Honors @ Georgia Southern

Spring 2016

University Honors Program Students and Staff

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HONORS @ GEORGIA SOUTHERN

SPRING 2016

HONORS ALUMNAE PUBLISHED
FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dr. Steven Engel
Director, University Honors Program

I am very excited that we are able to share the stories of Cassie and Kate Beasley in this issue. As I complete my eleventh year as Honors Program Director, I reflect with pride upon the many outstanding students we have been able to support and challenge in their studies. Cassie was among the very first students I recruited and offered a 1906 Scholarship and Kate followed in the next year. I was lucky enough to teach both of them in honors seminars. I was struck at first at how similar they were in class—both were generally reserved but when they spoke it was incredibly insightful. Still, despite their similarities, they have very different personalities. Kate has a dry sense of humor that will make you chuckle whereas Cassie tells stories that can not help but lead you to join her in a full-throated laugh. I am thrilled (but not surprised) to see the success they are having in their young careers.

This year, enrollment in the University Honors Program reached over 500 students. While bigger does not equal better, I am delighted that we are able to offer more students these intellectually challenging opportunities. This year’s issue of Honors @ Georgia Southern includes a sampling of the many success stories of our honors students and our honors alumni. Please feel free to let me know if you wish to share your story in next year’s issue or in one of our monthly newsletters.

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Sincerely yours,

Steve Engel

MISSION STATEMENT

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

Critical Sense of Inquiry

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

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.

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.

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.

CONNECT WITH THE UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM YEAR ROUND

To learn more about the University Honors Program, visit our website: GEORGIA SOUTHERN.EDU/HONORS

“Like” the University Honors Program on Facebook to keep up with news and events about the Honors Program throughout the year: WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GASOUHONORS/

Visit the Honors playlist on the Georgia Southern University YouTube channel to see professional videos of honors in action: WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/GEORGIA SOUTHERNUNIVERSITY

And subscribe to our monthly newsletter at: HTTP://EEPURL.COM/7PDSV

HONORS @ GEORGIA SOUTHERN

Elise Rustine
Graphic Design - 2018
Design, Photography

Alayna Rentz
English, Writing & Linguistics - 2017
Writer and Editor

Xavier Robertson
Management, Film Production - 2018
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Maria Alejandra Amiel
International Studies, French - 2017
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Honors @ Georgia Southern staff with the National Collegiate Honors Council competition second place award for the 2015 magazine, the third award the magazine has won in five years.
SISTERS, HONORS ALUMNAE PUBLISH FIRST BOOKS

Many esteemed writers begin their careers in the college classroom. F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, in lieu of studying for his classes at Princeton University. David Foster Wallace’s senior thesis culminated in his first published work, *The Broom of the System*. Donna Tartt spent her college years writing *The Secret History*, which launched her into literary stardom only a few years after graduation. Following in this tradition are Honors Program alumnae Kate and Cassie Beasley, who discovered their passions for novel-writing during their undergraduate years at Georgia Southern. As 1906 Scholars in the University Honors Program, they took a nontraditional approach to their Honors theses by embarking on writing their first novels.

“I grew a lot as a writer because of the Honors Program,” said Cassie. “The capstone requirement took me out of my comfort zone, which was writing short stories and poetry. It gave me the push I needed to tackle one of my first novel-length projects. I worked with my advanced fiction professor, Laura Valeri, on a Young Adult (YA) novel, and just having that structure in place that forced me to commit to a longer, more difficult piece was very helpful.”

Kate worked on a middle grade novel under the guidance of Professor Sonya Huber. “It was the first time I’d ever worked on a novel-length project,” she said, “and that experience helped me realize that this was the kind of writing I wanted to do.”

Six years later, the Beasley sisters have not stopped writing. Although their honors theses did not culminate in their first published books, they gave Cassie and Kate the space to explore their talents and prepare themselves for their future careers as full-time novelists.

Cassie, in fact, recently made the *New York Times* Bestsellers List. From December 20th, 2015 to January 3rd, her first novel, a middle grade fantasy book titled *Circus Mirandus*, held the tenth spot on the middle grade bestselling list, and it took the ninth spot the following week. *Circus Mirandus* has collected other accolades, as well it was a *New York Times* Book Review Notable Children’s Book of 2015 and one of Amazon’s Best Children’s Books of the Year.
"I Grew A LOT AS A WRITER Because of the Honors Program.

Gertie’s Leap to Greatness

Gertie Reece Foy sets out to be the Best Fifth Grader in the Universe, a mission that involves unseating current national champion Lightbender who owes his career to his Aunt Gertrudis Tuttle. While he hopes to make it to Circus Mirandus, he knows that’s actually where he wrote and essentially finished his book.

"I didn’t declare a major until they made me," Cassie admitted, "but I took an intro to creative writing class because I loved to read and knew I liked to write, but I didn’t know it was something I wanted to major in." Gertie also fell in love with the writing classes, especially the workshops. In this unique type of class, a writer turns in his or her work to be read by every member of the class, so students, creators—designers—and, Kate revealed, even calligraphers who do the lettering.

Topics covered in Georgia Southern’s comprehensive writing program span from literary fiction to writing the undead. Among this eclectic array of classes, Kate and Cassie found themselves gravitating mostly toward children’s literature courses, especially Kate’s Gertie.

You end up writing a wide variety of things—poetry, essays, nonfiction, stories—and towards the end of my career at GSU I really just knew the next book I wanted to write was a children’s story. I looked for grad school programs that emphasized this, and VCCA (Vermont College of Fine Arts) had one of the best programs in the country, and that’s where I ended up going. And Cassie was going too, so that was fun.

Cassie was more ambitious. While much of her writing was geared toward younger readers, she still found herself writing for adults.

