Honors @ Georgia Southern

Spring 2010

University Honors Program Students and Staff

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The University Honors Program provides transformative experiences for bright and talented students. Undergraduate research and creative activity can be one of the most transformative of those experiences. Working side-by-side with a faculty mentor on a substantial project gives a student a much deeper knowledge of the discipline and an appreciation for the ways in which knowledge is discovered and communicated. This issue provides highlights of a wide variety of the undergraduate research and creative activity completed by the honors class of 2010.

As always, the work of our students and our faculty extend beyond the classroom. In this issue, the reader will travel to China with Ryan Pickrell, one of our Boren Scholars; and to Japan with Rose Sheehan and Denmark with Anna Mcaughey, two of our Gilman Scholars. In addition to the variety of other stories about the Program, we are featuring three poems from our students. Honors students and honors alumni welcome to submit their poems or flash fiction for next year’s issue. As always, I would love to hear from you. Drop me a line and stay in touch (submission of poetry not required).

Sincerely yours,
Steven Engel

Mission Statement

The University Honors Program provides a small college atmosphere in the context of a large comprehensive university. The program is designed to foster the development of a critical sense of inquiry, a spirit of creativity, a global perspective and an ethic of civic responsibility. A hallmark of the program is the emphasis on bringing students 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 student 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 curricular experiences.

Undergraduate Research Experience

- 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.

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SUMMARY

The University Honors 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 students to life through undergraduate research, experiential learning and service-learning opportunities.
The housing market may be in a slump but it has turned out to be a great time for the University Honors Program to get a new home. In August 2009, the Program moved into a newly renovated Eidson House. Originally built as the President’s Home in 1955, the building had been the campus home of Alumni Relations and Development since 1972 (see timeline). With the opening of the Bishop Alumni Center, this old house became available.

While the Bell Honors Program had its Honors House, that was a residence for just a few students and was across campus from the office of Bell Honors Director Dr. Hew Joiner. Also in a different location was the most important space for the program, the honors seminar room, located in the library. Similarly, the University Honors Program bounced around in its first ten years from the Administrative Annex, to the interior design cottage and then to the Information Technology building. Now located in the Eidson House, the Program offices, student social space, and seminar room are under one roof.

As soon as it was determined that the Eidson House would be assigned to the University Honors Program, students and faculty participated in the planning of the renovation. Kimberly Anderson (pictured left), honors Interior Design major from Boonton, New Jersey, was instrumental in helping define the color scheme, furniture selection, and layout of the furniture.

The house now features a student lounge, a spacious back porch, a seminar room, and a small kitchen in addition to the offices of the honors staff. With the support of student technology fees, the seminar room includes the latest technology and the building is wireless. At any given time, students can be found drinking coffee, studying, relaxing, or conversing in the lounge or on the porch. “I love Eidson House already,” said senior honors student Cassie Beasley. “I go there to do homework, and I almost always have a chance to chat with other students who I wouldn’t normally get to see because our classes are on opposite ends of campus.”

For the upcoming fall semester, twelve classes will meet in the seminar room. Math professor Jim Braselton, who is scheduled to teach there in the fall, said “Having classes in the honors building forces it to be a gathering place for honors students … it encourages a sense of culture and community among them.”

To provide the proper setting in the house, the Program has acquired works of art from current and former students. Items added thus far to the honors permanent collection from current students include those from Elizabeth Debban (painting), Jeanne Henry (ceramics), Jennifer Youmans (photography), and Sara Whaley (drawing). In addition, three works from Bell Honors graduate Ashley Anderson (2005) are on display in the student lounge.

The house’s namesake was the seventh president of Georgia Southern, John Olin Eidson, serving from 1968-1971, and he was the last president to live in the house. “It is fitting that the University Honors Program is located in a facility named for Dr. Eidson,” said Dr. Steven Engel, “since he and his wife have made the largest donation to the Honors Scholarship Endowment to date. The University Honors Program will continue to strive to further his legacy and build upon the tradition of academic excellence which he worked to establish during his tenure as president.”

Kelsey Decker contributed to this article.
Megan Ekstrom
International Studies
Who Are We?? The European Union Experience
Dr. Darin Van Tassell

Megan Ekstrom’s interest in how people develop their individual identity comes from her own experience as someone who has lived in two countries. Ekstrom, an International Studies major, was born in Sweden. She later moved to America where she learned English as her second language, and in her time at Georgia Southern, she has taken on a third language, German, as a minor. This experience with two cultures and three languages gave her an excellent foundation for her Honors Thesis research on European identity.

Specifically, Ekstrom has been determining how European citizens develop identity, particularly a larger, overarching European identity. “I have been examining the European Union to find out if a common European identity emerges, or if people continue to hold onto their national identities,” said Ekstrom. “When I started, it was half way technical and half way ‘let’s hope this works,’ and that’s definitely my style of work.” With respect to her finished pieces, she said that her goal is to discover what people want and need from their ceramics. “[I want to] make the perfect coffee mug,” she said. “When you see somebody pick up something you made and they say, ‘Oh, that feels nice… I love the angle of the handle. I love the thumb imprint,’ it makes you feel so much better.”

Ekstrom has been utilizing the Eurobarometer, a research study conducted by European commissioners that asks Europeans about topics, including but not limited to their identity (the question of identity was recently added in 1992). Using the Eurobarometer, Ekstrom has been searching for trends.

On top of an already challenging topic, Ekstrom has had another obstacle to face—she only started the project last semester, giving her merely a year to complete it. However, Ekstrom is dedicated, and she has worked hard to catch up. Ekstrom’s mentor and thesis director is Dr. Darin Van Tassell, Associate Professor in the Center of International Studies and the Department of Political Science. He has been with Ekstrom throughout her research process, from forming her ideas in the beginning to writing out her research. Dr. Van Tassell is very passionate about Ekstrom’s research, feeling that it is a publishable topic of great interest.

When senior Art student Jeanne Henry built a small wood burning kiln more than a year ago as part of a class, she didn’t know that just months later she would have the opportunity to put her skills to use for a bigger project. The original kiln was still in use when Jeanne’s newest endeavor was fired up for the first time. No longer working under the direction of a faculty member, Jeanne helped lead other students in the creation of the new kiln, which is much larger. “[The first one was] quite small. It didn’t seem worth it to fire something that small for four days. We couldn’t get enough work in there. This one’s about four times bigger,” she explains.

The students did not receive any funding from the school for the project, instead calling on local businesses to donate supplies. According to Jeanne, getting the community involved in supporting the arts was one of the most rewarding aspects of building the new and improved kiln. She has also enjoyed slowly mastering the ins and outs of wood fire kilns through hands-on work at every stage, from the initial design to the finished product. “[That’s how it is a lot when you start up on your own, so it’s been a learning experience].”

Ceramics made in wood kilns are glazed by ash settling on the pieces during the firing. “This is chaotic,” Jeanne said. “It depends on how one piece sits next to another and how the flame wraps around it… you don’t know how it’s going to come out.” Jeanne used the kiln to complete some, if not all, of the finished ceramics pieces that are part of her completed Honors Capstone project. “It is my favorite. It’s half way technical and half way ‘let’s hope this works,’ and that’s definitely my style of work.”

After graduation, Jeanne will be getting her Master’s degree in art education from the University of Georgia. When asked if she will miss the opportunity to work with the kiln she laughs, “I told my professor, ‘I’m coming back, and I’m firing it.’” It is likely that she will be able to do just that. The new wood burning kiln is a much more durable structure than the old one, and ceramics students will be able to use it for many years to come. “This is one of the more permanent kilns that have been built here. I would say it would last about twenty-five years if people maintain it,” Jeanne said.
Most consumers do not think about how their favorite product finds its way into stores, but Kurt Barnes does. Through his Honors Capstone research, Barnes, an Information Systems major, has sought to demonstrate why these enterprise systems are a very important support element for supply chain operations. In studying “enterprise systems” with his faculty mentor, Dr. Ednilson Bernardes, Barnes evaluated “the importance of enterprise systems in the supply chain management field.”

