designed to foster the development of a critical sense of inquiry, a spirit of creativity, a global perspective, and an ethic of civic responsibility. A hallmark of the program is the emphasis on bringing ideas to life through undergraduate research, experiential learning, and service-learning opportunities. The University Honors Program at Georgia Southern University rests on a foundation of the following ideals that are inspired by the institution’s emphasis on engaged learning.

Critical Sense of Inquiry

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

Spirit of Creativity

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

Civic Responsibility

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

Global Perspective

Honors students will develop a perspective which allows them to approach their chosen discipline from an international point of view. This outlook involves the critical exploration of global concerns and generation of proposed solutions to international problems. Honors education provides this worldwide perspective through academic courses, study abroad opportunities, and co-curricular experiences.

Cover photo: Mallory Taylor and her mentor Brian Graves
Thank you to the Honors @ Georgia Southern Staff who helped make this year’s magazine a success.

FEATURE STORIES

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“Like” the University Honors Program on Facebook to keep up with news and events about the Honors Program throughout the year.

Facebook.com/GaSouHonors

Visit the Honors playlist on the Georgia Southern University YouTube channel to see professional videos of honors in action. Filmed and edited by Mallory Taylor (2014) with music composed and performed by Sydney Sewell (2014) and Ben Ratliff (2014).

(Be sure to click on the University Honors playlist)

Youtube.com/GeorgiaSouthernUniv

INQUIRY AND CREATIVITY

HONORS ANNUAL REPORT

HONORS IN ACTION

INVEST IN HONORS

To learn more about the University Honors Program, visit our website:

GeorgiaSouthern.edu/honors
Undergraduate research projects in the University Honors Program span the disciplines. These profiles of the honors seniors of 2013-2014 demonstrate the critical sense of inquiry and spirit of creativity they have employed in their research.
Madeline Bunn found an innovative way to make her research sweet—literally. Bunn’s research project combined her love of baking with her major to create a business plan for her future bakery, MaddyCakes by Design.

“I took a more unique approach to it,” Bunn said of her Capstone Project. Rather than posing a specific question in her field and conducting research to find an answer, Bunn’s Capstone Project is more personal, as it aims to help her in planning her future business endeavors. In creating her business plan, Bunn researched how one opens a bakery, how such a business is run, and how to price merchandise. While studying target markets and sales forecasts, Bunn had to consider where she should ideally open her business, and in effect, where her future home might be.

“Knowing the demographics of a place is important when opening a business,” Bunn said. “You have to know whether or not the town has a market for your product, or if people are able or willing to buy what you’re selling.”

While looking at cities, Bunn tried to find areas that are both health and environmentally conscious. “Nashville, TN, Austin, TX, Washington, D.C., and Denver, CO were in the top five,” Bunn said. “I ended up choosing Boulder, CO because it had everything I was seeking in a business sense, and it looked like a gorgeous place to live!”

Bunn believes that her Capstone Project will prove especially valuable in securing a loan to start her business. She believes that “the whole idea of a business plan is to show the bank that you are responsible, that you know what you are doing.” Bunn’s scrupulous research will definitely attest to that. Her research involved finding statistics that dealt with market value, population sizes, wedding industry, business locations, and inventory and equipment pricing; she also called several bakeries to estimate startup costs and pricing.

Bunn’s interest in baking was first sparked in high school, where she took part in ProStart, an advanced cooking program taught in hundreds of high schools across the nation. Bunn’s skills led her to work at Kroger for the past two summers, where she had virtually free reign over what the cakes in the display cases looked like. This freedom allowed Bunn to further hone her cake decorating skills; she has even constructed complex cakes for special events. For example, one was shaped like a castle, and another was modeled after Cinderella; a doll served as Cinderella, and a multi-layered cake as her dress. Bunn hopes to carry this creativity into her future bakery.

Aleyna Rentz

Stephanie Shipley
Biology
The Effects of Sodium Lauryl Sulfate on the Abundance of Producers and Grazers in an Aquatic Community Using Freshwater Microcosms
Dr. Risa A. Cohen

Going “green” has become a marketing strategy with all sorts of companies claiming to take an environmentally friendly route in their practices and products. Still, are the “green” chemicals we use actually environmentally friendly? Biology major Stephanie Shipley set out to test this theory in her Honors Thesis.

Through a three week long experiment, Shipley performed toxicity tests to measure how toxic the water was for snails and fleas. Her research has shown that sodium lauryl sulfate was directly toxic to grazers, but not to algae.

“This research shows that while sodium lauryl sulfate is not toxic to the environment, it does have a harsh effect on living organisms,” Shipley said.

Shipley worked closely with her mentor, Dr. Risa Cohen, who was already doing work on environmentally friendly products.

“I chose this project because I was attracted to the topic. Dr. Cohen and I got to know each other, and now we are like colleagues. It has been a great experience,” Shipley said.

Upon graduation, Shipley will spend two years doing mission work inside the United States. After that work, she intends to enter graduate school for prosthetics.

“The Honors Program has been an incredible opportunity. You can’t find better professors anywhere,” Shipley said.

Sarah Ryniker
One of the most infamous and brutal killing methods ever unleashed, the gas chambers of Auschwitz, were designed by Rudolph Höss. He had a role in the planning and building the camp, but did he directly participate in the mass killings of the camp or was he a “desk killer” hiding his crimes behind paperwork? Fields researched Rudolph Höss and how his pre-trial memoir compared to the eyewitness testimony of his victims. She contrasted this research with the question of why the perpetrators performed these atrocities. Fields asked, “What was the mental state of these officers while they were in the camps? What ultimately coerced them to justify this horrific behavior?”

Under the guidance of Dr. Brian Feltman, Summer Fields extensively researched books, memoirs, and interviews to cross-examine different testimony in the case trials and came out with one concrete account of which camp officers abused and murdered on a daily basis and which ones played more indirect roles.

“According to trial testimony,” Fields said, “no Auschwitz survivor ever pointed out Rudolph Höss as a camp officer. They never saw him, which is consistent with his pre-trial memoir.” Fields argues that one of the reasons Höss justified his gas chambers during the Holocaust was because he was almost never required to see it first hand and did not have to witness the brutality.

Fields was recently accepted to Georgia Regents University where she intends to pursue a Master’s of Arts in Teaching. She plans to become a high school history teacher and is adamant in making sure her students will learn about history from multiple perspectives.

Volunteering with the Center for Sustainability on campus has been a great passion for Thorne. She has been involved in sustainability for over two years and has assisted with many of the events that are put on every year. All of her volunteer work opened her eyes to what more could be done around campus to promote green and sustainable initiatives. In this area Dr. Lissa Leege, the director for the Center of Sustainability, helped inspire Thorne in her work and passion.

Thorne said the Georgia Southern Honors Program really helped her along the way with her work. “The Honors Program was a challenging experience for me, but it’s been really rewarding, directing me on the path I want to be on with my volunteer work and my thesis,” she said.
The summer of her freshman year, exercise science major Sarah Simpson studied abroad in Italy and fell in love with the breathtaking country. Her trip abroad influenced her time at Georgia Southern University so much that she returned to Italy to complete her honors thesis that focused on healthy eating and the Mediterranean diet.

On her return trip to Italy last summer, Simpson interviewed five mothers about the cultural ideas surrounding healthy eating. In America, she did the same. She found that Italian mothers value fish and fruit with yogurt, while Americans eat more beef and chicken. American mothers often carried smaller, easier to go foods like nuts.

“People associate ‘being American’ with eating fast food,” Simpson said. In her study, she found that over half the people she studied feel like they eat the ‘average American diet,’ which includes fast food. Americans also mentioned organics, but noted that it was generally too expensive to incorporate into everyday life.

Simpson and her mentor, Dr. Daniel Czech got along quite well. She says, “He was always very helpful. He helped me devise ways to organize my paper and analyze my data.”

After graduation, Simpson will attend graduate school for Physical Therapy. “The honors program definitely made a difference in my life,” Simpson said. “Even from the beginning the honors housing community made me feel like I belonged here. I’m going to miss this place.”

Sarah Simpson
Exercise Science

The Examination of Healthy Eating Across Cultures: An Existential Phenomenological Approach
Dr. Daniel Czech

International student Paola Robelo may be more than 2,000 miles away from home, but she has found a second family with the University Honors Program.

Having lived for extended periods of time in both the United States and Honduras, the graphic design major began to notice that each culture features unique graphic design within marketing campaigns. Her Honors Thesis explores this effect of culture on a region’s graphic design techniques.

Robelo said of her project, “I thought it would be interesting to see how a country’s unique culture affects how graphic designers choose to create their products. Today we live in such a globalized society—I wanted to see how individual regions of the world have reacted to this globalization within the field of graphic design.”

According to her research findings, those countries which have only recently adopted the use of the graphic design industry are more likely to feature culture specific products. Graphic designers in the Middle East, for example, tend to produce designs which directly reflect Middle Eastern culture. Conversely, larger nations whose graphic designers have more experience overall tend to feature globally focused work. Rather than display the particular culture of their region, these graphic designers attempt to create products that appeal to a wider range of the global society.

Robelo believes that by analyzing cultural influences on graphic design, those who work in the field will be better equipped to design products that can effectively communicate within specific regions of the world.

Involved both academically and philanthropically throughout her time on campus, Robelo shares that it was her time in the University Honors Program that most affected her experiences at Georgia Southern.

“Being so far from Honduras, the Honors Program truly became my home away from home. I knew that there were always people in the office who were eager to help me succeed and to encourage me to take on new challenges. I will always be thankful for my time as an Honors student.”

Following graduation, Robelo plans to pursue a career in graphic design, bringing her unique perspective to the field.

Kelsey Keane

Visit our YouTube playlist to watch our student produced piece featuring Paola Robelo
College students understand stress and anxiety all too well. While students certainly feel the physical and emotional effects, few can identify what exact habits cause such distress. Jade Boykin’s Honors Thesis research explored these concepts and possible connections to sleep patterns.

Through previous research in kinesiology courses, she established the connection between sleep and stress and considered how she could explore her hypothesis through a biological setting. After taking a class in comparative animal physiology, she asked herself the question, “Can I prove that lacking adequate amounts of sleep leads to stress?”

She decided to test her theory on fish, which go through cycles of rest and immobility that can range between seven seconds and two minutes. She set fish tanks with automatic light timers and used light to deprive sleep from the fish in her study. Boykin collected data on the fish’s sleep patterns in association with their cortisol levels, a primary stress hormone.

Boykin was accepted into Georgia Southern’s Master’s Program in Biology for the upcoming fall, and plans to continue with this research under her advisor, Dr. Johanne Lewis. She is grateful that she had the opportunity to do research as an undergraduate and believes that it played a large role in her decision to pursue a master’s degree.

“Without the Honors Program always encouraging me to get involved and do research, I may not have the opportunities before me that I have now,” Boykin said.

Laura Smith

In the United States of America, many people like to think that all cultures can assimilate quite well in what is known as the “melting pot.” On some levels, the U.S. considers itself unique in this regard. However, other countries face issues around immigration, assimilation, and cultural identity, too. Take for example Germany and the influx of Turkish immigrants and even more recently arrived immigrants from Vietnam. The struggles to integrate these newly arrived people into German society and culture became the research focus for Carson Downs.

Downs was specifically interested in the topic of Vietnamese immigration and assimilation to Germany because it provides invaluable experience as he works towards his future goals: to work with a wide range of immigrants and to connect with them on a personal level.

Downs says that his mentor, Danielle Smith, who helped him shape his research questions, was a great resource. Downs originally presented Smith with two broad ideas: Germany and immigration. He was also fortunate enough to go on two study abroad trips, traveling to both Germany and South Korea, which opened up new ideas about travel and migration. In the final months of his last undergraduate semester, Downs returned to Germany to complete his research.

While in Germany, the senior conducted a survey of both local Germans and Vietnamese residents. The survey of German citizens asked how they think the Vietnamese people fit into the German culture. The survey of Vietnamese immigrants included questions intended to determine if they felt a sense of belonging in the German culture and if they wanted to assimilate into the culture.

Downs knows that this kind of research has great implications for cultural understanding, dialogue between different peoples, and immigration policy. After graduation he has plans to attend graduate school.

“The Honors Program gave me a drive to do more. As a result, I was brought to a higher standard,” Downs said.

James Devlin
Wade studied a total of fifty-five dogs, not regulated. Over several months, the dogs had to consider several aspects. For example, guide dogs are usually trained to have her own small-animal surgery practice, or a clinic in veterinary pathology. Williams

Wade would hide a non-allergic treat in each hand and offer it to the subject at the same time. After the dog became aware that licking or nipping would not gain them their treat, they would use a paw to bat at one of Wade’s hands. While almost all used their presumably dominant paw, Wade jokes that one energetic dog used both paws on both of her hands at the same time. “I suppose he’s ambi-paw-dextrous,” she laughs.

The next test was the “Toy” test, where the dogs were given an oversize ball to play with. Wade recorded with which paws the dogs batted the ball with, whether it was left or right. Her hypothesis was that the dominant paw would be used with more regularity. The third test was the “Tape” test. Wade placed a piece of large tape lengthwise over the subject’s snout. The dog then would use one of their paws to try and remove it. With the added stimulus of irritation, the dogs were pressured psychologically to use their stronger, and more dominant, paw.

Wade found her conclusions to be quite satisfactory, with a 72.7% correlation between the dominant limb of the dogs and their owners. Four out of the fifty-five dogs had been with their owners since puppy-hood, and all four subjects were found to be in direct correlation with their owners. Wade states that this shows a direct example of how human and domesticated animal behavior is reflective. Besides illustrating how dogs understand behavioral cues, Wade hopes that her research will “Help people understand that your dog really is paying attention to you.” Also, as a “small gesture to the medical field,” Wade hopes to show how interrelated human and animal psychology can be.

Wade acknowledges that being in the Honors Program challenged her to conduct research like her thesis project, which gave her experience in her field and was a “lot of fun.” The mentor-student relationship would not have been as close, she further states, if it wasn’t for the Honors Program. Dr. Cawthorn was instrumental in the development of the project, as well as support throughout it.