Barnes explained, “Enterprise systems are a type of information system (IT system) which were primarily developed to support and integrate the more financial aspects of companies.” This project required a great deal of hard work, dedication, and time, especially because Barnes faced the challenge of limited sources in the business literature, as there are not many studies showing how the use of enterprise systems affects a company’s financial performance. Barnes is hopeful that more such studies will appear in the future, he said, as “more and more companies are beginning to invest in enterprise systems.”

Barnes enjoyed working on his project as it gave him an opportunity to study how enter- prise systems are used and where they are used. “You really don’t get to see that aspect [of enterprise systems] too often whilst doing your coursework,” he said.

While working on this project Barnes also found out he had more in common with his mentor than originally thought. Both have a “somewhat fanatical love for aviation” and are licensed private pilots. Dr. Bernardes even convinced Barnes to join the Statesboro Squadron of Civil Air Patrol (which is an Auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force) where, he said, “I have to call him Major instead of Professor!” Not many students get to learn that much about professors, or fly planes with their professors rather than for that matter, but I am very glad to have gotten to know Dr. Bernardes and I will definitely keep in touch with him after graduation.”

Barnes believes that his capstone project has helped prepare him for his future career because, “as a future business leader and information systems leader, I need to be able to identify successful trends and assimilate them into my company.” The better I am at recognizing new leading-edge technology, the more successful I will be,” he said.

Sarah Anzjon Nursing
Professor, School of Nursing
Dr. Rosemary Gee

Sanitation has become an obsession in our culture and these days every cleaning product promises to be a bacteria killer and germ destroyer. But will staying so clean prevent illness? Nursing major Sarah Anzjon is questioning the conventional wisdom.

“I’m looking at the hygiene hypothesis, which says that the more bacteria and infections you are exposed to, the less you get sick,” she said. “It’s kind of like Lysol, Clorox, bleach and all those things are bad for us. And there’s a lot of interesting papers that contradict the previously thought ideas about vaccines and immunity.”

Anzjon is working in coordination with Dr. Rose Mary Gee, a nursing professor, and chose a topic for her paper that she feels strongly about. “Infectious diseases are my passion,” she said. “So I’m really interested in what people automatically assume, and once I started getting into the research, it became even more interesting.”

If time permits, she wants to analyze data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which surveys thousands of people around the country by taking blood, asking questions about health behaviors and looking at things like antibodies and living conditions. “I’m going to see if I can correlate anything with antibody levels, which would indicate previous infections, in a positive way – they won’t get the disease again – with things like where they live or income, the number of people in their family and how they like that,” she said.

Over the course of her research, Anzjon came across a treatment for some kinds of cancer from the 1970s – before chemotherapy was used against multiple types – that approached treatments in a “counterintuitive” fashion. “The way that they used to treat some types of lung cancer, and even bladder cancer, was with a strain of the bacteria related to tuberculosis,” she said. “They would infect people with these bacteria and then they would monitor their tumor size. They could see that in some certain types of cancer, the tumor was actually shrinking, and things like that,” she said.

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English major Ava Conger does not call herself a feminist, nor does she consider Margaret Atwood's novel The Handmaid's Tale a purely feminist work, but feminist literature interests her. “In The Handmaid’s Tale, society is hierarchically divided with women placed into specific roles based on their reproductive capabilities,” Conger said. “My [thesis] focus is to look at how power is aspired by the higher ranking male authority figures, primarily through the prohibition of female reading and writing.”

Although The Handmaid’s Tale is not strictly feminist, “the lower ranking males in society have limited freedom as well” said Conger, Atwood does address historical issues of backlash against the feminist movements of the 1970s. The book is also dystopian, meaning the story is set in a futuristic society that varies the Utopian ideal, often through an autocratic or repressive form of government.

Dr. Candy Schille serves as Conger’s mentor and referred Conger to Atwood’s book after Conger expressed interest in dystopian and feminist literature. “She also listened to my ideas about what direction I wanted to go with the paper and helped me refine them,” Conger said of Dr. Schille. “Ultimately, the novel underscores the power of language and how this power can be abused by language misinterpretation.”

Conger read and studied the novel, as well as sought information through the interlibrary book exchange program within the University System of Georgia called GIL Express. Some resources were unavailable, but Conger also found that the time constraints of the loans proved problematic. “It is unavailable, but Conger also found that the time constraints of the loans proved problematic,” Conger said. “It is generally allowed to keep library books longer, but it is also dystopian, meaning the story is set in a futuristic society that varies the Utopian ideal, often through an autocratic or repressive form of government.”

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While most people think of wars in terms of human casualties, George Barnhill couldn’t help but think of the animals—and the implications for the awareness of a new kind of combat. During World War II history class taught by Dr. Charles Thomas, he kept running across mentions of animals in battle. “I would find references, little snippets that animals served in war, but there was never a full article about it.”

Fascinated, Barnhill decided to investigate, and he was amazed at some of the stories he found. “There are stories out there about animals that sort of epitomize everything that their species did. For example, there was a dog that fought with the Canadian regiment, and it was credited with saving 20-30 lives,” he said.

Stories like this one lead Barnhill to the topic of the Honors Thesis project he’s been working on with Dr. Thomas as his advisor. Titled “Another Kind of Soldier,” his paper explores the roles of animals in the world wars. Barnhill is particularly interested in how the participation of animals changed human perspectives on animal rights. “When war broke out, the Red Cross heard about the need for veterinary assistance, so they started setting up animal hospitals for animals that were serving. Even after the war was over, a bunch of them stayed open,” he said. “Over time, you see this heightened appreciation of what animals are capable of. In World War I animals were listed as equipment, but by World War II you actually have some groups that are listing them as personnel.”

Despite the number of amazing stories he’s found, the research hasn’t been easy. “History tends to focus only on the human cost of war, and he has found it rewarding but challenging to find the information he is looking for. “We’re never going to get every single story. We’ve got tastes of experiences, and from this we’ve got to patch together an understanding of what it was really like.”

Barnhill hopes his research will help shed light on an underrepresented topic, and he thinks people who read it might discover a love of history through this unexpected facet of an otherwise familiar subject. “People think history is boring. This is not boring. This is interesting stuff,” he said.

After graduation, Barnhill plans to attend the Cumberland School of Law at Samford University. KB

George Barnhill Biology 
An Honor's Thesis Directed Study 
Dr. Charles Thomas and Dr. Anastasia Sims

Kristina Kegerreis Exercise Science 
The Effect of a Collegiate Soccer Season on Performance and Recovery Stress Score 
Dr. Stephen Rose

An interest in sport often leads to an interest in another, which is exactly what happened to senior Georgia Southern University tennis player, Kristina Kegerreis. Playing tennis since she was six-years-old led to her earning a full tennis scholarship. However, interests in all college courses are not mutually exclusive.

In an era when many students in college enter with dear majors and career paths in mind, Tyler Thompson arrived at Georgia Southern curious to discover where his life would take him. It was not until he completed all his core classes within his first two years that he declared Political Science as his major, with International Studies as his minor, and devoted himself to a serious interest in the People’s Republic of China.

For much of his life, Thompson had always had some interest in China. His father, a career journalist, had been to China years before. Facciated by this foreign land, he knew that one day he would want to travel there, and last summer he did just that through a study abroad program. Thompson said, “The country had resonating subaltern.” He explained, for example, going to a park and seeing thousands of people rather than a dozen. These differences maintained his interest in the Chinese people and their society, and were considered in stark contrast to his life back in Georgia.

When Thompson started his Honors Capstone project he knew his focus would be on China, but he just did not have all the details sorted out. “I struggled with my topic,” Thompson said, “until last year spring semester in my Asian politics class.” Participating in a discussion about the democratization of China sparked the idea that led to his research project, “Democratization in China: Leave it to the Industries.” His plan was to closely examine the expanded view on democratic trends in the People’s Republic of China.

The ideal argument about this topic contends that economic liberalization in China will produce real political change. However, Thompson’s theory is that political liberalization in China, if it is to come, will not be the result of foreign or domestic political pressures, or the consequence of open economic reform. He believes that the practices of foreign industries operating within China will be the cause of such a change in the Chinese economy. “These industries entered China within a Sino-Foreign Cooperative Joint Venture, a combined business enterprise between a Chinese and a foreign company within the territory of China. The Chinese company typically provides the factory buildings along with the land use rights and the labor. The foreign company will bring in the equipment along with the necessary technology to put all of this into working prog- ress.”

As Thompson began his research, he started to become familiar with the current information available on the relationship between China, “The internet of my research involved reading,” he said. As time went on, by gathering more and more information, he was able to formulate a developed theory of why and how China is moving towards democratic trends. Assisting in Thompson’s work was his advisor, Dr. Krista Wiegand, a specialist in the Department of Political Science, who ensured that he stayed on track with his project over the long span of time he was working.

Tyler Thompson Political Science Democratization in China - Leave it to the Industries Dr. Krista Wiegand

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Working with Dr. Heidi Altman, Anthropology major Kristen Mitchell has been studying folklore and how original folklore stories differ from their modern incarnations.

The focus of her project is a comparative study of folklore from a linguistic standpoint. Mitchell has always been interested in folklore, but last year she was inspired by Dr. Altman to examine the different forms folklore stories have taken over time.

Mitchell worked with many tales, including Cinderella, Diamonds and Toads, and Rapunzel’s Tower. While many readers have seen the Disney versions of such tales, Mitchell noted that these movies are for entertainment, whereas the written tales were created to teach a lesson. The written versions are thus of a much darker nature than the Disney films.

For Mitchell, the challenging part of this research was the linguistic angle from which she approached it. She has studied cultural anthropology and it took some effort to properly work from a linguistic perspective.

In the fall, Mitchell will begin her graduate program in Library Science at the University of North Texas where she will continue her love of folklore as well as the study of it.

Most undergraduate projects have as a final stop the professor’s desk or a classroom presentation. However, Chemistry major Caitlin Madigan has already discussed some of her research at two national meetings of the American Chemical Society and is well into her fifth semester of research that examines the bonding of carbohydrates and receptors in the human cell in an attempt to find carbohydrate replacements to act as a drug against disease.

“The cells in your body have receptors on them, which you could think of as one Lego. Then another ‘Lego’ would come and bind to it, and sometimes the binding is reversible, so it can unbind, and sometimes the binding is permanent.” Madigan said. “So what we’re looking to do is find one ‘Lego’ to bind to this receptor, but this receptor already has a receptor for galactose, so we’re trying to find something to replace galactose.”

Madigan has been working on this project with Dr. Karen Welch since her sophomore year, when she initially worked on computer-based rational design, which searches a database of molecules. “We had the basic set of atoms that we wanted, and the computer could find things that were like it or almost exactly that, or some things that didn’t look like it at all but act like it.” Madigan said. “The computer searched over 10,000 molecules, so it took awhile. Then, after it gave back a list, we took the top 100 and we went through and looked at them visually and tried to pick out the ones that we thought would be the best and that we were interested in.”

But she also feels starting her capstone early has afforded her opportunities she otherwise wouldn’t have had. “I had the opportunity to present last year at the American Chemical Society national conference in Salt Lake City, and that was a really fun experience,” she said. “This year I had the opportunity to go to the ACS again in San Francisco. The research has brought about so many more opportunities than I ever could have imagined – not only the direct research and the presenting, but the fact that Dr. Welch has been able to help me in so many other areas.”

This year, contracting Instrumental Analysis with Dr. Shannon Davis and Physical Chemistry II with Dr. James Lohse for the University Honors Program has also given her the chance to take a “new, independent tangent” to the research for her project: trying to find the concentration at which the molecules aggregate, or if they aggregate at all.

“It’s using a fluorometer, and it’s definitely not anything like the computer work that I did or the hands-on well-plate work or the synthesis work, so I would say there have been four major parts,” she said. “My favorite part, I would say, has been the well-plates, it was just so hands-on, and at the end of the day there was an answer. And also, there’s the fact that every time I turn around I’m learning something new about something I thought I already knew.”

After graduation, Madigan plans to attend the Medical College of Georgia for either medical school or graduate school. She has been accepted to graduate school to pursue a Ph.D. in neuroscience, but is still waiting to hear about medical school.

The rising cost of health care affects more than doctor exams and prescription drugs. Patients often need durable goods like wheelchairs, hospital beds, etc. And the cost for the use of those items adds up just as quickly. Economics major Ann Hedges is examining how changes to Medicare policy affecting durable goods are supposed to help lower their costs.

This research is also resulting in a paper Hedges co-wrote with her mentor, Dr. Michael Reksulak, an Associate Professor in the School of Economic Development, entitled, “Taking the ‘Silver Scalpel’ to Durable Medical Equipment Expenditures: A cautionary tale of competitive bidding in medical markets.”

Economics major Ann Hedges is examining how changes to Medicare policy affecting durable goods are supposed to help lower their costs.

The bill has had two incarnations, one in the early 2000s and one more recent version.

“Costs are a substantial part of the rise in health care costs,” Hedges said. “It is interesting how much more important an issue is getting a lot of awareness,” said Hedges. “Now with Obama in office, the Healthcare reform and the recent health care bill, Hedges has seen her topic become even more relevant now than she had anticipated.

“Now with Obama in office, the healthcare issue is getting a lot of awareness,” said Hedges. “It is interesting how much more important this issue has become even since I began researching it.”

Hedges has been working with Dr. Reksulak ever since she took a course from him as a freshman, and they began talking about her research project when she was a sophomore. “It has been a great research experience working with a professor on a paper,” said Hedges. “You get to see it from their perspective of preparing it to be submitted to a journal.”

This intersection of economics and politics has prepared Hedges for a future in public policy. “I enjoy learning economic theories that can be applied anywhere and using cost-saving analysis to look at these policies to see what’s gone wrong.”
While the majority of students in college choose one major en route to their degree, Michelle Wehner has taken on the task of double majoring toward earning a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Recreational Emphasis in Therapeutic Recreation. To add to the complexity of her ambition, she also completed two separate Honors Capstone projects before graduation, a task no honors student has attempted before. She, however, was not deterred, and with help from Dr. William McIntosh, Dr. Lorne M. Wolfe, Dr. James D. Bigley and her father, Wehner had just the right amount of guidance that she needed to carry out her projects professionally and to completion.

Wehner’s psychology project, entitled Exploring the Use of Different Types of Education Interventions to Change Attitude and Behavior, used both written and video formats to try to measure attitude and behavior of psychology student participants toward Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches. As a young child she had a constant fear of the insect resulting from an incident. Wehner was forced to confront that long-time fear when she began working at the Georgia Southern Center for Wildlife Education and Lamar Q. Ball, Jr. Raptor Center and was entrusted with cockroaches. After getting over her phobia through exposure, she was interested in examining incidents and fears like hers through science and experiment.

A total of 47 undergraduate psychology students, 15 female and 12 male, took part in the experiment. Wehner hypothesized that the video format would be more effective than the written format. She constructed both the video and written format herself. With the help of her father, Wehner composed the six minute video in the back yard of her own home. The results of the experiment showed the males were generally more accepting of the Hissing Cockroaches than the females. Wehner explained, “I discovered several interesting results, one of which is that college students seem to learn more from a video than written material. “The students that demonstrated a better understanding were the males and they had heard of wheelchair basketball but were not aware that it was coming to Georgia Southern. In the end, they concluded the program should be advertised more around campus.

After completing two projects of this magnitude, Wehner feels a boost of confidence. All the hard work and dedication that was involved paid off in the end. “I now know that an assignment of this size is possible,” she said. Although she did have a job, Supervisor at the Center for Wildlife Education and The Lamar Q. Ball, Jr. Raptor Center, while accomplishing these projects that caused stress, Wehner described it as “good stress.” She loves working at the Wild Life Center with the animals which helped with relief from her projects.

In addition, Wehner’s projects have already begun to prepare her for the future and shape her career. She spent this semester as an intern at Bend Parks and Recreation’s Special Recreation Department in Bend, OR, completing an internship course for her therapeutic recreation degree where she is working with park recreation’s special recreation program on opportunities for adults and children with disabilities. As for the future, Wehner has high hopes. She is currently contemplating on applying for graduate school. No matter where her life might take her, she plans to “live life full of diverse experiences and leisure activities.” She sees herself being involved with animals, animal therapy, and wildlife.