After graduation, Wade plans to further her education and plans to attend veterinary school. Eventually, she plans to have her own small-animal surgery practice, or a clinic in veterinary pathology.

Carrie-Ann Williams
Kimberlee Beall’s research in stroke rehabilitation began to take shape during one of her sociology courses, and for the next two years she continued to expand the scope of her study. Along the way she learned as much about the research process—gaining approval to conduct research interviews, traveling to area hospitals, and so on—as she did about the social and mental aspects of stroke rehabilitation.

Beall chose to focus on the intrapersonal nature of therapy rather than relying solely on statistics for her project. To gain perspective into the needs of all involved in the therapy process, the senior interviewed both patients and occupational therapists at Savannah Memorial Hospital and Optim Orthopedics to find common themes in recovery therapy.

In order to conduct the study, Beall completed the IRB approval process through both Georgia Southern and the Memorial Health University Medical Center. While daunting at first, she believes that the experience of developing a strong research methodology, presenting the concept to review boards, and editing plans to satisfy approval requirements strengthened both her project and her confidence in her findings. Beall’s extensive efforts to gain research approval yielded results that will shape the perception of patients’ needs.

Project results suggest that while both parties believe that encouragement plays a vital role to the recovery process, patients rarely identify the importance of a personal relationship with their Occupational Therapist. Therapists, on the other hand, strongly focused survey responses on their relationships with individual patients and the resulting impact on recovery time. Beall suggests that future research might investigate this discrepancy in order to determine a possible cause.

The goal of this research project is to help rehabilitate patients faster and safer, Beall said, “We want them to get back to doing every day, meaningful things.”

In the fall, Beall will begin graduate studies at Georgia Regents University as she pursues her Master’s degree in Occupational Therapy.

“My research experience as an Honors student helped me gain important knowledge for my future career as an Occupational Therapist. I have a better understanding of the role between therapists and patients as well as what patients need psychologically throughout the therapy process. I’m very thankful for the Capstone Requirement; it certainly pushed me to excel and helped set me apart as I applied for grad schools.”

Sarah Ryniker

It is common knowledge in the United States that the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act was confirmed by the Supreme Court in 2012. However, because the expansion of Medicaid in the fifty states is not required, as many as twenty-one states have said “No” to the opportunity to expand healthcare. As a result, up to 5.5 million people are stuck in a coverage gap, unable to qualify for Medicaid yet without adequate income to afford private insurance coverage.

Jana Simmons explained, “Although the Republican Party as a whole has opposed the Affordable Care Act, many Grand Old Party governors have supported Medicaid expansion in their respective states.” Her thesis set out to answer whether a governor’s party affiliation has a drastic change in health care policy compared to colleagues in other political parties.

Simmons became more interested in the Affordable Care Act during her research in the evolution of children’s health insurance programs in different states since the Clinton administration. As she got further along in her research she wondered how the legislation was going to affect constituents in Republican states in 2014, particularly since Medicaid expansion is under the state’s control. Georgia’s republican administration said “No” to the expansion.

Simmons first knew she wanted to add Political Science to Biology as a double major when she met Dr. Sabia at an Open House her freshman year. Sabia was enthusiastic and sparked the enthusiasm in Ms. Simmons as well.

Upon graduating in the fall, Simmons has held an internship working for the Florida Academy of Physician Assistants in Tallahassee, Florida. “I have been able to see in action what I’ve been researching for a year and a half,” Simmons said.

She intends to pursue her M.D. as well as her Master’s in Public Health and continue to develop the same kind of research that she began in the Honors Program.

Michael Connor
Political science major Xavier Brown had every intention to graduate in three years, and with the help of the University Honors Program, he has succeeded. Not only did he finish in three years, but he did so with an Honors Thesis in hand. His research examines why African Americans vote. While the popular rhetoric links education levels to the percentage of voters, Brown’s findings challenge that notion.

Group membership, such as belonging to a church or being part of any group that is tied to where someone lives, shows a dramatic increase in voters between the 2004 and 2008 elections. Brown sees a rise in group membership having a significant role in African American voter turnout.

“It is always important as a nation to solicit the votes of everyone and get the opinions,” Brown said. “We need to shape policies to create a comfortable lifestyle for everyone, not just the majority.”

Brown and his mentor, Dr. Richard Pacelle, worked hard to uncover the real reasons African Americans vote. Both share an interest in public law and American politics, so it was a great match, Brown said. “Regardless of race, it is important to vote,” Brown stated.

Outside of the classroom, Brown participated in Eagles in D.C., a program which facilitates the opportunity for Georgia Southern students to intern on Capitol Hill. He spoke of the experience, “It was an amazing opportunity to work with today’s law makers.”

After graduation, Brown intends to enter law school, and he knows his experiences with the University Honors Program prepared him well. “The Honors Program put me in contact with like-minded students and faculty who also have meaningful goals and aspirations. It was really encouraging to see people achieve the best of their abilities.”

Sarah Ryniker

Mattie Raiford took on the task of completing two majors while in college, but unlike other double-majors, she also took on the task of completing an Honors Thesis within each major. Her love of biology develops out of her interest in health. Raiford conducted research on cancer cells to learn how cancer cells operate. Her interest in Spanish arises from a passion to learn the language. She loves that speaking another language connects her to people of other countries and cultures.

In the biology lab, Raiford would split breast cancer cells into flasks and then radiate them. After two days she would take the nanorods and put them into the cell, after which she would run tests looking for protein decomposition.

“Mattie has been able to encounter biomedical research first-hand, including the ups and downs that will be encountered during research,” her mentor, Dr. Karin Scarpinato, said.

Her Spanish thesis expanded out of an idea Raiford had during a class on the Spanish Civil War. She quickly became interested in how the portrayal of the church and its involvement in the civil war changes in movies and literature.

“This thesis is predominately based on how the church was portrayed through film both before and after the civil war,” she said.

After Francisco Franco, a powerful traditionalist who ignited the civil war, passed away the people started making true depictions of the war.

“Media and literature started painting the church as the bad guy. The church had a lot of power,” Raiford said. “Spain was a monarchy at the time, but they had other heads in power. The Catholic Church allied with Franco—giving him names by telling him about some of the private confessions told to the church. All of the church wasn’t bad; it was only a few who were into the corruption from Franco.”

For a student to successfully complete two majors is an impressive task, but to take on two majors on opposite spectrums like Spanish and Biology takes a lot of work and dedication. After graduation, Raiford will work as a research assistant in a family health care center during a gap year as she applies to medical schools.

James Devlin
Many colleges and universities offer study abroad trips to their students, often to some of the same well-worn paths in Western Europe. Elijah Anderson found a different path through the University Honors Program trips to Egypt and to Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro. He heard the conversation in the streets and in the cafés as Egyptians wondered if the Arab Spring would come to their country—and it did, four days after Anderson left—and he saw Albanians still coming to terms with their isolated past. The impact these trips made on Anderson was great. In Kosovo, Anderson’s interest in the reasoning behind decisions to intervene in humanitarian conflicts was piqued after visiting a town where 60 women and children had been massacred during a civil war. The United States had intervened soon after, and Anderson saw how grateful and respectful the people of the country were towards the U.S. because of the aid offered during the Balkan conflict of the 1990s. As a political science major who was always interested in political actions and choices, Anderson began to question why the U.S. might choose to intervene in one conflict while seeming to ignore other, sometimes more tragic, acts of violence in other countries.

“That trip changed my entire perspective and opened my eyes to things I’d never thought of before,” Anderson said. “I started questioning why the United States would intervene in a conflict with 2,000 deaths, but then ignore conflicts like Syria and Rwanda where hundreds of thousands of people were killed. Aren’t those lives just as important as the others? I wanted to explore the political motives behind it.”

After his time in Kosovo, Anderson began to shape the idea behind his Honors Thesis. Anderson researched presidential approval ratings, political policies, public opinion polls, and the overall political atmosphere during past major humanitarian intervention efforts. He found a noticeable correlation between when action was or was not taken by the United States and the political atmosphere and public opinions of the time.

Anderson hopes to submit his current thesis to be published so that his findings can further expand this area of study. As he continues his education in graduate school, he plans to keep studying these correlations and further delve into the topic.

Anderson credits not only his opportunity to study abroad, but his overall academic success to the University Honors Program. “The Honors Program is one of the main reasons I decided to attend Georgia Southern, and it is a decision I have never regretted,” Anderson said. “The Honors Program has offered me guidance and mentorship at every step and has helped make me who I am today. I feel confident in my next steps of education and career, and I am extremely grateful for that.”

Angels in America by Tony Kushner stood out to Jeffery Silvey, a double major in theater and Spanish, as a unique text which works to move past the traditional portrayal of the gay protagonist by using the elements of character and time to change that image.

“Angels in America is a play that looks unflinchingly at the ugliness that is a part of the human spirit, as well as at the love and triumph of which human beings are capable,” Dr. Sarah McCarron, Silvey’s mentor, said.

Silvey became interested in the play Angels in America in his very first theater appreciation class at Georgia Southern. Two years later in his theater history class he found himself writing a research paper on Angels in America. His extensive experience with the work encouraged Silvey to just continue to refocus his ideas, a process which ultimately led to the development of his Honors Thesis.

Angels in America, a major work within the genre of gay drama, opens with a scene in 1985 as the protagonist contracts AIDS. Silvey states that in most gay dramas an AIDS diagnosis would signal the bitter end for a protagonist; however, Angels in America defies the genre stereotypes. The audience sees the protagonist four years later in 1990, determined to continue.

“The Honors Thesis provides a special opportunity for a student to receive intensive mentoring in the process of scholarship from a faculty member,” Dr. McCarron said. “[Silvey’s tenaciousness] enabled him to drive through those moments of frustration and inarticulacy.”

After graduation, Silvey intends to enroll in graduate school to earn his MFA in Fine Arts.
British Partridge
History and Modern Languages
Georgia Women and Their Struggle for the Vote
Dr. Anastatia Sims

One cannot deny that women are oftentimes suffering both underrepresentation and misrepresentation throughout society. History and Spanish double major Brittany Partridge was first introduced to the academic study of these issues in her women’s history class, and with the help of her mentor Dr. Anastatia Sims, Partridge went on a mission to get more information.

“Because religion continues to be an important force in women’s lives, especially in the South, Brittany’s research has implications that resonate into our own time,” Dr. Sims said.

Partridge was particularly disturbed by the fact that women in Mississippi and Georgia were not allowed to vote in the 1920 election, even though the 19th amendment had already passed. She divided her thesis into three chapters in order to adequately describe the struggle that Georgia women faced to cast their ballot in an election.

She discussed the history of the female population of the United States with specific emphasis on their struggles in the South; the influence of the Southern Baptist congregations on the women and the African American population as a whole; and how the views of the Southern Baptists are linked to the specific struggles of female Georgians.

Partridge became a member of the University Honors Program her junior year, and she later had the opportunity to serve as a peer leader in an honors class. “Honors students are given more responsibility as a student, and the University Honors Program encourages those students in that way,” Partridge said.  

Joshua Rogers
International Studies and French
The Moldovan Identity Crisis: A Young State, an Old Nation, and the Search for a National Identity
Dr. Darin Van Tassell

Six years ago, international studies and French double major Joshua Rogers fell in love with a country that most Americans have never heard of. As a sophomore in high school, Rogers traveled with his church to Moldova, a small country in Eastern Europe.

“I fell in love. The Moldovans are incredibly resilient people,” Rogers said. Eager to learn more about the small country, Rogers visited Moldova again this past year. This past trip inspired him to write his Honors Thesis on the “Moldovan Identity Crisis,” an ongoing struggle for the young country.

After gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the country became the Republic of Moldova. With a divided political system, the country faces similar issues as other countries in trying to overcome their unemployment, poverty, and crime. Rogers, however, wanted to explore beyond these issues and look at how Moldova has forged its identity. Rogers explained that he wanted “to create a study that looks into the true identity of Moldova and to also formulate a solution to the crisis that they are having.”

In order to grasp a full understanding of the Moldovan country, Rogers encompassed all history, culture, and political aspects in his research. He interviewed Moldovans and Eastern European scholars to gauge the necessity of having a national identity. Using the interviews combined with literature, Rogers explored theories on identity formation and issues in identity development.

Rogers admitted that writing the Honors Thesis was difficult because there is a lack of research on the subject. He stated, “There was no way I could have completed this project without the encouragement of the Honors Program. My project was unique, making it difficult, but rewarding.”

After graduation, Rogers will attend the International Studies Graduate Program at American University in Washington, D.C.

INQUIRY AND CREATIVITY

James Farmer
Political Science
Are there Cracks in the Democratic Peace?
Conflict between Democratic States
Dr. Jamie Scalera

Many people will never receive the opportunity to live with someone from another country, let alone live on an entire floor of individuals from all around the globe. James Farmer, political science major, chose to be a part of the international living community offered by University Housing his freshman year. This exposure to different cultures was one of the reasons Farmer took an interest in political science with an international focus.

Farmer became interested in the relationships between democratic countries, particularly in the theories and ideas behind the Democratic Peace Principle.

“My research analyzes the amount of conflict between democratic states of differing military and economic capabilities in order to see if such dyads have different dynamics than dyads with comparable military and economic might,” Farmer said. If there is a difference, he said, “This could indicate where future wars between democratic states would arise.”

Farmer was also able to study abroad and hold an internship abroad during his time at Georgia Southern. A study abroad trip to Spain in 2012 piqued his interest about that country. He returned to Spain for the spring semester in 2014 where he worked for the Consulate General in Barcelona with a focus on public affairs. He developed reports, created breaking news files, fine-tuned the social media presence, and conducted research and writing to support the Consulate.

After graduation he will seek work as an intelligence analyst or communications officer, and eventually he sees himself continuing his studies in graduate school.

Sarah Ryniker

Are there Cracks in the Democratic Peace?
Conflict between Democratic States
Farmer took an interest in political science with an international focus.