David Robeck believes in the power of art. For his Honors Thesis, Robeck is examining the role of music and art in psychological relief for people, particularly children, whose lives have been torn apart by war.

Robeck is an International Studies and Spanish double-major and Music minor, as well as a percussionist. He is also an officer in STAND, a student-run organization addressing violence and genocide. (Read an article about Robeck’s work with STAND on page 32 of this magazine.) Robeck draws upon research on conflict in Darfur, Sudan and Uganda and also sees applications of the process for victims of natural disasters such as the recent tragedy in Haiti.

Making molecules has occupied Chemistry major Sierra Mitchell and her advisor, Dr. Karen Welch, for the past three semesters. “We’ve been synthesizing polymers as biologically active precursors,” Mitchell explained. “It is successful, the molecules she made as an undergraduate will eventually mimic glycogen in the human body and act as inhibitors against enzymes that could create diseases.

“Since no one’s made [these molecules] before,” said Mitchell, she and Dr. Welch “have to troubleshoot, look for a good source, and tweak the conditions.”

Dr. Welch serves as the research advisor for an organic chemistry course Mitchell took. Based on Mitchells work during the class, Dr. Welch invited Mitchell to join the project. The research will also continue at Georgia Southern after Mitchell goes to Georgetown University for graduate school.

“The project will probably go to the biochemistry department,” said Mitchell, who plans to continue researching during graduate school at Georgetown. “I’m tired of a definite set schedule. I’m looking for freedom,” she said, seeking more “flexibility” in scheduling her classes and research.

“T’ll work in organic chemistry [at first], but I’ll try to work with an analytical chemist person,” she said, as her undergraduate research has been a blending of the two disciplines. Mitchell presented her research, with the help of the Honors program, last October at SERMACS, the Southeastern Regional Meeting of the American Chemical Society in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Mitchell presented a poster of her work to leading chemists in every field. “It’s kind of intimidating,” Mitchell said, “but no one really grills you because you’re an undergraduate. They want you to keep researching.” Mitchell will certainly keep researching, and she knows she will be welcomed at future SERMACS events, as will those Georgia Southern students who continue her research.
Philosophy major Rhett Moore knows that the search for truth is not only a practical endeavor, but also a fun one as well. His Honors Thesis, which began as a term paper for a class on existentialism, focuses on the similarities between the ideas of ultimate truth in the work of German philosopher Martin Heidegger and Taoist philosophy.

"I thought it would be interesting to try to write one myself," he said. In addition to the humorous aspects of his paper, Rhett thinks that the real world importance of his research is clear. "There are some practical tools that can be derived from these philosophies," he said. He knows that what he has learned has had an impact on his own life. Regarding the personal significance of his project, he said, "These philosophies remind me to focus on the now and not over think my surroundings. They remind me to be here."

Moore had his choice of law schools this spring, and after mulling over acceptances from Georgia, Georgia State, South Carolina, LSU, Mercer, Samford, and Santa Clara University, decided on Mercer where he was also awarded a scholarship.

"Large scale, small feel" is a phrase familiar to undergraduate students who have demonstrated interest in the environment. Warburg’s research focuses on variable data printing and its applications in the printing industry.

"Variable data printing is a system of printing using new digital technology. In conventional printing, a plate runs the same image over and over, but this form of digital printing allows printing to be customized to the person receiving it based on collected data.

"It’s a new way of marketing to people on a level we have yet to do before," Warburg said. According to Warburg, the technology for digital printing came around in the early millennia past, showing that there are male-biased years and female-biased years.

"Nature has a way of balancing the sex ratio," Sparrrow explained. "The only accurate way to support or reject these findings in multiple sea turtle studies and hopes her research can continue after she graduates."

"Temperature variation is crucial to predict sex ratios and determine if there is a male or female bias," Sparrrow said. "To record these variations, she buried three dataloggers in each nest, one at the bottom, one near the middle, and the last near the top. Most loggerheads study uses only one temperature datalogger so little is known about how temperatures vary within different parts of the nest. Sparrrow and her mentor, Dr. David Restal, developed the project and sought funding through the Chandler Foundation and COOR grant (College of Undergraduate Research) for the ninety-nine dataloggers Sparrrow required, each costing $100. The instruments recorded temperatures every two hours, allowing Sparrrow to accumulate data.

"There is a significant difference in temperature within nests but not across the season. Thus, the bottom logger temperature was always significantly different from the top and middle" Sparrrow explained. "The only accurate way to know sex ratios is to euthanize the hatchlings and dissect them to determine their gender," Sparrrow said. "This season the dataloggers showed temperatures... implying mostly females."

Sparrrow examined the single datalogger temperature data from the Eastern Seaboard in years past, showing that there are male-biased years and female-biased years. "Nature has a way of balancing the sex ratios," said Sparrrow. "However, with global climate and the temperature rising more dramatically, it has yet to be seen how sea turtles will compensate."

This fall, Sparrrow will attend College of Charleston’s master’s program in environmental studies and hopes her research can continue after she graduates. "I would like this study to be continued," she said. "It would be nice to continue this project to support or reject these findings in multiple seasons."

From May through early August of 2009, Biology major Jessica Sparrrow trekked to two beaches of Blackbird Island off Georgia’s coast, searching for loggerhead sea turtle nests and recording data from the instruments she placed inside each.

"I wanted to work in a conservation field and since Loggerhead sea turtles are a threatened species, this was a great place to start," Sparrrow said. Her record of work on environmental issues and her drive to active through the Student Alliance for a Green Earth and to her Honorable Mention for the Murisi K. Udall Scholarship, a national scholarship which recognizes undergraduate students who have demonstrated a commitment to careers related to the environment.

Logggerheads dig massive underground nests in which between 100 and 126 eggs incubate, the internal temperature of the nest determining the sex of the hatchlings. As long as one in 10,000 hatchlings will survive to adulthood and females generally wait for two years between nesting periods to replenish fat and nutrients, sex ratios must be specially reproductive to survive. Sex determination occurs in the middle third of the six week incubation period, with lower temperatures producing all or mostly male hatchlings and higher temperatures producing all or mostly females.

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What if a consumer did not have to purchase a license to buy a computer software product, but could obtain it through free access to the code behind it? That code, called "source code" is the method used by programmers to specify what actions should be performed by the computer and is exactly what constitutes a program. Every software product a consumer purchases is created through program source code, a collection of statements and information written in readable computer programming language. David Styer, an Information Systems major, has focused his Honors Capstone project on "Open Source Development," a concept that gained hold with the rise of the Internet. He wanted to clearly define Open Source Development. His next step involved delving into the Internet to find colleges that either used or taught open source. He used web surveys to examine lists of colleges, while taking a closer look at three different departments, Information Technology, Information Systems, and Computer Science, he explained. All three of these departments are the most likely areas to find use of the open source tool. However, Styer discovered the open source concept is not firmly addressed in these or any other departments. The closest thing he found was a reference in research papers and consulting papers, and every now and then a reference in a class. But, open source was never included in any course curriculum.

Styer mentioned one interesting discovery he made while during his research. He came across a symposium that addressed the issue of Open Source Development and its rising importance, but the group did not know how to solve the problem of teaching the topic. This obstacle is one that Styer himself faces in his project as creating a curriculum for a semester long class on open source code is another one of his goals. "The most difficult part for me was the hump of getting going," Styer explained when asked what was the most challenging part of the entire project was. He learned how to manage the intensity of a large project and the energy and patience required to accomplish it on time. Styer enjoyed discovering new information and finding the answers to all his questions on the intensifying topic. Open Source Development will continue to be a controversial issue but its use will increase because of the advantages it can offer.

Music Education major Amy Ruiz knows that the economy places funding for music and arts education in a precarious position and in fact, many music programs survive only through fundraising by students and parents at the school. Her Honors Capstone project examines the various arguments music teachers need to defend their programs to school boards, and arts education in a precarious position. And lately, some districts have had to close music departments completely.

"This capstone project has shown Ruiz what her own argument and better understand the person who is being questioned, and whether or not it influences the direction of the case," she explained.