Many people will never receive the opportunity to live with someone from another country, let alone live on an entire floor of individuals from all around the globe. James Farmer, political science major, chose to be a part of the international living community offered by University Housing his freshman year. This exposure to different cultures was one of the reasons Farmer took an interest in political science with an international focus.

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Sarah Ryniker
After enjoying the beautiful outdoors, the last thing a person hopes to discover is the bloated body of an attached tick. Ticks not only suck blood from their victims, they often transmit diseases in the process as well. This is a problem that intrigued Jack St. Jean throughout his undergraduate college career, and he decided to search for an innovative solution.

“Currently we rely on pesticides, which can harm the environment, to control ticks,” St. Jean said. “I want to find a better way.”

St. Jean focused his attention on the ferritin gene, which plays a crucial role in iron metabolism. Ticks need blood to survive and reproduce, but if the ferritin in the blood is disrupted, the ticks cannot feed or reproduce properly. Therefore, if ferritin expression can be controlled, so can ticks.

St. Jean started his project in the summer after his freshman year after he read about microbial genetics, cloning, and gene expressions on Georgia Southern University’s biology webpage. St. Jean sought out Dr. Quentin Fang for assistance in his research.

“Dr. Fang taught me everything,” St. Jean said. “He trained me by demonstrating techniques and was there if I had any questions.”

St. Jean asserted that working on this project had a tremendous impact on his research skills, especially his commitment to his work. “We faced many challenges in the research,” St. Jean said. “Many times it felt like it wasn’t going anywhere, but we kept going at it and analyzed each problem to find the solution. This can definitely help me in future situations.”

Dr. Fang agreed that this project was crucial in demonstrating and enhancing St. Jean’s devotion to research. “Many bright students won’t do anything worthwhile because they are not willing to commit the time necessary for research,” Dr. Fang said. “They will make all sorts of excuses to get out of work. But Jack was always on time and would stay in the lab for 10 to 12 hours at a time. He was willing to do something.”

St. Jean intends to apply to medical schools, and Dr. Fang believes that this project will help St. Jean with that application process. “This project will give Jack a chance to make it in. Even if he is not accepted to medical school, this area of research will still be open to him.”

Alicia Burrus

**Arielle Coambes**

*Writing and Linguistics*

*A Usability Study of the WINGS Registration Interface*

*Dr. Janice Walker*

WINGS stands for Web Interactive Networks for Georgia Southern, and it is an interface for student information, like financial aid, personal information, and transcripts as well as the method for class registration. The student body of Georgia Southern has always had mixed feelings on this system, and Arielle Coambes decided to investigate the effectiveness of WINGS to find out if it offers students the tools they need to succeed.

Coambes started out with the desire to know if WINGS is truly efficient, and she began collecting information on the system from the University’s IT services. She then facilitated face to face student surveys and gathered quantitative data from students and qualitative information from the interviews.

“My thesis relates to my major in that web usability is just a study of technical communication through writing and through design,” Coambes said.

Dr. Janice Walker helped Coambes refine her survey and her interview questions. “She’s an expert on technical writing and communication. She is also the head of the Georgia Southern Institutional Review Board or IRB,” Coambes said.

When asked about working with Honors students like Coambes, Dr. Walker said, “It is indeed a pleasure to work with a student such as Arielle who is committed to excellence, accepting of criticism as a learning experience, and motivated to learn and discover.”

After graduation, she plans to pursue a career in digital media, focusing on user interface and design. In the fall, she will enroll at the Georgia Institute of Technology in the Master of Science Program in Human-Computer Interaction.

“Without the Honors Program, without this thesis, I wouldn’t know that I wanted to get a master’s degree, nor would I be a qualified candidate for graduate school. My course work in the honors program prepared me for further education,” Coambes said.

James Devlin
Swain’s project emerged as he expanded on their research, which worked towards eliminating carbon dioxide emitted from factories, a contributing factor to global warming. His project studied the different metal film combinations that could effectively line factory flumes and stop carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere.

He was tasked with analyzing previously conducted research on a specific type of thin film called HKUST, which is made of copper and trimesic acid and can withstand temperatures of over 200 degrees Celsius. He used an instrument that measured the mass of each film layer, comparing the findings to analyze how mass affected usability. His research helped the laboratory better understand the parameters of these films and their influence on the final product.

Swain enjoyed the research opportunity and was grateful for the experience to intern in a professional laboratory. “I had a lot of stereotypes of what a lab setting would be like going into this experience,” Swain said. “You imagine scientists sitting alone in a lab doing research, but I learned that there is a lot of collaboration and community in the chemistry field. Experiencing the environment opened my eyes to see what the opportunities for lab research are.”

This was not Swain’s first experience with research. He has worked on several other research projects during his undergraduate career and presented his results at conferences such as the National Meeting of American Chemical Society, the Joint Southeast and Southwest Regional Meeting of the American Chemical Society, and at a symposium hosted by the Lawrence Berkley National Laboratory.

Medical school is the next step in Swain’s education, and he hopes to one day be a military physician or a general practitioner. “I’m grateful for what I was able to do through the Honors Program and all the opportunities I had at this university that led to my internship and undergraduate research,” Swain said.

Laura Smith

INQUIRY AND CREATIVITY

Many students participate in internships, which greatly benefit their education and introduce them to their future career. An internship with the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory gave Caleb Swain a research opportunity that became his Honors Thesis.

Should parents have an input on what qualities their child’s teacher needs to have? Early childhood education major, Taylor Roberson, realized that under the United States’ “Race to the Top” program our school systems call for highly qualified teachers, yet everyone has a different opinion on what characteristics make up a highly qualified teacher. Roberson’s idea sparked an interest to research parents’ perspectives on teaching qualifications since they are experts of their own children’s needs. Before creating a survey to collect parents’ thoughts on the matter, Roberson and her advisor, Dr. Meca Williams-Johnson, sought to find related studies concerning parent teacher involvement. To their surprise, very few studies had been conducted regarding the opinions of parents.

“Parents are heard too loudly or not heard at all,” Roberson explained. She stated that we need to strive for “a balance of input.” In order to gain valuable responses from parents, Roberson and Dr. Williams-Johnson pulled a list of qualities from several different surveys that were sent home to parents in various school systems. They then compiled a handful of qualities and created their own survey, asking parents to rate the qualities that they would like for their child’s teacher to have. Dr. Williams-Johnson explained that “Taylor’s research is critical to understanding the beliefs of parents and what they are seeking when working with their child’s teachers. With this newfound knowledge she can build teams that will help get the positive results we see in making a difference.”

Roberson exclaimed, “This project set me apart from other education majors; everyone does not get this opportunity. This type of project usually goes towards graduate students.” She added, “I would not have thought of this type of study if it were not for the Honors program. It made me think further and made me think on a larger scale.”

The ultimate goal of this project was to define what teacher qualities are the most important in parents’ eyes. However, Roberson also aimed to improve parent teacher relationships as well as her own teaching style. The project idea originated while Roberson was serving as an Honors Ambassador, an experiential learning project that required her to talk to Georgia Southern parents. The Honors Ambassador experience made her comfortable talking to parents and also introduced her to the parents’ expectations of the university. It inspired her to look further into parents’ feedback about education and served as the base idea for her Honors Thesis.

Roberson plans to use the feedback she attained through her survey in her own classroom after graduation. She is certified to teach pre-K through fifth grade and also graduated with an ESOL endorsement in addition to her early childhood education degree. Roberson also hopes to attend graduate school in the future, but stated “I need experience and time in the classroom to know where I want to explore further.”

Mikaela Shupp
Sarah Gleissle
Finance
Comparing and Contrasting the German and the US Financial Systems, Institutions, and Regulations with Emphasis on the Financial Crisis in 2008
Edward Sibbald

Sarah Gleissle’s four years at Georgia Southern have been a study abroad of sorts. She came to Georgia Southern from Germany, and in embracing the call to develop a global perspective, focused her research on the American and German banking systems.

“Mr. Sibbald, my mentor, suggested doing something financial but that also had to do with my German heritage,” Gleissle said of choosing her topic.

Her research focused on banking methods in both countries, such as their regulations and procedures during financial crises. She also looked extensively into the practices of the European Union, of which Germany is a member.

Her findings show that although both banking systems are strong, they both have their weaknesses. Perhaps the biggest difference between the two lies in their foci. According to Gleissle’s research, German banks are mostly concerned with economic growth and are primarily government-owned, and therefore cannot fail. American banks, on the other hand, are highly competitive and often profit-driven. There is also the added pressure on American bankers to use creativity and innovation to attract customers. Germany’s banking system, according to Gleissle, provides more security for small businesses.

“Small businesses have it easier in Germany, as the banks are there to support the economy and economic growth,” Gleissle said. “This makes the country stronger and more competitive in a way that small businesses can grow into strong exporters.”

After completing her scrupulous research, Gleissle concluded that a mix of the two systems could potentially create the perfect banking system. “The competition from the U.S., combined with Germany’s stability, interstate banking like in the U.S., and economic growth support in Germany would make the perfect system,” Gleissle said.

After graduating from the Honors Program, which Gleissle credits with “pushing [her] to go beyond the curriculum,” Gleissle hopes to either find a job or internship in the United States, or continue her global exploration with a job in London.

Daniel Ogden
Biology
Immunohistochemical Localization of the Aquaporins AQPe and AQP3 in Kidneys of Freshwater and Saltwater-acclimated American Eel (Anguilla Rostrata)
Dr. Christopher Cutler

Planet Earth has only a few fish classified as osmoregulators; that is, a fish with the ability to live in both freshwater and saltwater for extended periods of time. Daniel Ogden conducted research on this phenomenon for over a year and a half with the American Eel (Anguilla rostrata). This project helped him better understand the methods eels and other fish use to adapt to various salinity environments.

Ogden first became inspired for his topic when he took Molecular Genetics with Dr. Christopher Cutler. He was enthralled by the science of heredities and the microscopic universe of genetics early in his junior year, and soon received assistance from Dr. Cutler about pursuing this interest further.

American Eels live the majority of their lives in freshwater ecosystems, mostly along the eastern coast of America. However, they swim out into the saltwater Atlantic Ocean during the breeding season to give birth to their offspring before returning home. During these vast changes in salt concentration, water transport proteins—aquaporin—express changes to regulate ion levels in the eel. Through this process they are kept alive and healthy wherever they are, and Ogden intended to learn more.

Ogden said, “Think of it like a seesaw effect.” Fish must maintain a higher ion concentration than that of the freshwater. When in saltwater, external ion concentrations are too high so eels have to retain water to keep internal ion concentration down. “I don’t think I would have been able or even voluntarily set out to pursue this undergraduate research had it not been for the Honors Program,” he said. “They challenged me to push myself, and I found that I indeed had the capability to conduct this project.”

Ogden knows studying the American Eel in freshwater and saltwater environments has helped him in his preparation for Medical School. He plans on attending the Georgia Regents University and possibly participating in the highly involved field of biomedical research. “I hope that the lessons and skills I learn now will continue to benefit my career when they are needed for something as demanding as that,” he said.

Michael Connor
Caroline Greene  
Child and Family Development  
College Students’ Attitudes and Perceptions Towards Adults with Developmental Disabilities  
Dr. Jerri Kropp and Dr. Brent Wolfe

While most college students on spring break find themselves poolside at the beach or caught up in a Netflix binge, Caroline Greene's college spring break experiences deviated from the norm—they significantly changed her life and future for the better. Greene was one of many Georgia Southern students that participated in the annual Alternative Break trip to Camp Twin Lakes, where she was a camp counselor at Camp Blue Skies, a camp for adults with developmental disabilities and chronic illnesses. In fact, she was there during the inaugural year of the camp as a freshman. Greene's role as “cabin captain” for a group of disabled women during her freshman year was a pivotal moment in Greene's education. “Living with this group of women opened my eyes to the world around me,” Greene says of her first alternative break trip. Greene's new perspective was so impactful that she returned the next year to conduct research with Dr. Jerri Kropp and Dr. Brent Wolfe on college students' attitudes towards disabled adults. Dr. Wolfe praised Greene's work ethic, stating that she is "very much a self-starter who takes initiative." During her junior year trip to Camp Blue Skies, Greene pursued her research alone.

Greene's meticulous approach to collecting data for her Honors Thesis consisted of four parts: quantitative data, qualitative data, open-ended journals, and her own observations. Through these methods of data gathering, Greene studied college students’ shifting attitudes towards those with developmental disabilities throughout the week. Her research supports her hypothesis that college students who attended the camp left with more empathetic attitudes towards disabled individuals. In fact, Greene’s research yielded such positive results that she recommends Camp Blue Skies to every Georgia Southern undergraduate student. “This trip is suitable for any student, regardless of their major,” Greene insists. “Working with disadvantaged people teaches students compassion and understanding, which are important skills for any profession.”

Greene acknowledges the Honors Program when speaking of her successful Capstone project. “Being a part of the Honors Program has presented me with so many opportunities that I otherwise would not have had. If you want to do something, the Honors Program makes it possible.”

Greene recently held an internship with Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta and plans to attend Georgia College and State University to earn her Master’s in Public Administration. She will also sit for the Child Life Specialist certification exam in August. Greene plans to pursue a career as a child life specialist, where her skills learned from Camp Blue Skies will be used to help children facing illness.

Aleyna Rentz

Many students, like Biology major Jordan Garrett, join the University Honors Program after their freshman year because of the additional benefits the program offers. “I am always looking for ways to grow, and the Honors program gave me a chance to do undergraduate research,” said Garrett.

Garrett started working with his mentor, Dr. Christopher Cutler, on a research project related to Garrett’s own interests in the medical field. Together, they examined the kidney structures of fish to find what level of Aquaporin 4b was present. These genes help water to flow through the fish’s internal structures. Because humans contain the same gene for osmosis, identifying the gene could be extremely helpful for understanding how the body processes water.

“Even though our research was inconclusive, it did prepare me for working in a lab,” Garrett said. “I learned procedures and how to take on complex projects.”