"The project has been difficult in part because of the sensitive nature of the cases she is reviewing. "My topic isn't one that people are comfortable discussing," she admits. "I really didn't want to get into the emotional aspect of the topic." The research itself has been daunting as well. "I'm just trying to stick to the language part right now, only what's said in the courtroom, but that leaves out a lot. Body language is considered language too, but that's not in the transcripts."

Despite the complexity of her task, Winger is optimistic about the real-world value of this particular avenue of research after completing an internship at the state capital. While there, she was able to discuss her thesis with representatives who were writing legislation that could affect sexual assault cases. "The current laws don't let victims prosecute after so many years, but they're trying to change that," she said.

Ultimately, Winger hopes that completing this project will help her to understand more about the subtle uses of language in trials so that she will be well prepared for her future career. After graduating, she plans to attend Mercer Law School.

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A whole team effort was needed for Exercise Science major Natalie Williams to complete her latest research project, and Georgia Southern’s soccer team was happy to provide the assistance in helping her reach her goal.

“I am doing research on seasonal changes in drop jump performance and perceived stress and injury in soccer,” she said. “Basically, we’re just tracking stress in soccer through their preseas ond their seasonal competition to see if there’s any changes — if they get more stressed throughout the season — and then we’re also looking at drop jump performance to see if it gets better as the season progresses.”

Williams is working with Dr. Stephen Rossi, the exercise science professor who thought of the topic. Originally, Williams wanted to test the vertical jump of college students and college athlete to find out how it affected their maximal leg strength, but as the soccer team was already in season, this was a more feasible subject to tackle.

In this project, the data were collected through surveys in which players could rate their “perceived stress.” For the preseas on and surveys were done at the beginning and at the end of the season for the seasonal competition, the surveys were given at the beginning, middle and end.

Following graduation Williams will pursue a Masters in Public Health at Georgia Southern University.

Zebra fish and goldfish have kidneys as well as gills, which secrete sodium chloride as a byproduct of moving ions through a membrane. In gills, the membrane separates the ‘inside’ from the ‘outside’ of the fish and is the topic of Biology major Bradley Wilbur’s Honors Thesis.

“Ions moving makes us ‘living,’” Wilbur said. Wilbur has spent the past year and a half studying zebra fish and goldfish, measuring the levels of sodium chloride that indicate how ions are moving across the fish’s membranes. A similar process of ion movement occurs in the human kidneys and both processes, in gills and kidneys, are coded in the species’ genetic sequence.

Wilbur hopes to use his research to understand human diseases coded by DNA.

“Cystic fibrosis, for example, is all because of one little gene that has one little problem,” said Wilbur. His research seeks to discover the properly functioning gene sequences of zebra fish and goldfish and to discover how ion mutations disrupt those genetic instructions.

Wilbur spent his first year of research finding primers, sections of the fish’s DNA that instruct the ion transfer Wilbur studies. Each set of instructions is 3000 bases, like words, long, but Wilbur has only been able to identify about 1000 bases so far.

Bases are assigned letters, A, C, T, and G, to identify them and primers are a specific sequence of three bases.

“But bases can change; mutations occur all the time,” he said. “Why does one mutation lead to cystic fibrosis in some cases but, in most cases, doesn’t matter at all?”

The identification of bases has not been easy. The first method Wilbur used to expand the sequence, so researchers can look for the ending primer that signals the end of the ion moving instructions, failed.

“Now, we’re circulating,” Wilbur said, adding phosphates to bacteria polymerase that are threaded around a small magnetic bead. Wilbur places the beads in a tube of fish DNA, and the DNA segments that code for ion movement in gills reacts to the polymerase, sticking to the beads as well. The DNA segments are then extracted and washed off the magnet. Wilbur has been coding these newly identified DNA segments, along with his advisor Dr. James Claburne and graduate student Andrew Diamanduros.

“The actual work isn’t all that much fun— the peeling back and forth—but getting the results is really exciting,” Wilbur said. “No one has done this before.”

jaime Thompson information Technology Tutorial Dr. Christopher Kadlec

Jaime Thompson shares a passion for production. As an Information Technology major with an emphasis in Web and Multi-Media Foundations, Thompson wanted to create a Video Production Studio for her Honors Capstone project.

Thompson called on a colleague to assist her with physical construction of the studio. She has also had the help of her mentor, Dr. Christopher Kadlec, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Information Technology. Once the construction is completed and the studio tested, Thompson will be producing a video tutorial instructing users how to operate and use the facility. She will then publish this tutorial online.

In building her studio, Thompson faced a major challenge. Having borrowed the equipment from the university or the IT Department, Thompson was missing most of the operation instructions and manuals and had to research the products online to figure out how to assemble them.

Thompson is very passionate about her research project, eager and excited to expand her knowledge of IT. “I wanted to take a different approach to the regular IT projects like website development, networking, and database projects,” said Thompson. “I felt like this project was an opportunity for me to try something new, to demonstrate that IT is not only all about computers, but it expands far beyond that. With the video production studio, of course we use computers, but with this I have the ability to do so much more with the studio production package, the switch, and the green screen. Video production has always intrigued me, and now I want to get the chance to expand my knowledge base and learn something that I might never have learned.”

Thompson is extremely grateful to have had this opportunity. “The Honors Program has given me an enriching educational experience that I couldn’t have received otherwise,” said Thompson. “It has allowed me to meet and work with many wonderful people with designing, creating, and implementing websites, and I truly appreciate the chance that I had to expand my knowledge through the Honors Program.”

Thompson has recently been offered an internship with the Office of Sustainability and Public Safety, where she will be able to use her experiences with the web first-hand. She intends to leave the studio at the school, where future students will be free to use it as they please.

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Kendra Mosley Wins Boren Scholarship to Study Abroad in Russia

University Honors Program student Kendra Mosley has been awarded a National Security Education Program David L. Boren Scholarship for study in Moscow, Russia during the 2010-2011 academic year. The Statesboro, Georgia native, ROTC Cadet, and History and International Studies major seeks to use her senior year abroad to develop her Russian language skills and immerse herself in the Russian culture.

Drawing on her experience from a study abroad program in Estonia during 2007-2008, Mosley is well-prepared for another year in a foreign country. “The year I spent in Estonia mentally prepared me to face the adversities of studying abroad,” she said. Mosley plans to travel around the country, but she is focused on her goals. “I plan to earn my minor in Russian, and I also plan to complete my honors thesis research which will focus on Russia,” she said.

Mosley’s education in history and international studies led her to become more globally aware and set learning about another culture as an academic goal. “Dr. Steven Engel, Director of the Honors Program, told my freshman orientation class about the opportunities available for study abroad,” she said. “That message stayed with me and the program was very helpful as I applied for this award.”

Boren Scholarships are awarded to students who wish to study in countries of critical importance to U.S. interests. Language learning is a key component of study for many undergraduates. Boren Scholarship recipients are as is developing a cultural understanding of the country. Boren scholars also must commit to a year-long service requirement in a government agency with national security responsibilities.

Upon her return to the United States, Mosley will be commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. Her plans following graduation are to become either a military intelligence officer or air defense artillery officer. Still, she also has plans for more studies. “I want to attend graduate school for Russian studies and history. My goal is to become a Russian history professor at some point,” she said.

Rose Sheahan Returns from Japan

More and more college students in America take advantage of study abroad programs, but very few do what International Studies major Rose Sheahan did, which is go live in another country for a whole year. Awarded a Gilman International Scholarship by the U.S. State Department, Sheahan studied at Nagaoya University of Foreign Studies in Japan and immersed herself in the culture and way of life of Japan.

“Experiencing the culture firsthand gives a person the opportunity to learn new things,” Sheahan said. “For example, I learned about the traditional origins of the popular dishes. Learning the history of food adds to an understanding of the culture,” she said.

During her first semester, she enrolled in Japanese language courses. “My study of the Japanese language was, at first, a bit shaky but as I joined clubs and made more friends in Japan, my listening and speaking skills started to really improve, and I became more confident in my skills,” she said. Last September, Sheahan took the placement exams given to exchange students who wish to study the Japanese language. Sheahan scored well on her exams, and for her second semester abroad she was enrolled in courses such as Issues in Global Business in Japan and Introduction to the History of Japanese Diplomacy.