While Dr. Cutler and Garrett worked closely on this project, they also had a great relationship outside of the thesis project. “Dr. Cutler wrote references for me, helped me pick out classes, and gave me ideas for different graduate schools,” Garrett said.

After graduation, Garrett plans to attend a medical school and travel. “The Honors Program made me dig deeper. I developed strong relationships with professors. Most importantly, I was surrounded by like-minded students who truly wanted to challenge themselves,” Garrett said.

Sarah Ryniker

Visit our YouTube playlist to watch our student produced piece featuring Jordan Garrett.
Microphones, recording instruments, and synthesizers are iconic elements of music technology, an ever-growing industry which has always interested Information Technology major Ty Von Plinsky. The theremin, however, is an important element of music development in older generation cinematic productions which is much less widely studied. The box-shaped instrument, which is “played” by a musician moving his hands, became the specific focus of Von Plinsky’s Honors Capstone Project.

Much of his academic work focused primarily on web design, but to diversify his range of experiences, Von Plinsky added a second discipline, music technology. He enrolled in graduate classes that helped him bring together his interests, and as he said, “go further down the rabbit hole” of music technology.

He developed the idea of remodeling an old theremin because he was interested in the instrument and how it worked. It was not until two other Information Technology students completed their Capstone Projects, one of which involved building a gaming engine from scratch, that Von Plinsky thought, “I could do this.”

Von Plinsky has put a modern take on the theremin while under the guidance of his mentor, Dr. Chris Kadlec. He used the software systems Microsoft Kinect and Cycling ‘74 so that one hand can control three things at a time as opposed to only one thing at a time. He has also remodeled it in a way so that it can control other synthesizers via Musical Instrument Digital Interface.

Upon completion of his Honors Thesis in the fall, Von Plinsky held an internship at National Public Radio in Washington, D.C. He worked in NPR Labs on a variety of technology-related projects and plans to take that experience into a music technology field.

Emily Dodd

Claire Goodwin
Athletic Training and Exercise Science
The Effects of Psychological Intervention on Anxiety and Confidence Levels of First Year Athletic Training Students during Emergencies
Erin Jordan

Claire Goodwin spent every spring break of undergraduate career at camp—Camp Twin Lakes, that is. That site hosted Camp Blue Skies, a camp for people who have cognitive and developmental disabilities. The weeklong camp gives campers opportunities to gain confidence and have fun while also learning new ways to stay healthy and active. Goodwin was in the inaugural group during her freshman year, and she has returned every year on this Honors Alternative Break Trip.

While many people would think that the camp is the main beneficiary of students volunteering their time during spring break, Goodwin would disagree. She said she has learned as much and more from the experience than the campers. Every year taught her something new. And every year that she grew at camp, she had more ideas and concepts to bring back to her studies and research as well as a deeper sense of empathy and understanding.

Goodwin has always been passionate about delivering care to people, so she focused her Honors Thesis research on how such care is best managed. Using the patient simulator ISTAN, Goodwin set up emergency simulations in her thesis project: “The Effects of Psychological Intervention on Anxiety and Confidence Levels of First Year Athletic Training Students during Emergencies” and tested how well students reacted with a variety of different relaxation techniques.

“Often, students forget what they are taught, and as a result care is not as efficient. Students who went through the relaxation techniques had higher confidence levels and performed higher,” Goodwin said.

Goodwin and her mentor, Ms. Jordan were very close and shared similar interests. “She understands the importance of transferring care fast in an emergency. She’s been my mentor in other areas as well,” Goodwin said.

After graduation, Goodwin will attend University of North Georgia in Dahlonega, Georgia, and begin pursuing her doctorate in physical therapy.

Sarah Ryniker
Osazee Paul
Information Technology
Predictive Analytics: Another Approach
Dr. Adrian Gardiner

When almost thirty million Netflix users browse the shows on their homepages, few wonder about the intricate computer programming that goes into finding their favorite shows and movies. Osazee Paul, however, was fascinated by programs like these. Paul conducted his Honors Thesis on computer predictive analytics, evaluating current practices of predictive programs for sites such as Netflix to develop best practice suggestions. He ultimately hopes his conclusions will help provide a faster and smarter program to better fit consumer’s needs.

Paul spent over a year examining research surrounding predictive analytics and thinking about his own research. He used a computer program called Oracle Data Miner to analyze large sets of data. Understanding and analyzing data in this manner can help resolve issues concerning inconsistencies, Paul says.

Paul spent his last two summers doing internships to help him learn and develop new ideas in information technology. In the summer of 2012, Paul worked at the BMW Manufacturing Company in Spartanburg, South Carolina as an Information Technology Analyst where he wrote a program to prioritize data through Java. In the summer of 2013, Paul worked for Coca-Cola Incorporated as a Material Data Quality Analyst. There, he made resolutions for data quality and provided documents for better training techniques. “These internships were a good way to get out into the real world and do work for companies while getting your name out at the same time,” said Paul.

Upon graduation in December, Paul returned to Nigeria to teach practical information communications technology as part of the National Youth Service. This program seeks to address the country’s limited access to technology by providing children electronic devices and the skills to implement them in daily life.

Sarah Ryniker

Ariel Vipond
Anthropology and French
The Gift of Second Sight: An Analysis of Puppy Raisers for the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind
Dr. Heidi Altman

At Georgia Southern University, it is normal to see puppies walking around campus and playing fetch with their owners. It is also normal to see puppies in gold vests sitting in classrooms and standing in line at Chick-fil-A. These dogs are not family pets that their owners have brought to college, nor are they stray animals that decided to pursue a Bachelor’s degree. These dogs are a part of the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind, an organization that provides guide dogs for those who are blind or visually impaired. Ariel Vipond is one of the people who raises future guide dogs for the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind.

What started off as a simple interest when Vipond saw her friend raising a puppy and decided to start raising puppies herself in July 2012 turned into her Honors Thesis. Vipond’s research focuses on analyzing the demographics and motivations of volunteer puppy raisers for the Guide Dog Foundation.

When asked about her reasoning behind choosing her project, Vipond stated, “It would be a good introspective project to see why I chose to raise these dogs myself only to give them up to someone else.”

Vipond also stated that raising puppies for the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind is a “huge act of sacrifice,” but a lot of people have raised several dogs for the organization.

Vipond hopes to submit the information she collected about why people are interested in raising service and guide dogs to The Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind in hopes that the information will aid the Foundation in concentrating their advertisements for its Puppy Raiser Program. “Better advertisement leads to more puppy raisers, and in the long run, more service and guide dogs for people with disabilities,” Vipond stated.

Stating that raising puppies for the Guide Dog Foundation as one of the most rewarding things she has ever done, Vipond plans to pursue a career working with service animals. For the foreseeable future, Vipond wants to work for the Guide Dog Foundation and get a better understanding of how dogs are formally trained, and how non-profits as a whole work, as well as how the different departments of non-profit organizations and guide dog training can come together to help people in the long run.

Vipond stated that, “The best advertisement is a cute little puppy walking around on campus,” but she believes that it would be helpful to have a more concentrated advertising plan. “If you know who to advertise to and what aspects about the program you need to advertise, then you’ll get the right kinds of people you want.”

Vipond concluded that, “There’s a lot that goes into [raising service dogs], but it’s about finding the right people who have their hearts into it; more homes for puppies-in-training and a greater supply of guide and service dogs for those who need them.”

Yavaria Ryan

Visit our YouTube playlist to watch our student produced piece featuring Ariel Vipond
When people think about the Honors Thesis, the words “paper” and “typing” come to mind. For senior Multimedia Communications major, Mallory Taylor, the word “documentary” came to mind. Her Thesis is a short film titled *Inside Out: Reexamining Stereotypes from Behind Bars, a Documentary*. Under the mentorship of Brian Graves, Taylor worked to produce a documentary showing the problems that come from stereotypes of those in prison and the media’s focus on violence.

Although Taylor had never made a documentary before, she said she was inspired by recognizing “the power documentaries can have in influencing the way people see issues because seeing something can be so much more powerful than reading about it in certain situations.” For Taylor, the issue she chose to focus on was the media’s violent portrayals of people who are incarcerated. Taylor’s mentor introduced her to the Inside-Out Program, a program that provides a classroom environment that involves both college students and people who are incarcerated. Dr. Laura Agnich and Dr. Bryan Miller are two Georgia Southern Criminal Justice professors that Taylor interviewed for the documentary. Taylor also interviewed students who were involved in the program as well as other Statesboro residents in order to see how a variety of people felt about people who are incarcerated.

Taylor believes that her project has helped her further understand the power documentaries have on society. She said that “with sites such as Vimeo and YouTube, anyone can make a documentary and have it reach a large audience.” Although Taylor loved her final product, she wished she had a chance to film inside of the prison and to interview incarcerated men and women. Taylor’s setback did not lessen her spirit. Taylor asserted that such difficulties have driven her to want to further pursue this project. Taylor said, “These difficulties have inspired me to keep pushing and to continue to make documentaries in the future.”

Yavaria Ryan

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As more women enter the workforce, questions about equality surface. Do women actually do less work? Are they paid less? Is it really even a fair comparison? Psychology major and criminal justice minor Blayne May first learned about the skewed perception of women in business through psychology and law classes taught by his mentor Dr. Amy Hackney. This new information made him curious as to if the same skewed perception is carried over into the court room.

May developed an electronic survey that was sent out to other Georgia Southern University students who were enrolled in psychology classes. This survey featured a short video of an attorney’s closing statement in which the attorney was either a calm male or female or an angry male or female. May implemented the angry versus calm aspect since one can perceive an angry male having more competence while penalizing an angry female. After watching the video, the participants then took a survey regarding internal and external attributions. Is the attorney angry because “that’s just how they are,” or are they angry due to their circumstances?

His results did not necessarily support his hypothesis, he said. However, when race was added to the model, participants found male attorneys more competent than female attorneys when in the angry condition.

May appreciated the guidance he received from his mentor Dr. Amy Hackney. According to May, Dr. Hackney is more theory based while he said he places more emphasis on application. Working with his mentor, May said, has given him a broader understanding of his research and his career as a whole.

“The Honors Program has made me think deeper,” May said. May also shared that the Honors classes had a lot more detail and focused on the “how” and “why” as opposed to the “what.” He knows that this is good preparation for the fall when he enrolls in Law School at Georgia State University.

Emily Dodd
Kristin Campbell
Psychology
Resilience and Self-Control Among Georgia Southern Students: A Comparative Study between ROTC Students and Non-ROTC Students
Dr. Amy Hackney

Daughter of a member of the United States Navy, Kristin Campbell’s research combined personal experience and an academic interest in the psychology of resilience. Through her Honors Thesis, she sought to determine how a student's participation in the ROTC program affects the development of individual’s resilience.

Defining resilience colloquially as “the ability to bounce back,” Campbell says it is important to research ways of promoting psychological wellbeing among the men and women of the armed forces. Those ROTC students who complete the program will be automatically considered for officer positions, making it even more important that they are trained to handle high stress situations.

Ultimately the results of such study could influence the development of pre-deployment programs focusing on resilience training. Campbell hopes that such measures could decrease the steady rise in psychological disorders such as PTSD and aid the fluidness of returning home to civilian life.

While her initial results were inconclusive, the graduating senior holds that adjustments to the participant pool may see a dramatic shift in research outcomes.

Campbell shares that while the benefits of the Honors Program are numerous, the personalized mentorship during the writing of her Honors Thesis experience proved invaluable.

“I was able to develop a meaningful and lasting relationship with my Honors mentor, Dr. Amy Hackney,” Campbell said. “She continually motivated me to pursue the project. I’m thankful for the opportunity that so greatly influenced my college experience.”

Kelsey Keane

Philipp Burns
Anthropology
Fiber Crafts and Production Spaces at La Milpa North, Belize
Dr. Heidi Altman

Lots of students have great stories to tell about what they did over summer break. For the past two summers, Philipp Burns has been able to tell the story of doing intensive field research at a Mayan archeology site, La Milpa North, a portion of an ancient Mayan city located in Northwestern Belize. While there he completed research with the Programme for Belize Archaeological Project that became the foundation for his Honors Thesis.

During his research, he uncovered many fascinating things about the inhabitants of La Milpa North. A report on his findings, co-authored by Eric J. Heller, “The 2013 Season of Survey and Excavation at La Milpa North, Belize,” will appear in the upcoming issue of Research Reports from the Program for Belize Archeological Project, Volume 8. Burns also presented his research at the Lago Conference in Davidson, North Carolina during the spring.

Burns cannot speak highly enough of the work he has engaged with faculty while at Georgia Southern. “The faculty definitely left their mark on me. I’ve grown as a scholar and an archeologist,” said Burns. “This university offers a lot, but you have to do beyond to really stand out. The University Honors Program research has afforded me an opportunity to apply the knowledge that I have gained inside and out of the classroom.”

After graduation, Burns intends to continue his studies in graduate school, but he will continue to conduct research at the Mayan site this summer.

Sarah Ryniker

Shannon Rhodes
Chemistry
Detection of Heavy Transition Metal Cations using Novel Chemosensors
Dr. Shainaz Landge

Shannon Rhodes participated in research and developed work that she hopes to continue past her time as an undergraduate at Georgia Southern. In her research, Rhodes worked under the advisement of Dr. Shainaz Landge, who helped Rhodes develop her project. Dr. Landge, she said, “mentioned the health concerns that come from heavy transition metals.” Rhodes knew this thesis project was right for her because her family has been personally affected by this problem.

During the course of her project, Rhodes and Dr. Landge partnered with Dr. Karelle Aiken and her research group. Dr. Aiken’s research group worked on making the chemosensors while Rhodes and Dr. Landge tested the chemosensors by using ultraviolet (UV) “absorption spectrums to see if bonding happens with different salts,” Rhodes said.

Her group would then, she said, “take the chemosensors and apply them to see if they are metal specific.” The goal in testing the sensors was to funnel the sensors and metals in an effort for the sensors to be metal specific.

Rhodes stated that her research helped her prepare for graduate school because she plans to study organic chemistry and conduct medical research while in graduate school. Rhodes stated that “seeing chemistry and machine applications is a great thing—I feel more prepared, and I have a better understanding.”
When international studies major Corinna Miller visited Romania in the summer of 2012, she noticed the considerable number of orphanages in the country. Moreover, several of the families she saw had unusually large numbers of children. Miller decided to investigate this intriguing trend, and the project quickly became the focus for her Honors Thesis.

In 1967, Romania had a relatively low population and birthrate. Nicolae Ceausescu, the leader of Romania at the time, issued Decree 770, which restricted access to abortions and birth control. As a result, the population exploded, and many families could not handle the number of children that were being born. Many children were given up to orphanages, while other families inflated in size. The policy was terminated after the Romanian Revolution in 1989. In 1996 Romania began to close down many of its large orphanages and gave children to families, in an effort to join the European Union.

Miller wanted to know how the decree had affected the culture of Romania, particularly its lasting effects on family size. Miller worked with Dr. Darin Van Tassell on her project. Dr. Van Tassell gave Miller advice on how to narrow down her topic, as well as how to conduct her study and her interviews.

She interviewed several people who could tell her about the decree’s consequences, including a woman who had grown up in Romania under the policy, an Oxford professor who had visited the country during that time, and a worker from an organization who worked with women and children in Romania.

Dr. Van Tassell believes that Miller’s research could have a significant impact on public policy. “200 years ago there were one billion people in the world. Today it’s seven billion,” he said. “The pressure placed on governments to control family size is very real.”

Miller believes that her Experiential Learning with Honors Ambassadors made it easier for her to conduct interviews. “It helped me get out of my shell so I could talk to people and get to know them,” she said.

After graduation, Miller intends to work in Romania with Kidz Romania, a ministry which specializes in reaching out to children. She is confident that her research will help her better understand Romanian culture. “Since I’ll know the history of the event and how it affects people over there, it should make my work more successful,” she said.

Alicia Burruss

Georgia Southern’s state of the art Recreation Activity Center, the RAC, quickly became exercise science major Haley Cronon’s second home on campus.

“I don’t just go to the RAC because I work there—I really love it there. At the RAC we’re a family,” Cronon said.

Her interest in personal fitness encouraged her to pursue research developing fitness regimens. These fitness plans specifically focused on the needs of women as Cronon explored methods to encourage female participation and retention.

“I figure I should do what I love and share that passion with other people,” Cronon said. “Working out has traditionally been seen as a male dominated hobby, but the health benefits of staying active are universal. It’s important to help women find their niche in the gym.”

Through her project Cronon found that women particularly look for community and encouragement in the ideal fitness environment.

As an undergraduate student Cronon became certified as a personal trainer. Following graduation she has pursued work in the field through internship opportunities and, most recently, working as a personal trainer at a private gym in Statesboro, Georgia.

Cronon attributes much of her undergraduate success to the Honors community: “My time in the University Honors Program shaped my time at Georgia Southern. From our First-Year Experience course to honors courses and research experience—we really gained a community through the program.”

Kelsey Keane
Alexa Lowery
Early Childhood Education
Teachers’ Perception of Scripted Education
Dr. Meca Williams-Johnson and Dr. Lina Soares

Many high school students in public school systems have noticed the recent emphasis teachers place on incorporating the standardized curriculum into their classroom. Standardization means that teachers are required to cover certain topics that the board of education has put forth. The information is delivered through catchy posters and is often mentioned by teachers who stress the importance of covering those specific topics of the curriculum.

Alexa Lowery noticed these trends as a high school student. She was curious as to the background behind curriculum standards and began to wonder: Why are standardized curriculums so important? Why can’t teachers teach at their own pace? How do the students feel, and do they perform better? Lowery worked closely with her mentor, Dr. Meca Williams-Johnson, as she pursued answers.

Lowery and Williams-Johnson created an original electronic survey to collect data and sent the survey to all teachers in Effingham County. The survey asked questions regarding how exactly the standards are implemented. Lowery also crafted questions targeted to the veteran teachers who have been there since before the implementation of curriculum standards to discover if they have personally witnessed any improvement in student success as a result of the educational standards.

What she found was that many teachers were not using the standards as originally intended. “Many of these teachers feel that their students are falling behind,” she said.

After receiving her degree, Lowery plans to teach abroad in Honduras and attend graduate school when she returns. Emily Dodd

Social media has been used in many different areas to attract customers and supporters. In higher education, it has also been implemented to attract students to college campuses. As a person who plans a career in student affairs, James Kelly saw a need to investigate social media’s role in higher education. Under the advisement of Dr. Lindsay Larson, Kelly, a senior marketing major, used his Honors Thesis as an opportunity to look at how college campuses and universities use social media to reach out to prospective students.

This exploratory research project took a year to complete and occurred in three phases. The first phase took place in the spring of 2013 in which Kelly and Dr. Larson planned a survey which would be sent to several institutions in the state of Georgia. In the fall of 2013, phase two consisted of sending the surveys to those Georgia institutions. Kelly received twenty-four responses that included small, medium and large institutions in Georgia. In the spring of 2014, Kelly analyzed the data with the help of his adviser, separating the anonymous responses by enrollment size. The survey gave Kelly information about “how they used social media and what different outlets they used, how effective they think it is, how they manage it on their campus, and if they think it is worth it.”

Kelly saw his research as a mirror for some of the goals he wishes to accomplish later in life. With dreams of working in student affairs, specifically student orientation, Kelly’s research showed him the link between higher education and student affairs as well as how social media is used to market to colleges and universities.

Kelly said that his Honors Thesis “helped [him] see the research process” and that his experience with conducting research will help in graduate school. After graduation, Kelly will enroll in the masters program in College Student Personnel and work in the New Student and Family Programs at University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Emily Dodd

Visit our YouTube playlist to watch our student-produced piece featuring James Kelly

James Kelly
Marketing
Social Media Marketing Use in Georgia’s Institutions of Higher Education
Dr. Lindsay Larson

Yavaria Ryan
Hulsey selected her topic after she discovered that three of her sorority sisters had been raped, all before the age of fifteen. “Listening to their stories inspired me to look into the psychology behind rape,” Hulsey said. Her topic expanded to encompass how sex trafficking in the United States and Thailand perpetuates minority repression. Hulsey explained, “The only way to find a solution is to first identify the problem.” In order to gain information on the sex trafficking problem in Thailand, she read numerous journal articles on the issue. Because of Statesboro’s proximity to Atlanta, she was able to visit that city as she conducted her research. Hulsey interviewed a Georgia Bureau of Investigation agent, a Homeland Security Investigation agent, as well as member of Youth Spark. She admitted that she had to step away during one of the interviews because it was so graphic. However, she continued with her research because she knows that it is important to make people aware that the problem exists.

The goal of Hulsey's project was to analyze both sex trafficking areas and draw a connection between the two. “It is important to make a point that sex trafficking occurs here,” stated Hulsey. She successfully made a global connection between the two locations as she discovered that the same methods are utilized. The information revealed to Hulsey was surprising, but it also had an effect on her mentor, Dr. Van Tassell explained, “My eyes have been opened to how prevalent it is in Georgia, especially in Atlanta.”

Hulsey recognized that sex trafficking is a disturbing topic, but the distinctiveness of the topic is what made her research interesting. “It is a story that needs to be told and it needs to be told honestly,” Dr. Van Tassell said. The experts that Hulsey spoke with explained that education is the best way to stop the problem; people need to be made aware of the problem. Hulsey’s goal is to find better techniques and methods to combat sex trafficking.

“I want to help provide a foundation that will lead to finding a solution to combat the problem,” she said.

Emily Hulsey
International Studies and Spanish
Sex (still) Sells: How Sex Trafficking in the United States and Thailand Perpetuates Minority Repression
Dr. Darin Van Tassell

Emily Hulsey spent the past two years comparing sex trafficking of Burmese women in Thailand to sex trafficking of children in Atlanta. As she dug into a dark and illicit international business that largely exists outside of public knowledge, she was mentored by Dr. Darin Van Tassell, who reminded her that “There are more people enslaved today than at the height of the African slave trade.”

Liana Moran
Public Relations
Adoption of Social Media Marketing Among Professionals
Dr. Camille Broadway

In today’s fast-paced technological world, it is easy to forget how new social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter have only been around for a few years. The question of how companies use social media and to what degree of success intrigued Liana Moran. She used the diffusions of innovations theory by Everett Rogers in her research, a concept that essentially explains how, why, and at what rate ideas and technology spread through cultures.

Moran ultimately hoped to discover how social media affected the theory’s bell curve when businesses chose whether or not to use it. “Some businesses hesitate to adopt social media marketing. Among other reasons, businesses fear the possible negative feedback from customers and the possible loss of brand control online,” she explained.

How does the marketing strategy affect sales and success? The two social media sites that she focused on were Facebook and Twitter. “I conducted qualitative interviews with fifteen different rental housing organizations in Statesboro. It is a competitive market and they all have different ideas on where they stand on marketing systems,” she said. She looked for trends and what qualities those who did or did not use social media had in common.

Moran first knew she wanted to be in public relations in her sophomore year when she took the Introduction to Public Relations course. This passion was solidified when she studied abroad in Spain and saw American companies with unique marketing tailored to specific countries. She said, “American brands are everywhere in Europe, and they all have their own interpretation of how to market their product to foreign cultures.”

Moran also interned with Abshire Public Relations in Savannah and saw how hands-on the industry was when she was given a chance to work with a real client with real problems. “That was what got me so excited about this career, the fact that everyday brought something new to the table with a new set of rules and challenges,” she said.

She plans to stay in the southeast after graduation and work with either a P.R. agency or department. “I’m leaning towards agency work right now because it is really diverse and you work with a lot of different clients,” she said.

Moran knows that this work will help her in her career. “Social media marketing is still such a new aspect to the business world and certainly a developing business tactic,” she said. “Social media facilitates two-way communication between businesses and consumers. For the first time, customers are publicly talking about businesses, and the businesses are talking back.”

Michael Conner
Intercountry adoption is a topic of conversation in many different countries. With the development of the Hague Convention for Intercountry Adoption, Alyssa Johnson, decided to examine how these types of adoptions have been affected. Specifically, Johnson examined the not so “seamless” process of adoption that helps facilitate adoption inequalities that exist within governments.

Johnson has always been “passionate about intercountry adoptions,” especially in light of China’s one child policy. In order to conduct her research about the topic, Johnson interviewed different lawyers as well as families who have adopted internationally. By speaking to families who have gone through the adoption process, Johnson was able to gather information that showed the effects of many different intercountry adoption policies. For example, Johnson spoke with one family who adopted a child internationally after the Intercountry Adoption Act. A benefit of doing so was the Act helped provide adopted children with American rights without having to go through another adoption process once in America. Conversations like that with many families helped Johnson construct an Honors Thesis that gave faces and names to the struggles that people who participate in intercountry adoption.

By working with Cross Cultural Friendships when conducting her Experiential Learning Project, Johnson learned many different things about a multitude of cultures. Johnson knows that her Honors Thesis will help her with her future career goals because she is passionate about international human rights. The process of this research also helped her connect with many different people and gave her the opportunity to examine HCIA’s effect on one of the world’s most pressing issues—human trafficking.

“I don’t really know where my career path is going to take me, but I do know that this is a really important issue that I do want to bring focus to,” Johnson said.

Cydnee Jones
Graphic Design
Bringing Design to Life: Three-Dimensional Graphic Design
Edward Rushton

Graphic design is an extremely valued and vital skill in today’s heavily advertised world. It has the power to enhance the atmosphere of restaurants, coerce potential customers into buying a company’s product, and endless other possibilities. However, graphic design also has the power to send a message to the public, making them ponder over important issues that they otherwise might not have cared about. Art major Cydnee Jones chose this latter approach to use graphic design to encourage the awareness of recycling and sustainability.

Since August 2013, Jones worked diligently on a piece she felt could make a difference in how people thought about sustainability. While much of today’s graphic design is created on computers, Jones decided on a more hands-on approach. “I think it showcases something that not many graphic designers can do, which is thinking three-dimensionally.” She crafted letters out of scavenged cardboard and spelled out the word “Recover.” Feeling that “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle” did not have the same impact it once did, she picked a word that would spark a fresh reaction in her audience. She photographed the word in different locations around Georgia Southern’s Sweetheart Circle and distributed them in poster format. In this way, she turned a three-dimensional concept into a more accessible medium for a wider audience, thereby spreading the potential impact.

According to Jones, the University Honors Program enhanced her college experience and her project. She said, “I’m confident that it has prepared me for my career after graduation, preparation I otherwise would not have had. You’re surrounded by students who what to learn and professors who want to help you achieve your goals.”

Jones also incorporated the influence of the experiential learning requirement of the University Honors Program into the process of her project. From assessing the technology needs of nonprofit organizations, to the humane society, to being secretary of the Gay-Straight Alliance, Cydnee gained many experiences each year. “Just giving back to the people, lending a helping hand; it became a personal requirement for my Capstone project.” After graduation, Jones plans to pursue work at a design firm or through in-house designing. She wants her future projects to inspire positive action and attitude in all her clients and people she works with.

Michael Conner
Asea Gilmore
Psychology
A Cultural Examination of Hardiness: Associations with Self-Esteem, Wisdom, Hope, and Cope-Efficacy
Dr. Jeffrey Klibert

Life as a college student is stressful: getting to class on time, writing multiple papers, and balancing schoolwork with socializing. How do college students handle all of this pressure? What are their strategies for success? And how do we measure that success? Asea Gilmore thought there might be answers in research rooted in positive psychology.

“I want to equip people with the tools they need to be successful,” Gilmore said. “It is relevant to everyone.”

Gilmore studied what she terms “hardiness” in students: an individual’s ability to handle opposition over time. Hardiness is a more static and longstanding form of resilience. It differs from resilience, which is an individual’s ability to bounce back from a single stressful situation, because hardiness must be measured over a length of time. Gilmore examined three variables that may underlie the experience of hardiness are wisdom, hope, and coping self-efficacy, which is a person’s confidence in his or her ability to cope.