In describing her overall experience as a student in Japan, Sheahan said, “I love Japan, even though the society and culture are vastly different. However, it has taught me that I am able to adjust and get used to the feel of other ways of doing things. ‘Study abroad has made me a much more global person. And after a year, I really feel a part of both countries’”

Nicholas Hoad
Honors in Action

**Thomas Eisenhart to Spend a Year in Belfast as Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar**

Senior Chemistry major Thomas Eisenhart counts Bob Frigo, former assistant-director of the University Honors Program, as a mentor and close friend. But when Eisenhart applied to earn his master’s degree abroad, he did not expect to follow so closely in Frigo’s footsteps.

The Rotary Foundation has awarded Eisenhart the Academic-Year Ambassadorial Scholarship to study in Belfast, Northern Ireland for the 2010-2011 academic year. Frigo studied as a Rotary Scholar and met his wife, Professor Stefanie Frigo of Georgia Southern’s Department of Writing and Linguistics, at Queen’s University in Belfast.

Eisenhart will begin classes at the same university where Frigo studied as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar and met his wife, Professor Stefanie Frigo of Georgia Southern’s Department of Writing and Linguistics, at Queen’s University in Belfast.

Eisenhart grew up in Statesboro and has called Georgia Southern his home for the past three years, but has travelled extensively. Last summer, Eisenhart backpacked alone through Italy, Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Spain. Booking one hostel ahead, Eisenhart ended his trip in Madrid, Spain, where he waited on standby for six days to fly back to Atlanta. “After seven weeks spent on the road in seven countries that didn’t speak English, I’m not really worried about going to the grocery store [in Belfast],” he explained.

As a part of the clean chemical technology and management joint degree program at Queen’s University, Eisenhart will earn his master’s degree in just one year. He is also one of just five students accepted to the program annually. “[The program is] relatively new, classroom based, and it involves a thesis. That’s a lot for one year,” he said. He’d also like to travel more during that year. “[University students] only get two weeks out of the country per semester, but we get a three week holiday for Easter, so I’m hoping to escape to somewhere warm with sunshine.”

Eisenhart first learned of Rotary International Scholarships in fall 2007, during a presentation by University Honors Program Director Steven Engel. Two and a half years later, with a year of research on efficiently converting biomass for biofuel, Eisenhart has the rest of his education well planned.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has agreed to defer Eisenhart’s enrollment until after his year as Rotary Ambassador in Belfast is complete. Katie Brookins

Read about Eisenhart’s research on page 12.

**Anna McGaughey Earns Gilman Scholarship to Study in Denmark**

Anna McGaughey has found happiness abroad. As a winner of the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship and a University Honors Program sophomore, McGaughey is studying in Denmark to investigate claims that it is “the happiest country in the world.”

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and the Institute of International Education, the Gilman award provides money for student travel and studies overseas. McGaughey is attending Roskilde University, and she lives every minute of it. “My schoolwork is with mostly Danish students, and it has been great to talk with them,” said McGaughey. “The style of Roskilde University is so completely different than anything I have done before—it is mostly group work and research, and I have definitely been stretching myself as a student. I love Copenhagen and Roskilde!”

Part of her preparation for stretching herself as a student came from two honors classes she took as freshman: Dr. Troy Denton’s Honors in Action and Dr. Debra Sabia’s Honors American Government. It was in Dr. Denton’s seminar where she learned about Denmark’s claims to happiness. McGaughey is using her travel to understand the lifestyle behind this claim, particularly as it relates to health care and health care policy, an interest she developed in Dr. Sabia’s course.

Though she is studying hard at Roskilde, she is also learning a lot about culture. “My favorite part of the day is at dinner time when there are 20 people in the community kitchen cooking really strange food combinations and discussing the differences in our respective cultures. This weekend I plan on going on a daytrip to Malmö, Sweden with a group of people,” she said. “My favorite things about studying here would be learning how to take trains, meeting new people, having to sniff things in the grocery store to figure out what they are, walking down cobblestone streets next to buildings that are at least 200 years old. ” Happiness, indeed.

**Ryan Pickrell Spends a Year Abroad in China**

For someone who has never travelled outside the country, spending a year abroad may seem rather daunting. However, junior History major Ryan Pickrell was up to the challenge of studying abroad in the People’s Republic of China.

As a freshman at Georgia Southern, Pickrell decided to minor in Chinese language and travel to China for advanced study. Two years later, Pickrell was awarded the nationally competitive Boren scholarship and the Coca-Cola scholarship to fund his year spent at Huazhong Normal University. At Huazhong, Pickrell takes five language-specific courses. “The classes are taught completely in the target language, and that does increase the difficulty,” Pickrell said. “Having Chinese language explained in Chinese is challenging, but my language ability has progressed greatly. After two years of study, I can now communicate without any problem, and I’m extremely excited about that.”

Aside from his coursework, Pickrell has also experienced the wonders of China, including he said, “Walking on the Great Wall at Mutianyu, about two hours outside of Beijing. The wall had snow on it, and there was snow in the mountains, it was amazing.” His time in China has allowed Pickrell to gain a perspective of the world outside of the U.S. “My overall experience has been phenomenal,” Pickrell said. “In just 6 months, I’ve traveled to 9 different cities, have the ability to talk to anyone I meet, and have been a part of a world completely different from my own. It is by far the greatest experience of my life. I’m extremely thankful for the opportunity.”

Pickrell plans to return to the U.S. in August of this year. After graduating from Georgia Southern in May 2011, he wants to attend graduate school, possibly Human Normal University in Changsha, Hunan, China. Katie Brookins and Nicholas Hoad

**First Year Seminar on happiness in a consumer society and Dr. Debra Sabia’s Honors American Government. It was in Dr. Denton’s seminar where she learned about Denmark’s claims to happiness.**
Julia Shull and Amanda Pennington will Teach For America

Georgia Southern University honors students Julia Shull (above) and Amanda Pennington (right) have been selected to participate in the Teach for America program starting next summer. Their participation makes them the second and third University Honors Program students to be selected for this prestigious service award in the last two years.

Shull, a political science major, was selected primarily for her demonstrated leadership qualities and scholarly achievement during her four years as an honors student. Pennington, also a political science major with a minor in economics, has been a 1998 Scholar in the University Honors Program, and cites her participation in a service-learning course focused on literacy as instrumental in her preparation for this opportunity.

Teach for America’s mission is to end inequity in educational opportunity by placing teachers in low-income rural and urban schools. Founded in 1990 and working with 500 teaching corps members, the program now boasts 7,300 teachers and over 16,000 alumni.

Pennington sees working with Teach for America as an opportunity to give back and make a change in students’ lives. “My experiences have allowed me to own my education, and I have seen firsthand the difference I can make. The education gap is prevalent all over our nation, but the most heart-breaking part is that the rest of us have the tools to solve the crisis and many of us do nothing.”

Shull learned about this program while on an internship in Washington, D.C. where she had an opportunity to talk to former Teach for America corps members. “I was extremely taken by the sincere passion and devotion they had towards corps members. “I was extremely taken by the opportunity to talk to former Teach for America as an opportunity to give back and make a change in students’ lives.”

Shull said, “I was extremely taken by the sincere passion and devotion they had towards corps members. “I was extremely taken by the opportunity to talk to former Teach for America as an opportunity to give back and make a change in students’ lives.”

Shull, who graduated last December, completed her honors thesis under the mentorship of Dr. Darin Van Tassell. “He was very supportive, and I cannot tell you how much he has supported throughout the years that has made such an impact on my life,” Shull said.

Pennington credits her mentors at Georgia Southern and advice from University Honors Program Director Steven Engel for giving her an advantage in the interview process. “I have been through so many interviews with the Honors Program, and I felt like I had an advantage in answering their questions,” she said. She is finishing her Honors Thesis project this spring.

Both graduates will work in Atlanta area schools during their time with Teach For America.

Biology Students Busy as Bees in Research Methods Course

Students choose the University Honors Program at Georgia Southern because they want the challenge of rigorous coursework and the opportunity to develop creative work and conduct research while working directly with faculty. This past year, the students in the honors section of Research Methods in Biology had just such an opportunity to participate in hands-on field research that is part of a larger global project to monitor wasp populations.