Gilmore was curious as to whether hardiness differed among ethnicities. This particular area of research has gaps in the psychology field and is largely unstudied. Most literature leaves out race and focuses on Caucasian people.

Gilmore studied both Caucasians and African-Americans to see which components of hardiness meant the most to each of them. She found that hope and coping self-efficacy were important in the experience of both ethnic groups. However, she found that wisdom was only a significant factor for Caucasians, which suggests the need for a measure of wisdom that encompasses African American traits of wisdom. “It does differ with ethnicity, possibly from differences in upbringing,” she said.

Gilmore asserts that her project gave her a strong knowledge base of how to conduct research. It also gave her an understanding of what hardiness looks like across cultures. She believes it is important to look at different ethnic groups, because it can improve ways to promote well-being among different clients. “It has helped me understand that different components matter to different individuals,” she said. “There is no cookie-cutter prescription for everyone.”

Dr. Jeff Klibert worked with Gilmore to conduct her research. Dr. Klibert, whose work deals primarily with suicide psychology, introduced Gilmore with a new approach to research. Rather than trying to collect data and then search for some fact that interested her, Dr. Klibert instructed Gilmore to find something she was interested in first, and then study the facts. He advised her to look into topics dealing with therapy that better equips students to deal with stressful situations. “It was easier for me to do it in such a practical way,” she said.

Dr. Klibert believes that Gilmore’s research demonstrates that she can do unique things in her field. Moreover he believes that Gilmore’s project will have a significant impact on the field of positive psychology. Psychologists can use this information to reinforce positive development through many mediums, including therapy, education and parenting programs, and community outreach. “We’ll be able to teach people how to enhance their life skills so they can have a higher quality of life,” he said.

After graduation, Gilmore intends to work as an intern at Safe Haven, which is a domestic violence shelter in Statesboro. This fall she will begin work on a Master’s degree in Social Work, with an emphasis in clinical counseling, at Savannah State. Eventually, Gilmore wants to open a nonprofit domestic violence shelter and counsel women. She hopes that this center will provide women with many services including counseling, cosmetology, and job training.

Katelyn Yeomans
Mathematics
Classifying Finite Groups up to Isomorphism
Dr. Alina Iacob

Exploring the complex field of abstract algebra, Katelyn Yeomans focused her Honors Thesis on researching finite groups.

Introduced to the concepts of group theory in Modern Algebra courses, Yeomans devoted hours to identifying and mapping the functions, or isomorphisms, of finite groups up to the twentieth level.

She shares that the experience provided hands on experience with information which comprise the proofs of algebraic theorems. This detailed knowledge of foundational algebraic concepts will help the senior pursue future research in the field.

Yeomans said, “Writing the Honors Thesis was a great experience. I not only gained a more thorough understanding of my field, but I also learned how to best explain truly difficult mathematical topics in a way that anyone can understand.”

The Mathematics major gained additional experience in the area through her work tutoring math students on campus. As she hopes to ultimately become a professor, she believes these experiences in have shaped her academic career.

In the fall, Yeomans will begin as a graduate student in the Georgia Southern Mathematics Department. She shares of her overall experience: “The experience of doing an undergrad thesis has helped me feel so much more prepared for grad school. Very few undergraduate students take the time to complete such a large scale project, especially in math; but it’s an experience I really encourage future Honors students to pursue. It gave me such a unique opportunity to become better acquainted with my subfield.”

Alicia Burrus

Kelsey Keane
Brittany Woods
Psychology
The Effects of Moderate-Intensity Acute Aerobic Exercise on Self-Disclosure
Dr. Janice Steirn

While teaching exercise classes at the Recreation Activity Center (RAC) on campus, Brittany Woods noticed a curious trend: many participants seemed eager to share personal information following group fitness sessions.

Interested in discovering a cause, Woods designed a research project exploring connections between exercise and self-disclosure.

“It was really striking to me how many participants would talk with me after group fitness classes and share information, like weight for instance. Through my project I hoped to see if the exercise itself had any connection,” Woods shares.

As she developed the experiment, Woods realized that little research has been done on the topic. While prior studies have linked exercise to mood and mood to self-disclosure, directly linking exercise to self-disclosure is a new development in the field of psychology.

Woods believes the future implications of her study in therapy sessions are numerous. If exercise were to be directly linked to higher rates of self-disclosure, therapists could incorporate brief work-out regimens into sessions in hopes of encouraging a more meaningful exchange between patient and therapist in early sessions. If so, then there might be a chance for a quicker development of trust and, hopefully, a faster recovery.

After working to develop and implement her original research design, Woods’ results confirmed the link between exercise and mood as well as a significant correlation between exercise and intimacy—one of three self-disclosure indicators.

Woods plans to publish her findings and continue her research in graduate school. She is thankful for the University Honors Program’s emphasis for all students to complete undergraduate research. “It has made all the difference, especially in developing a grad school project,” she said.

Kelsey Keane
English and Political Science
Kelsey Keane

When Kelsey Keane went on a study abroad trip to Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Corfu, Greece in 2012, she had no idea the people she encountered would impact her life forever. While there, she took two classes, “A Narrative of Trauma” and “Politics of Ethnic conflict.” These classes, as well as a class in twentieth century American Literature, gave her the idea for her Honors Thesis focused on writing as a product of recovery.

Through her research, she examined Kurt Vonnegut’s novel Slaughterhouse-Five, and applied connections between the novel’s stylistic order and the concepts of trauma theory.

“Many people assume that because the book is postmodern, it speaks only of hopelessness and nihilism. In my paper I argue that such conclusions largely ignore Vonnegut’s genius as an author. By analyzing the work as the story of writing, of a victim regaining his voice, I work to illustrate Vonnegut’s ultimate call to action. We should not accept postmodern pessimism, but should work towards a better tomorrow, to help society recover from the traumatic experiences of the past.”

Keane notes that she could not have finished this thesis without Dr. Hemchand Gossai. “Dr. Gossai is an incredible professor who cares deeply for his students and academics both. Not enough things can be said of him,” she said. “He helped me find a project that engages my passions, and worked with me every step of the way.”

“What struck me with Kelsey was her experience: she had already found certain themes that interested her,” Dr. Gossai said. “Kelsey was unafraid to take on new things. She wanted to get the most out of the honors life, so she participated in many things outside of school. She was great to work with.”

Outside of class, Keane has been involved in a variety of different organizations. She worked for the University Honors Program as the publications editor and also interned with the Office of Student Leadership and Civic Engagement. Keane also participated in BUILD throughout her time as an undergraduate student, a volunteer program centered on civic responsibility in the local Statesboro community.

“It has always been extremely important to me to give back to the community,” Keane said. “I believe that is why research in the field of trauma theory so thoroughly engaged my interests—it allowed me to explore academic interests while searching for meaningful solutions to the pressing problems in today’s society. Through my academics, my volunteer work, and every aspect of my life, I want to work to make others’ lives better.”

After graduation, Keane will return to the Balkans through a Fulbright Student Grant where she will work as an English Teaching Assistant in Kosovo. Following her time abroad, she plans to earn her master’s in International Development Practices.

Sarah Ryniker
Two Latin American novelists, Rosario Ferré and Gabriel García Márquez, have developed characters so unique and exceptional that many readers find many rich ideas to consider. Dora Suarez found these characters compelling and developed her research, “Proper Names as Narrative Gaps: a Deconstructive Reading of Rosario Ferré and García Márquez,” to examine these figures.

Suarez became interested in language through a course in Philosophy. She was explicitly interested in how it influences the way people think. Each reader plays a role when they read something, and the dynamics change frequently, Suarez said.

Suarez examined narrative gaps in the writer's literature by exploring caricatures and the roles they play and contrasting the roles with how readers project their ideas of the characters onto the text.

“We define our characters, not the other way around,” Suarez said.

This year, Suarez presented her research at the Georgia Southern University Philosophy conference and the Southern Regional Honors Conference. “Presenting gave me a chance to meet people from different backgrounds,” Suarez said.

Recently Suarez also published in Dialogue an article entitled, “I am my own (In)security: An existentialist Reflection on How the Embracing of Certain Individual Liberties can Jeopardize our Freedom.” In the article, she commented on gun control and the government’s role.

Suarez worked closely with her mentor, Dr. Toby Graves from the foreign language department, “I was very lucky to find my mentor. She has been very involved in my research.”

Outside of class, Suarez worked on The Southern Praxis, a magazine for critical dialogue run solely by students at Georgia Southern. She was also a member of the Georgia Southern International Club and the Committee for Tolerance and Community.

“The University Honors Program enables students to try very different things,” Suarez said.

Kelsey Keane

Katie Googe

Biology

A Morphological and Genetic Analysis of Forensically Important Blow Flies, from Georgia: The Genus Lucilia

Dr. Edward Mondor

Counting blow fly bristles and solving crime may not seem easily relatable, but Katie Googe explored that very connection in her research to determine whether morphological or genetic testing methods most accurately identify flies found in crime scenes.

Three blow fly species are commonly found in Georgia, and understanding and identifying them is important in estimating “death to discovery” for human remains. Working with Dr. Scott Harrison and Dr. Edward Mondor, Googe investigated the blow fly’s unique natural maturation processes. Forensic investigators can create timelines based on what flies are found on or around a decaying body.

“Correctly identifying flies at a crime scene is crucial in establishing a time and therefore identifying suspects. It is possible for a simple misidentification to lead to an innocent person becoming a high profile suspect because the entire investigation is now based on an incorrect timeline,” Googe shares.

To begin the experiment, Googe accompanied Dr. Mondor to collect stillborn pigs from a nearby farm. As the carcasses decayed, she collected fly samples which were then tested both morphologically and genetically to allow for cross method comparison. After completing extensive testing, the project statistics supported her original hypothesis: flies are most accurately identified by completing both forms of testing on each fly sample.

Googe has presented her research at various conferences, including the Georgia Entomological Society annual meeting, and she plans to publish the findings within the next year.

“The University Honors Program encouraged me to pursue undergraduate research and helped me connect with meaningful volunteer opportunities on campus. I have quite a lot to be thankful for.”

Kelsey Keane
Colleen McNally
Journalism
Influence of Social Media on Journalistic Routines
Dr. Reed Smith and Dr. Camille Broadway

Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are all common social media tools students use every day to interact with friends and family. Through her Honors Thesis Colleen McNally explored journalist’s implementation of social media and the resulting effects on the field of journalism as a whole.

McNally’s interest in social media began with her personal love of blogging and use of social media. Through her time at different internships and work at Georgia Southern University’s Student Media program; however, McNally found her curiosity in the topic expanding to include social media’s effects on journalism. As journalists were some of the first to implement Twitter and Facebook for uses beyond socializing and because the trend has proven to more than a fad, McNally wanted to further explore journalist’s related habits. She describes herself as a futuristic thinker and focused her research conclusions primarily proposing ways organizations can use social media to broaden their reach.

McNally was most specifically interested in journalistic storytelling routines and how different news organizations, such as print, broadcast, and online publications, have adapted to the concept of social media implementation.

The project developed through years of conversations with fellow journalism majors and professors concerning social media’s role in journalism. For instance, Facebook has become a point of contact for sources that may have not been available or accepted in the past.

Journalists often use Twitter as a way to build a following and a quick means to sharing a story with up to hundreds or thousands of people.

“Everyone is a communicator and uses different tools on a daily basis as a way to communicate,” McNally said. “My project explores how one demographic, journalists, implements social media as a means of communication.”

McNally currently works as the Sales and Editorial Coordinator at Points North Magazine, and ultimately plans to pursue additional education through a Masters program.

She credits Dr. Broadway’s online journalism class as a spark in her journalism career, especially with regard to her specific interest in social media.

McNally shares of her Thesis experience: “My Honors experience helped me better understand the process of intensive research and taught me the value of perseverance. These are vital skills, not only to the Honors experience, but also in any future career.”

Sarah Ryniker

Juan Diego Guevara Pinto
Psychology
Effects of Perceptual Fluency on Reasoning and Pupil Dilation
Dr. Ty W. Boyer

Psychology major, French and marketing minor Juan Guevara joined the University Honors Program during his second year at Georgia Southern. He enrolled in an Honors Psychology Research Methods Class where he immediately dove into research. Guevara was interested in reasoning and decision making, and early on he decided his research topic: “Effect of perceptual fluency on reasoning and pupil dilation.”

Guevara and his mentor, Dr. Boyer, worked to develop an experiment which would test two theories of reasoning in comparison to one another. These theories included problem solving through a quick and direct approach versus a more thorough and thoughtful contemplation. Guevara hypothesized that by wording a logic problem in a difficult to read font readers would spend longer deciphering the text and would therefore be more likely to determine the correct answer. Connecting this hypothesis with the knowledge that pupil dilation occurs when one is concentrating, Guevara’s thesis hoped to measure a person’s level of reasoning while he reads texts of differing legibility.

“I devised an experiment that measured pupil dilation size when testing these two types of reasoning to find a correlation between previous data,” Guevara said. “Although our results ended up inconclusive and we were not able to replicate the studies, we did find that pupil dilation actually occurs more in easy-to-read questions,” Guevara said.

Guevara plans to attend Louisiana State University to pursue his Ph.D. in Cognitive and Developmental Psychology. “The Honors Program is what convinced me to do research. Without the program, I would never have done an independent project, and now research is what I want to pursue. I have the Honors Program to thank for these opportunities.”

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Sarah Ryniker
When patients suffer severe brain trauma, a strong supply of oxygen is required to repair the damaged brain tissue. Complications such as hemorrhagic shock often cause the loss of blood pressure which severely reduces the oxygen supply. This can have severe consequences such as a significant loss of cognitive functions or even death. Chemistry major Andrea McCollum’s research is focused on developing materials that can resupply oxygen to severely damaged brain tissue.