Dr. Alan Harvey, associate professor of Biology, led the team of eleven students in the project, part of a larger U.S. Geological Survey endeavor that involves other U.S. institutions as well as universities in Canada, Great Britain, and the Czech Republic. Not only did the students learn about research methods in biology, but they had the opportunity to contribute to studies of wasps around the world.

According to Harvey, the class is designed around the core skills all biology students should have in common, namely design and develop experiments, collect, synthesize and analyze data, and present findings in written form, posters, and presentations.

Sophomore Chet Joyner appreciated the opportunity to experience the combination of in-class, in-lab, and in-field work that this class offered. “I enjoy working with first-year student and volunteering in the community,” Spaltea said. “I have a passion for bettering the lives of others around me. Giving back to Georgia Southern and the community is fun and part of who I am.”

Using plastic bottles and three kinds of bait—apple juice, cider vinegar, and beer—the class set up 36 traps around campus and another 36 traps in nearby George L. Smith State Park. Over the course of the semester the traps caught more than 1,400 yellow jackets.

“That was one of the biggest surprises,” said sophomore Tabitha Williford. “The fact that few were caught by vinegar was not a surprise.”

Students teamed up in groups and were responsible for data collected within a single class experiment. Each student completed at least four hours of field work during the semester which involved setting up traps, straining traps, replacing bait, and taking down the traps at the experiment’s end. By placing the traps around campus and at the state park, students could compare how the different baits worked in different habitats, and in both urban and non-urban environments.

Students had to confront the unexpected out in the field. As Tabitha Williford said, “The appearance of mold in some of the traps would definitely affect the results. But I was able to see the impact of pollution on the environment.”

The environment also required adjustments from the students as well, “Out in the field, modifications are needed,” said Chet Joyner. “You have to think, let’s tweak it a bit to solve issues.” According to Joyner, the experience will give the students in the class an advantage because they have been exposed to how things do not always go as planned in an experiment.

For Professor Harvey, that was one high points of the class. It was great to see “when they had those mini-epiphanies—when they had those got it moments—in the experiment, or when they could start anticipating what they would find.”

While students provided individual analysis for in-class projects, they also presented their group’s research, methods, and findings in a poster presentation at last fall’s Biology Symposium. “That was a little intimidating,” said sophomore Jessica Cain. “But now I feel more comfortable with the process of presentation. Plus, I’m pursuing a research opportunity in the summer, and I am confident that I have the skills and the background—a good foundation—to take it on.”

Chet Joyner agrees, “The class prepared me to know what to expect and how to work my own way in my own projects.” But it also helped him learn how to work on collaborative projects as well. “Learning how to communicate with everyone in the class and coming to consensus on approaches are good lessons,” he said. “Plus, you need that coordination going out into the field. This experience was worth it for that.”

The Honors Research Methods in Biology is a new course designed specifically for the Departmental Honors Sequence in Biology, coordinated by Dr. Bill Irey. Students in the class were introduced to methods that they could take into any field in biology and a thinking process that would be useful across the sciences. “This class went extremely well and was successful,” Dr. Harvey said, “because of what the students put into it. They now have experience struggling through the issues that everyone deals with in a project.”

Jessica Spaleta
Wins National Phi Eta Sigma Scholarship

Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society recently awarded junior honors student Jessica Spaleta a $6,000 scholarship for her hard work in both the classroom and the community at Georgia Southern.

Spaleta, an Exercise Science major from Charlotte, North Carolina, maintains a 4.0 GPA and has served as the student liaison between student volunteers from Georgia Southern and Keep Bulloch Beautiful.

Phi Eta Sigma is a national honor society for college freshmen with a full GPA of 3.6 or higher. Spaleta has continued to work with first-year students as a peer leader and peer instructor in First-Year Experience courses, and she will also participate in the upcoming “Conversations with Professors” program for freshmen this August.

“I enjoy working with first-year student and volunteering in the community,” Spaleta said. “I have a passion for bettering the lives of others around me. Giving back to Georgia Southern and the community is fun and part of who I am.”
virtual project on leadership training. Oxfam also offered a number of different student sessions focused on the three main initiatives of Climate Change, Vulnerable Communities, and Extractive Industries.

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) is a global standard that promotes transparency in the extractive sector—oil, gas, and mining industries. The goal is to ensure that the revenues generated by these industries are accurately recorded and reported. The EITI promotes good governance, accountability, and transparency in the extractive sector.

The Vulnerable Communities Initiative focuses on communities that are most affected by climate change, such as those living in areas prone to natural disasters or those with limited access to basic services. The initiative aims to empower these communities to advocate for their rights and interests and to ensure that they are not further marginalized by climate change.

The Extractive Industries Initiative works to ensure that these industries are managed in a way that is sustainable and equitable. This includes promoting good governance, transparency, and accountability in the extractive sector. By doing so, the Initiative aims to contribute to the development of more inclusive and sustainable societies.

Keyyline Burgess “Avoiding Lawsuits in Academe: The Customer Service Solution”

Keyyline Burgess has been thinking about the role of the college student as a customer and recently had the opportunity to present a paper on that very topic at the 2010 meeting of the Southern Academy of Legal Studies in Business in San Antonio, TX. For the paper, entitled “Avoiding Lawsuits in Academe: The Customer Service Solution,” honors finance major Burgess collaborated with Dr. LaVon Wilson of the College of Business Administration. Dr. Wilson chairs the COBA Educational Outcomes Assessment Committee, on which Burgess serves as an assistant. Burgess and Dr. Wilson’s research is a study of the effects of customer service on universities. A conversation about state policies sparked the idea for the paper. “We started talking about the initiative that Sonny Purdue released, basically asking all state agencies to focus on customer service,” said Burgess.

Working closely with Dr. Wilson has been one of the most fulfilling aspects of the research process according to Burgess. She appreciated the chance to examine the subject from the viewpoints of both a student and a professor. “I brought the student perspective to it, and Sonny Purdue has said that the students are the most important customers. Students don’t really think of themselves as customers...” she noted. “The idea really did catch me off guard, and working with a faculty member has given me a perspective of how this will work from the faculty/staff side.”

Burgess was particularly interested in the effect the customer service perspective might have on student expectations. “If you decide that you’re supposed to be being served by your university, are you going to think ‘Well, I don’t have to work as hard’ or ‘I don’t have to take the initiative?’” she wonders.

In addition to presenting her findings to a group of professionals, Burgess had the opportunity to participate in a focus group that was reviewing a new supplemental study aid. “It tracks the effort of students,” she explains. “It lets professors know when they were working and how much time they spent on the assignment.” Dr. Wilson said that Burgess’s contributions to the focus group session were “very constructive and insightful.” As a student, Burgess brought a different perspective to the table. “Working closely with Dr. Wilson has been a unique experience for me and also for the company,” she said.

Burgess’s presentation in San Antonio was a success. “She did an excellent job and received rave reviews from those in attendance. I was extremely impressed by her presentation,” said Dr. Wilson. “She represented Georgia Southern, the College of Business Administration, and her department very well.” Dr. Wilson and Burgess plan to continue researching and working to get the paper published. Cassie Basky
On the Editor

By Jack Preston Lavender

A man of hunched back and purposeful stride
Stalks coolly my thoughts at night
The High Controller of cerebral tide
In my peripheral site
Abnormally tall, he’s normally dark
His gaze preys on words unsaid
Ripping and spilling and killing for lark
His dinner lives in my head
Expert of arson, the clown loves to torch
Children and clouds and candy
That man kills sweet words with horrible scorch
Leaves just the sad or randy
Oh, I could kill him; I have not a doubt
With dull verse coats poisoned wine
But that lust would burn worlds on his way out
And so his absence is mine

Cumulonimbus

By Christina Belge

Humid
Damp
Dank with precipitation
As my pores sponge moisture
I become clogged and heavy
Like a soaked cork I seep
Into my surroundings and into myself
Bogged Down with weight as I suffocate
Aye, a beam
It is warm again
And as hairs fall pleasure sets in
Dank
As my pores sponge moisture
I become clogged and heavy
Like a soaked cork I seep
Into my surroundings and into myself
Bogged Down with weight as I suffocate
Aye, a beam
It is warm again
And as hairs fall pleasure sets in

As genocide began in Darfur, Sudan, many students around the United States decided to stand against it. Thus was born STAND, Students Taking Action Now Darfur. This organization has chapters in multiple universities and seeks to make Americans aware of the situation in Darfur while also advocating for politicians to take action. David Robeck, senior International Studies and Spanish major, acts as Georgia Southern’s Public Relations Officer for the local chapter of STAND.

Robeck explained that the scope of the organization now covers more countries. “STAND has expanded from being an organization that dealt with just Darfur to one that addresses the conflicts in Sudan, Burma, and the Congo.” STAND develops various plans and actions to try to raise awareness about these conflicts.

Robeck said that the local GSU organization screens documentaries about these wars to campus and community audiences and participates in other events addressing conflict and genocide. Last year, for example, Robeck and other STAND members attended a convention in Washington, D.C. called HodgePodge. At this conference the STAND members had three goals. The first was to raise awareness about the conflicts, which they achieved this through a YouTube campaign. Second, they held a convention in D.C. to bring the genocide to the attention of American politicians, and it was there they met other speakers from around the world who spoke of the conflicts in Sudan, Burma, and the Congo. Third, after the convention STAND conducted a signatures campaign. Around 50,000 people signed the petition for the government to help end the conflicts, and STAND considered the event a major success.

Since then, Robeck has helped new chapters of STAND “get organized” in the Southeast while also working to continue raising awareness on the GSU campus. Currently, he said, STAND at Georgia Southern is planning a 5k run to fundraise for their partner organizations.

For David himself, he said that “many alumni stay in touch with STAND and I hope to be one of those alumni.” If David goes to a graduate school with a STAND chapter, he hopes to join them and continue his participation in the organization. The best part of the STAND experience for David, “was meeting Romero Dallaire (commander of the UN peacekeeping forces in Rwanda during the genocide there). He was inspiring and a really nice guy. Also, the conferences were cool, because meeting like-minded people is always fun.”

David Robeck Fights Genocide with STAND

Synergy and Learning Meet: Dr. Thomas Case on Honors

Dr. Thomas Case, the current department chair for Information Systems, has taught at Georgia Southern University for the past twenty-seven years, and he has been a valuable mentor and instructor for honors students for more than two decades. His teaching philosophy for honors courses depends on three essential components of the classroom experience coming together:

When reading assignments, engaged students and an experienced instructor come together, “the result is almost unforgettable for the professors and the students,” he said. “The synergies are almost impossible to describe” when students and professors start to share their ideas.

Dr. Case’s experience with honors students began when the Bell Honors Program asked him to teach an orientation seminar for incoming freshmen. Together, he and his students studied Henry David Thoreau’s Walden. Dr. Case led his students in an economics course that integrated elements of subjects the students were more familiar with: history and literature.

“T. Their verbal jousting still amuses Dr. Case, who often felt like a referee. “It wouldn’t matter who said what, the other was going to ‘take an opposing side’” Dr. Case feels that these intense intellectual discussions are of great benefit to honors students, and the originality of his students continues to surprise him. Going into these discussions, which Dr. Case feels is instrumental to honors students learning, the individuality of his students still surprises him. “No matter how predictable you think [your students] are, they put things together in ways you don’t anticipate.”

For Dr. Case, this is what the University Honors Program does for its students. Honors classes create an atmosphere for faculty and students alike to come together and learn from each other in a positively charged atmosphere of debate and mutual respect. The synergy that emerges in this situation makes honors classes unique.

“The program needs to get bigger so more students have those experiences and faculty get to experience the honors students,” said Dr. Case. “I will always be a big advocate for the Honors Program. I would love to see a critical mass of honors students in the university.”

“The Eidson House serves as a first step. No matter how big or small the space, it’ll never really hold how big the college should be or its importance to the university.”

Katie Brooks
THE 2009 HONORS HOMECOMING CELEBRATION

November 13 at the Eidson House

Save the Date

Homecoming 2010
Friday, November 5, 2010
Alumni updates

Bryan Kight
(UHP, Finance and Quantitative Analysis, 2002)
and Christin (Patty) Kight (2002) announce the birth of their first child, AnnaLeise Renee. Bryan is currently a financial analyst for AT&T in Atlanta.

Shahnjayla K. Connors
(UHP, Biology, 2003)
was published in the February 2009 issue of *Oncogene*. She earned her Ph.D. in Medical Sciences at the University of Florida. Her research focuses on the biological and social factors that contribute to breast cancer disparities in the U.S. and around the world.

We welcome news and updates regarding both Bell Honors Program and University Honors Program graduates. Send us your information and photos to: sengel@georgiasouthern.edu

Honors Survey
In December 2009, honors alumni were invited to participate in a survey of both Bell Honors and University Honors alumni. Seventy-three people responded to this survey—nearly 20% of those for whom we have e-mail addresses. Overall, the survey yielded very positive results from both BHP and BHP alumni.

- **94%** Answered yes when asked if they had to do it all over again, would they enroll as an honors student at Georgia Southern University.
- **72%** Are enrolled or have completed a graduate or professional degree.
- **87%** Rate their education as an honors student at Georgia Southern as strong or very strong.
- **61%** Offered to participate in recruitment of new students, mentorship of current students, planning of honors alumni events, or assistance with honors fundraising. Committees are forming now to work on these issues. To volunteer, contact Dr. Steven Engel at sengel@georgiasouthern.edu

We periodically will send out a survey to find out what honors graduates are doing, but we would like to hear from you at any time.

Bell Memorial Oak Tree Collapses After Storm

On February 1, 1997, the large oak tree next to the Williams Center was dedicated to the memory of Orell Bernard "Red" Bell. Arguably the oldest and largest tree on the campus it was a fitting memorial to the long-standing friend and benefactor of the Bell Honors Program. Nearly thirteen years after this dedication, the oak fell in a large windstorm on January 24, 2010.

Photo Courtesy of Katherine Kennedy
Georgia Southern Student Media

The data provided on these pages provides an overview of the current state and recent growth of the University Honors Program.
2009-2010 by the numbers

Number of Honors Students

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall 2005</th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>406</td>
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Honors 2009-2010 Data

- Honors students (49% men, 61% women)
- Georgia residents (88%)
- States represented (94%)
- Freshman retention rate (85)
- Faculty teaching honors or mentoring honors students (144)
- Hours of service and leadership (4750)

Honors Students On Dean’s List

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<tr>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Honors Freshman Retention Rates

- Fall 2005 Cohort: 90%
- Fall 2006 Cohort: 90%
- Fall 2007 Cohort: 90%
- Fall 2008 Cohort: 94%

Honors Courses Offered

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

Honors Students By Academic College

- Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS): 149
- Science and Technology (COST): 136
- Health and Human Sciences (CHHS): 46
- Business Administration (COBA): 42
- Education (COE): 14
- Information Technology (CIT): 10
- International Studies: 20
- Undeclared: 8

2010 Incoming Freshman Class Projections

- 153 New freshmen
- 144 Georgia Residents (94%)
- 6 States represented
- 1268 Average SAT
- 28 Average ACT
- 3.8 Average GPA (unweighted)

Program Applicants

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>709</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Undergraduate Research is one of the hallmarks of the University Honors Program. Every honors student must complete a substantial research or creative project prior to graduation. Many of these projects require considerable costs in supplies, travel and time. The Honors Undergraduate Research Fund helps defray the costs for the growing number of honors students.

There are 650 Honors Alumni. If each were to make a one hundred dollar donation, we would raise $65,000.

With $65,000 we could:

- Purchase 3,250 pieces of glassware for use in scientific experiments
- Purchase 2,800 copies of Plato’s Republic
- Purchase 135,000 pounds of clay for ceramics students
- Purchase 43 tickets to Paris for students to examine the archives at the Bibliothèque Nationale
- Purchase 2,000 gallons of paint for art students
- Purchase 175 tickets to San Francisco for students to present at the American Chemical Society
- Provide overload salary funds for faculty in eleven College or Departmental Honors sequences

Donations are tax deductible. Their value is immeasurable.

To make a contribution, contact Dr. Steven Engel at sengel@georgiasouthern.edu