McCollum’s project involved making PEG-containing monomers, which can be combined with TEMPO-based monomers to synthesize multi-functional copolymers. The process of ring-opening metathesis polymerization, or ROMP, allows for the molecular weight of the polymers to be controlled and with that, a control of the amount and distribution of the important functional groups can also be accomplished. The copolymers are next incorporated into cell-free hemoglobin, the protein in the blood that carries oxygen. The modified hemoglobin can then be used to treat traumatic brain injuries. The modifications are necessary to reduce the toxicity of cell-free hemoglobin by better controlling the oxygen release to the injured site.

McCollum chose this project for its potential medicinal effect. She was particularly interested in this area of chemistry after working at the Marty Lyons Foundation in her hometown of Brunswick, which raises money for terminally ill children to live out their final days. “I’ve always wanted to help people,” she said.

McCollum worked with Dr. Hans Schanz, who took her as research student in her sophomore year. Dr. Schanz taught McCollum the basics of the project and prepared her for each step of the way. “If we had a lot more students like Andrea we would be a much better society,” he said. “Research is different from going to lectures and doing exams,” he said. “That’s passive. Research is creative; it takes problem solvers.”

McCollum is certain of the potential far-reaching benefits of her research. “If you come up with a cure for something you can potentially cure millions, rather than medicinal doctors who can only cure as many patients as they can take in their career,” she said.

Dr. Schanz agreed about the beneficial implications of McCollum’s research. “A major reason soldiers die in combat is brain injury with hemorrhaging,” he said. “This type of blood substitute would be useful in a war zone and remote areas where there is not a lot of donor blood available for treatment. This could be the only way to save lives in a lot of situations.”

Dr. Schanz also asserted that joining the Honors Program really helped McCollum. “The Honors Program has done a lot for her by setting the bar higher.”

After graduation, McCollum intends to go to Vanderbilt University, where she will enter their Ph.D. program in Chemistry. Ultimately, her goal is to develop and research new therapeutics in the pharmaceutical industry.

Alicia Burrus

When Alicia Burrus first read The Chronicles of Narnia as a child, she realized that there was a distinct bias against women throughout the novels. Over time, C. S. Lewis became Burrus’ favorite author, but her interest in his sexism never waned away. This curiosity led her to explore most of his works, and eventually evolved into her honors thesis: “Gender Differentiation and Gender Hierarchy in C. S. Lewis.”

“When I read C. S. Lewis, I feel like I am reading the writing in a letter from an old friend,” Burrus said. Although she deeply enjoys Lewis’ work, her attentiveness to the inequalities between his male and female characters encouraged Burrus to find out more about Lewis’ life.

Early on, Lewis lost his mother and became very close to his brother, an event which Burrus argues may have encourage the bias against women that is most noticeable in his early works. Eventually, Lewis meets his wife, and his opinion is drastically altered, evident in his last fictional work. More often, the gender differentiation shows up in Lewis’ nonfiction.

Burrus worked closely with her mentor, Dr. Gossai, to develop her thesis topic. “He was really patient with me, through at least a dozen drafts,” Burrus said.

“Alicia was very attentive: she did what needed to be done. Her final project was very different from where she started, but I think that is evidence that she pursued something she was passionate about,” Dr. Gossai said. “Honors students are not one dimensional. I find that I have to do very little by way of pushing. Honors students are unafraid to try new things intellectually and academically.”

After graduation, Burrus intends to get a job in the book publishing industry.
Throughout history, mate selection has played a role in people's views of one another. Would he make a good husband? Would she be a good wife? These questions in turn influence how a person views himself/herself as well, and Briana Green set out to investigate this phenomenon of self-perceived mate-value through her Honors Thesis.

Studying the topic, Green realized that many scales exist which all intend to accomplish the same thing: determine a person's own perception of his/her mate value. She decided to focus her efforts in determining which evaluation method provides both thorough results and a succinct process.

While Green’s efforts did not yield a best practice approach identification, her review of previous studies did gain interesting results, broadening her understanding of the field. For instance, while males tend to seek partnership with a youthful and physically attractive spouse, while women often pursue relationships with those are successful and able to provide. Both sexes tend to look for a mate who is humorous and honest.

Following a year interning with Christian Campus Fellowship, Green hopes to pursue a Master’s in Counseling Psychology. The graduating senior says that she is considering continuing her research focusing on self-perceived mate value as she works to complete her Master’s program.

She also shares of her time as an undergraduate at Georgia Southern: “I am so appreciative for my experiences as an Honors student. From the thesis to the individual attention in the smaller Honors classroom experiences, I know the program gave me all the tools I needed to excel.”

Kelsey Keane

Michael Putnam

Anthropology

The Viking language of the highlands and islands: reconstructing the Norn language from Old Norse

Dr. Heidi Altman

Michael Putnam is one of four scholars worldwide who are currently working on the extinct Norn language based in Scotland. This language, evolved from Old Norse, was once spoken in the Orkney and Shetland archipelagos. It went extinct under pressure from Scots English, and in his thesis, The Viking language of the highlands and islands: reconstructing the Norn language from Old Norse, Putnam sought to map the sound changes of the language and developed a dictionary for it.

He studied a thirty five stanza ballad in Norn from the 1700’s which had previously been translated into Old Norse, and identified seventeen sound changes and several grammar changes which evolved from Old Norse.

“I could not have completed this project without Dr. Heidi Altman. She has been an amazing help.”

Putnam presented his research progress at the Southern Anthropology Society 49th Annual Meeting in 2014, and he plans to work toward a Ph.D. in anthropology or linguistics.

Sarah Ryniker
In Statesboro and around the world, the students of the University Honors Program make a difference and take advantage of transformative educational opportunities.
This summer, Georgia Southern University Honors students will pair up with The Waterford Institute of Technology to begin a research project based in Savannah, Georgia, and Wexford, Ireland.

This year’s study abroad trip is just the start of a much larger research platform that includes in the partnership Georgia Southern University, Waterford Institute of Technology, The John F. Kennedy Trust (and its Dunbrody Famine Ship and Irish Emigrant Experience in County, Wexford) and the Georgia Historical Society. Future honors courses and study abroad trips are being planned. Because of the importance of this research program, Dr. Leo Varadkar, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport of the Republic of Ireland visited Georgia Southern University on March 18, 2014 to launch the project.

Led by Dr. Steven Engel, Director of the University Honors Program, and Dr. Howard Keely, Director of the Irish Studies Program, eleven students will divide their time between in-class research, historical museum tours, and in-depth interviews with relatives of Irish migrants to grasp a more complete picture of Irish migration to the United States.

The focus of the trip will revolve around the massive Irish diaspora and immigration to the Southeastern United States. While thousands of Irish immigrants traveled to places like Boston and New York City, a surprisingly large amount traveled from Wexford, Ireland to Savannah, Georgia.

“Because I’m of Irish decent, this opportunity to study abroad will give me the chance to learn more about my own family, as well as many other families. I’m captivated by the research,” junior writing and linguistics major James Devlin said.

The Great Famine of the 1840s increased Georgia’s Irish population, and in the mid-nineteenth century, many Irish immigrants to Georgia worked as laborers for the Central Railroad and Canal Company. Others worked on the docks in Savannah, while still others joined the Irish Jasper Greens of Savannah, a regiment created in 1843 that served in the Mexican-American war and later fought for the Confederacy in the American Civil War.

“By studying abroad in Ireland, I believe I will grow by experiencing another country’s culture firsthand. I will be more open to understanding others and other individuals’ lifestyles by having an opportunity to see how people in other countries live,” Education major Kayleigh Hunter said.

Two courses, Inquiry in the Social Sciences and Inquiry in the Humanities will discuss why specific Irish families chose to leave Wexford, Ireland and travel to Savannah. Through critical analysis, students will search through existing archives and accounts, such as ship manifests and church bulletins, to find the missing pieces. Studying abroad in Ireland will also give Honors students a chance to see the world from another perspective. “I will gain experiences that I could never achieve here in the United States,” Hunter said.

Sarah Ryniker
During the summer of 2013, Georgia Southern Honors students were offered the opportunity of a lifetime—a three-week-long, educational sojourn to Southeast Asia. Participants share that the experience was both engaging and enlightening. John Conner succinctly expressed a reoccurring opinion of the trip: “Through this study abroad experience with the University Honors Program I learned not just about the fascinating cultures and people of Southeast Asia, but also many things about myself. It was the best three weeks of my life.”

Traveling across the globe to Asia, the student’s journey began in Singapore. There, they explored Southeastern Asian culture in an environment not entirely unlike one of the larger, Western metropolises—one where English is the official language and high fashion is the norm, despite temperatures reaching upwards of 100 degrees and humidity just as high. In the city, students discovered an exceptionally clean urban environment, one of the safest in the world. No gum or garbage littered the streets (due to both chewing gum and littering being strictly illegal within the borders of the country), and it was not uncommon to see a young woman walking quite safely alone at night.

The group was led by Dr. Krista Wiegand, a Georgia Southern professor and international studies expert. Dr. Wiegand’s watchful eye and inerrant sense of direction ensured both the students’ safety as well as provided great insight into the region and its culture. Throughout the trip, Dr. Wiegand focused the group’s travels with lessons in international studies. Some of these lessons took place in exotic, open air markets, while others took place beside the pool in Bali.

From the relatively Western sensibilities of Singapore, the group took an overnight train north, into Malaysia and to the city of Kuala Lumpur. It is here that immersion truly began. Malaysia was something truly unique. Gone were most of the fluent English speakers of Singapore. Gone were the westernized malls and storefronts. Still present, of course, was the oppressive weather. No amount of humidity deterred the group, however, as they ventured from the Petronas towers (a high tech indicator of Malaysia’s growing economic potency) to the Batu caves (a strong reminder of Hindu/Buddhist spirituality and cultural influence). In Malaysia, meetings with fellow students at the University of Malaya allowed personal connections with locals. These connections enabled the student’s to see Malaysian life from a firsthand perspective—enjoying local cuisine, shopping in lesser-known areas, and enjoying the sites of the country’s more exclusive landmarks.

During the final leg of the trip, the Honors cohort turned towards Indonesia—more specifically, towards the island of Bali. While some expected the isolated region...
to prove less interesting than the more metropolitan areas, this quickly proved not to be so. While the accommodations were world-class and there was plenty of time for leisure, there was also no lack of excursions.

Participant Taylor Tyson said of their time in Bali: “We enjoyed Balinese flora and fauna at the island’s monkey forest and mountainous (read: uncharacteristically dry and cool) botanical gardens, we partook of the country’s culture at traditional dances and royal temples, and we didn’t complain one bit when we were all drenched by rain on our bicycle ride down the side of a volcano. Quite frankly, we were having too much fun to care.”

Students share that the experience was eye opening as they explored places and cultures which with they were previously unfamiliar. After spending time in mosques, temples, and churches, and speaking to individuals of all backgrounds, the universal humanity of all people began to become more and more apparent.

The students also gained a wider understanding of the challenges facing developing nations and participated in a service—learning experience. While Singapore revealed little in the way of poverty or strife, the signs of such things were evident in Malaysia and in Bali—where participants spent two days working with young children, volunteering as classroom English tutors.

Student Kristin Walker said, “Travelling to the opposite side of the world is a chance of a lifetime, and doing it with a group of friends and a professor with endless knowledge made it that much more memorable and meaningful. No where else in the world can one experience and view multiple religions, industrialization, globalization, and the countryside in 21 days. This trip taught me so much not only about those countries but also about myself and what kind of difference I want to make in the world.”

Taylor Tyson and Kelsey Keane
Spring Break 2014 marked the fourth year of the University Honors Program’s alternate break trip to Camp Twin Lakes to work with Camp Blue Skies. On these pages you will see photographs from camp and comments from students about the experience.

Camp Blue Skies is a camp for adults with cognitive disabilities and provides recreation, socialization and life skills education to campers. Camp Twin Lakes, located in Rutledge, Georgia, provides camp experiences to children and adults who face serious illnesses, disabilities, and various challenges. They host many camps throughout the year.

Each year, Georgia Southern students on the trip have been led by Dr. Jerri Kropp and Dr. Brent Wolfe along with Camp Twin Lakes Director, and Georgia Southern alumnus, Dan Matthews and Camp Blue Skies founder, Dick Sesler. The students receive training in sessions on campus and at camp prior to meeting the campers.

This year seven Honors students participated: Amanda Bastien, Meredith Eby, Samantha Goldberg, Claire Goodwin, Morgan Herrington, Sarah Holmes, Keaton Roberson. They led groups in a variety of activities ranging from arts and crafts to going down a zip line to archery to Wacky Olympics. The program and the two camps are looking forward to many more years of partnership.
“Every time I think about camp, I get a smile on my face.”
-Kori Williams

“You learn so much at camp every time you go, and you have such a great experience. It’s totally worth any nervousness that you might be going through at first.”
-Amanda Bastien

“Essentially it’s a place where the campers can just be themselves and not be judged and just be happy.”
-Jack St. Jean

“I hate to say I’m volunteering, because I feel like they’re giving more to me than I’m giving to them.”
-Samantha Goldberg

“It’s been life changing. I don’t know what I would be like if I hadn’t been coming here for the past four years.”
-Claire Goodwin
This year the University Honors Program had the honor of co-hosting the Southern Regional Honors Council’s Annual conference in Savannah, Georgia. Working alongside Armstrong Atlantic State University, honors program staff and students worked throughout the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 semesters to develop the conference itinerary and activities to provide an engaging experience for all in attendance.

Many conference participants arrived early Thursday morning to enjoy the highly anticipated City as Text™ program. Organized by Georgia Southern’s Dr. Francis Desiderio and students Rachel Neuhauser and Kelsey Keane, students and faculty explored the historic district of Savannah, hoping to develop a sense of the area so rich in history and culture.

Conference festivities officially began Thursday with educational sessions and continued into the evening with a riverboat cruise down the Savannah River. As attendees enjoyed a Southern style dinner and the captain’s educational narration of the area’s history, conversations continued from earlier explorations of the downtown district. Following time on the riverboat’s dance floor and a live band performance, participants found themselves peering off the boat’s starboard side where a historic fort showed signs of activity.

After a cheer-raising cannon firing, students and professors were able to venture from the boat into Old Fort Jackson where the staff brought history to life. From rifle firings to blacksmith demonstrations and a warm bonfire, fun was had by all. Dessert on the Riverboat concluded a night of engaging conversations and learning. Proceeds from the Riverboat Gala Silent Auction benefited the Second Harvest Food Bank of Coastal Georgia.

The next morning saw the continuation to formal conference activities as students presented research and findings during poster presentations, lecture opportunities, and panels. Such presentations covered topics ranging from scientific research to traditional Indian dance and literature; many Georgia Southern Honors students took advantage of opportunity to present research concepts and results. Lunch featured a keynote address from Bell Honors Alumnus Dr. Van Tassell (1989). Dr. Van Tassell was introduced by Dr. Hew Joiner, Director Emeritus of the Bell Honors Program (1996-2002) and President (1993-1994) and Executive Secretary-Treasurer (1996-2002) of the Southern Regional Honors Council.

Overall, the conference was a great success. The University Honors Program encourages its students to pursue these opportunities to become engaged in the academic community and the larger Honors conversations.

A special thanks to the University Honors Students who devoted extensive time and efforts behind the scenes: Feagin Oliver, Rachel Neuhauser, Paola Robelo, Mallory Taylor, Lydia Biggs,
This year’s annual meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council in New Orleans gave the University Honors Program several opportunities for recognition. Attending and presenting at the program were Director Dr. Steven Engel, Associate Director Dr. Francis Desiderio, Honors Advisor Erin Martin and Honors students Caroline Greene, Kelsey Keane, and Jana Simmons. Founding Director of the Bell Honors Program, Dr. Hew Joiner, was also in attendance to be inducted as a Fellow of the National Collegiate Honors Council. The program also celebrated receiving third place in the magazine/newsletter competition for its magazine Honors@Georgia Southern.

The third place award for Honors@Georgia Southern marks the second time in as many entries that the magazine has placed in the top three in this competition. The award was accepted by Co-Editor Kelsey Keane who, with Paola Robelo, developed a strong team of writers and photographers for our most recent issues focused on study abroad (2012) and undergraduate research (2013).

Both Caroline Green and Jana Simmons presented research in the Student Poster Sessions with Greene discussing “College Students Attitudes and Perceptions of Adults with Disabilities” and Simmons showing “The Impact of Gubernatorial Constituencies on Medicaid Expansion.” Kelsey Keane discussed her research paper “So It Goes: Hope Amidst the Apparent Chaos of Slaughterhouse-Five” during a Student Interdisciplinary Research Panel.

The group also had an opportunity to explore New Orleans and learn a little bit about the conference’s host city. The students participated in City as Text™, one of the signature programs of the conference where attendees visit interesting sites and report their findings back to the larger group. This year’s program had 31 different sites around New Orleans.

The National Collegiate Honors Council annual meeting is the main conference for honors programs and colleges, and it gives faculty, administrators, and students a chance to come together, discuss best practices, and learn from each other.
Dr. Hew Joiner, Director Emeritus of the Bell Honors Program at Georgia Southern University has been named a 2013 Fellow of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC). Dr. Joiner was recognized for his contributions to honors education at all levels from Georgia Southern to across the region and country and around the world. His wife Martha and daughter Jenna accompanied him to the award ceremony. He came to Georgia Southern as a professor of History in 1968 and he was the director of the Bell Honors Program from its inception in 1982 until his retirement in 2002. He built a program that became a national model for honors and he served as an external consultant for over 20 different universities and colleges around the country. He served as President at the state, regional and national levels of honors education including service as the President of the National Collegiate Honors Council in 2001. His recognition as a Fellow of the NCHC is in recognition of his lasting effect on honors education. According to current Honors Program director, Dr. Steven Engel, “I know of few people who take as seriously Georgia Southern’s emphasis on academic excellence and its student-centered ethos. Hew is well deserving of this national distinction.” Dr. Joiner was officially recognized as an NCHC Fellow at its annual conference in New Orleans on November 9, 2013.
Georgia Collegiate Honors Council Conference

This year Honors students Feagin Oliver and Kelsey Keane accompanied Dr. Engel to the Georgia Collegiate Honors Council Conference in Macon, Georgia.

Participants enjoyed enlightening conversations over the course of the two day conference which began with a student open mic event Friday evening.

Oliver presented her poster, "Beckett's Patriarchy of Words: Gender and Language in 'First Love'" and Keane presented her paper, "So It Goes: Discovering Hope Amidst the Apparent Chaos of Postmodern Work Slaughterhouse-Five."

Keane also completed her second term as Student Vice President of GCHC and Dr. Engel completed his term as President of GCHC.

Honors Students lead Jeopardy Math Team

Honors students Katelyn Yoemans, Michael Ackerman, and Micah Jackson helped make Georgia Southern history as they competed in the Mathematical Association of America Conference's Math Jeopardy tournament. Traveling to the meeting at Tennessee Tech in Cookeville Tennessee the team placed third in the final round of the competition.

Based on the long running television program Jeopardy, the competition featured three rounds. During each round teams had only two minutes to provide a question for math related answers. The four student team excelled in each round of competition.

Advisor Chasen Smith of the Department of Mathematical Sciences shared with mygeorgiasouthern: "We have met every week since December practicing Jeopardy questions from previous years so that we would be prepared. I couldn’t be more proud of our students! They represented Georgia Southern University, the College of Science and Mathematics and the Department of Mathematical Sciences very well, and set the bar high for next year’s meeting at UNC Wilmington."

Katelyn Yoemans also spoke of the experience: "While preparing for the Math Jeopardy competition, we knew we’d be facing twenty-six highly knowledgeable teams and would be tested on concepts throughout a wide array of mathematical fields. We practiced at least once a week to gain confidence in these different topics, and were excited to place third overall. It was a learning experience for all of us; it was also a lot of fun."

Kelsey Keane
Honors students in the College of Business Administration (COBA) are participating in a new yearlong curriculum developed by Dr. Trey Denton, professor of Marketing and Logistics and the University Honors Program. Through two new classes, Honors students in COBA will gain hands-on experience, learn about research, and be able to apply these useful skills to their careers after graduation.

Dr. Denton leads the Honors Business Seminar for juniors during their fall semester. The focus examines how successful businesses today are practicing “conscious capitalism,” and students explore how to best embody this philosophy in business strategies. The course allows students to preview companies in the local area, such as the Briggs and Stratton Corporation and Crider Foods, and emphasizes how concepts taught in the business classroom take shape in actual businesses. Students take field trips, complete hands-on activities, and participate in group discussions to identify their own style and approach to research in business. One objective of the course examines the impact that organizations have on all their stakeholders, and how to create win-win outcomes for all with a stake in an organization’s performance (with particular emphasis on doing the right thing). Students finish the semester by writing a personal business philosophy containing their goals for the future.

The class is followed by the COBA Honors Thesis Research Seminar in the spring, where students decide on a thesis topic that fits their personal business philosophy. Students talk about topics and methods and learn from each other as well as from their mentors. Through these two courses, Honors students in COBA will create a close-knit community with a group of mentors and scholars who share the same interests and passions.

Sarah Ryniker
Kelsey Keane wins Fulbright Student Grant to Kosovo

Kelsey Keane has won a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship (ETA) and will work in Kosovo during the 2014-2015 school year. This will be her third trip to the Balkans, but Fulbright funding will allow the Political Science and English major the opportunity to live in the region for a full year.

The Ruffin Scholar and University Honors Program student first traveled to the region when she was in high school, and the experience left an impact on her—particularly the war-torn landscape and the children growing up in that environment. Her second visit was with the University Honors Program study abroad trip to Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Corfu (Greece), where she and several other students discussed ethnic conflict, narrative memory, and trauma led by Dr. Krista Wiegand (Political Science) and Dr. Lori Amy (Writing and Linguistics). Dr. Amy was a Fulbright Scholar in Albania during the 2009-2010 school year.

“Kelsey was an exemplary cultural ambassador on the summer 2012 study abroad to Albania, Corfu, Kosovo, and Montenegro,” Dr. Amy said. “Her natural openness and empathy earned her the friendship of many of the people she met on the trip.”

Kosovo seeks to become an independent state, but it has not been fully recognized. “Our evening Skype calls during that study abroad trip revealed Kosovo to be a Serbian territory,” Keane said. “We saw concepts of nationalism, conflict, and self-determination jump off the pages of our reading and into everyday life and take on new meanings.”

That trip instilled in her a determination to return, and she continued to think about and research the area. Keane also had the fortunate chance to meet with former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on campus and gain the diplomat’s insight on the Kosovar War and the Balkans.

“Our conversation about the region’s continuing struggles further fueled my desire to return to Kosovo, to study the conflict and to work towards a brighter Albanian future,” Keane said.

Dr. Amy was impressed with Keane’s sensitivity to the region and the people who live there. “Kelsey combines deep, critical thinking with a genuine desire to understand what motivates people, how they think and feel and why they behave as they do,” Dr. Amy said. “She also uses what she learns to reflect on herself and her life, and through that reflection to strengthen her relationships with others and her commitment to school, work, and her professional communities.”

That return will now be as a Fulbright ETA. In the upcoming weeks Keane will learn the specific location of her station in Kosovo, and is excited about working in area schools: “Regardless of where I’m stationed, I cannot wait to work with students. My time will be spent rotating between different middle schools or high schools as a supplemental English instructor. My job will be to provide fun and innovative methods for students to learn English as a second language.”

Keane continues, “By serving as an English Teaching Assistant in Kosovo, I hope to invest in the future of Kosovo, working with students who will one day lead their communities. As a double major in English and Political Science, I believe that words are our most powerful tool. Given the predominance of the English language in global media, my work will help Kosovar youth tell their stories and take control of their narratives.”

The graduating senior will also have the opportunity to pursue a research or outreach project of her own choosing while living in the Balkans. She hopes to work with one of many agencies focusing on development in the area, and Dr. Amy knows that those agencies will be very happy to have Kelsey return.

“While in Albania and Kosovo, several of the people we worked with — from the American Embassy and the United Nations, as well as many local nongovernmental organizations — encouraged Kelsey to return to the region,” Dr. Amy said. “They will be thrilled to learn that she will be working in Kosovo on a Fulbright Student Grant.”

After spending additional time in Albania and Kosovo, she plans to pursue graduate work in international development practices and ultimately aims to pursue a Ph.D.
Georgia Southern University chemistry major Cameron Feriante received an Honorable Mention from the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and earned a prestigious internship with Milliken this summer.

In his Goldwater application, the 1906 Scholar and University Honors Program student proposed research that has potential implications for the methods used to treat traumatic brain injury. “The research that I am working on with Dr. Hans Schanz focuses on the development of organic radical-containing polymers as a component for the treatment of traumatic brain injuries,” Feriante said.

This work will be developed further into his Honors Thesis research.

“The goal is to synthesize polymers containing TEMPO, an organic nitroxide radical, as a component of a final copolymer, which will have antioxidant properties. The polymer will be bound to cell-free hemoglobin, and their antioxidant properties should allow the complex to deliver oxygen to the injury sites without causing damage to neurons and other cells. The eventual application of this research is the development of a treatment, perhaps a supplement to traditional IV solutions, which can supply oxygen through the bloodstream, reducing cellular death in the event of a traumatic brain injury.”

Feriante has been busy this semester continuing his research and developing his proposal for his Honors Thesis. He is looking forward to the work he will continue to do in the lab at Georgia Southern and beyond.

“It’s an honor to be recognized by Goldwater for the work I’ve already done,” he said. “I see it as an honor for what I have the potential to do. I feel honored that they have recognized that potential, and I view it as more of a challenge and I want to live up to those expectations.”

With one year left at Georgia Southern, Feriante is already beginning to meet those expectations. This summer he will intern at Milliken & Company in Spartanburg, SC. This opportunity is supported through the Society for Chemical Industry (SCI) America International Group in partnership with the American Chemical Society. In addition to receiving placement at Milliken for the internship, SCI will also pay him a stipend, provide relocation and housing support, and provide funding to facilitate travel to a professional meeting where he will discuss results developed during the internship.

“This internship will show me the industry side of chemistry,” said Feriante. “They conduct chemistry research focused on consumer materials. I am looking forward to seeing commercial research up close as well as having a change of pace and location.”

Feriante has been grateful for the support he has had while at Georgia Southern.

“I have to recognize the professors and the classes I had. It is not an exaggeration to say that none of this would have been possible without them,” Feriante said. “I have to thank Dr. Hans Schanz, my mentor, for the opportunity to work on research with him. The chemistry facilities here at GSU have been instrumental. And I appreciate all the support I have received from the University Honors Program.”

After his time at Georgia Southern, Feriante plans to attend graduate school for chemistry, but he is open to a variety of opportunities in academic research or in industry.
Honors 2013-2014 Data

- 461 Honors Students
  (40% Men, 60% Women, 80% Caucasian, 20% Non-white)
- 407 Georgia Residents (89%)
- 11 States Represented (including Georgia)
- 13 Countries Represented
- 87% Freshman Retention Rate
- 155 Faculty teach Honors courses
- 88 Honors Courses Offered
- 9598 Hours of Service and Leadership

Honors Students by Academic College

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2014 Incoming Freshman Class Projections

- 143 New Freshman
- 127 Georgia Residents (89%)
- 10 States Represented
- 1281 Average SAT
- 28.84 Average ACT
- 3.78 Average GPA (Unweighted)

Number of Honors Students

- Fall 2006: 295
- Fall 2007: 306
- Fall 2008: 343
- Fall 2009: 406
- Fall 2010: 451
- Fall 2011: 456
- Fall 2012: 423
- Fall 2013: 461
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<td>Fall 2009 Cohort: 91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>Fall 2010 Cohort: 91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>Fall 2011 Cohort: 92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>Fall 2012 Cohort: 87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can invest in the outstanding students of the University Honors Program by visiting our website and clicking "Invest in Honors."
Greetings from the Honors Program