"It wasn’t a hundred percent sure I wanted to write for middle grade and publishing, mainly because of the workshops," Kate said. "A lot of writing programs don’t have that, or they’re just a minor or part of the school and publishing, mainly because of the workshops," Kate said. "A lot of writing programs don’t have that, or they’re just a minor or part of the school and publishing, mainly because of the workshops."

"I love to go on school visits," said Cassie. "That’s a really big part of my job now. I go visit schools and talk to classes about the book and about reading and writing. The kids are all so excited about books, and they’re really eager to tell you who their favorite author is, so that’s fun."

While at a reading in North Carolina, she and Kate caught up with Bob Frigo, the former Assistant Director of the Honors Program.

"We were at a reading in North Carolina, and Kate and Cassie were both really excited to see Bob Frigo, who had been an assistant director of the Honors Program at Georgia Southern, where they both attended college.

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After experiencing both their undergraduate and graduate programs, Cassie and Kate were excited about the opportunity to travel across the country to visit their readers. After the publication of Circus Mirandus, Cassie had the opportunity to bring Circus Mirandus to life in bookstores and classrooms through readings and Q&A sessions.

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With their record of success, we doubt we’ll need to.

SOMETHERE AROUND ONE in the morning toward the end of her senior year, Cassie was notified of her first publication—one of her poems had been accepted to a literary journal, an accomplishment that necessitated waking up Kate, who was already sleeping.

"It was in her room at 3 a.m. on a Thursday night, and she was like, ‘what’s wrong, what’s wrong?’" Cassie remembers. "And I was like, ‘I’m being published!’"

"It was in her room at 3 a.m. on a Thursday night, and she was like, ‘what’s wrong, what’s wrong?’" Cassie remembers. "And I was like, ‘I’m being published!’"

In spite of the late hour, Kate could not help but be happy for her sister, after all, for the Beacons were part of the joy of being novelists comes from getting to work together every day.

"It’s the best part," Kate said. "We went to undergraduate together, and we were in all these workshops together, and we went to grad school together, so we kind of have the same sort of vocabulary when we talk about writing. And we’re sisters, so we’re not afraid to be really honest."

Cassie agreed, adding, "And I totally respect her opinion. Everything she comments on in my writing I either try to change or at least address in some way, and she does the same thing." From providing instant feedback on new drafts to celebrating successes in the middle of the night, writing is never a truly solitary undertaking for Cassie or Kate, but an experience they feel incredibly lucky to share. In fact, after their interviews, they planned to head back to Clinton and get straight back to work. "As soon as we get home, I’m going to read the first draft of Cassie’s new novel and edit it and make notes," Kate said. "I’m going to combine her notes with my editor’s notes and we’re going to write a good second draft." Here, Cassie paused. "Hopefully. Keep your fingers crossed for me.

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BOTH DEBUT NOVELS follow headlining fifth graders with lofty aspirations. Micah Tottie escapes from his mean Aunt Gertrudis to the fantastical Circus Mirandus, where he hopes to find a mysterious illusion called the Lightbender who owes his career to his Aunt Gertrudis. Cassie's new novel and edit it and make notes," Kate said. "I’m going to combine her notes with my editor’s notes and we’re going to write a good second draft." Here, Cassie paused. "Hopefully. Keep your fingers crossed for me.

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What began as a regular luncheon turned into a career-defining moment for Zack Davidson, a senior computer science major. Last year, Davidson attended a lunch event hosted by the College of Engineering and Information Technology (C#IT), where he met and exchanged contact information with Jim Scholzfeld, former CTO of Coca-Cola and current CIO of Nike, Inc. This meeting ultimately led to a Coca-Cola summer internship for Davidson, a coveted position not usually awarded to college students. Davidson spent three months at Coca-Cola’s Technology Plaza in Atlanta as a data analytics platform developer/administrator, where he worked primarily with a program called Splunk. His job was to develop and deploy an enhanced monitoring and reporting solution for the IT operations activity of job scheduling, such as running the payroll system. Davidson’s task not only required him to build search scripts and dashboards for monitoring and reporting but also demanded him to update an outdated system, but he also had to learn how to use Splunk, a program with which he had little experience. “I was at Coca-Cola for three months,” said Davidson, “and in that time, I went from knowing nothing about Splunk to teaching other interns and employees how to use it. People were actually coming to my meetings just to hear me talk about it.”

After learning how to navigate Splunk, Davidson was able to create and deploy an enterprise production ready application in only four weeks. Not only that, but he also gained valuable insight into working in the IT field. “I completed this internship because I wanted to learn as much as possible,” said Davidson. “I don’t want to just be a guy with a degree. I like to go to new environments and blow people away.”

After graduation, he plans to do just that as he moves to Austin, Texas to work as a Software Developer for General Motors.

The typical study abroad program usually allows students to experience another culture through a classroom environment, but Jenny Shaffer’s second summer in Germany found her outside the traditional college experience, conducting cutting-edge research in her field alongside professionals instead of sitting in a classroom. As one of 312 recipients of the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) Research Internship in Science and Engineering, Shaffer (German/mechanical engineering ‘17) spent three months at Ruhr-Universität in Bochum, one of Germany’s industrial hubs. Her internship focused on material science, a subfield of mechanical engineering built on researching new materials and improving materials already in use. She assisted a doctoral candidate, Maximillian Walter, with his thesis research on the development of new high speed steels to compete with the industry standard. Shaffer said, “I’m really excited to get to update an outdated system, but he also had to learn how to use Splunk, a program with which he had little experience.

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This summer she will return to Germany for a third time for another exciting research opportunity. Shaffer received another internship through the DAAD RISE Professional Program, this time with Bosch, a multinational engineering and electronics company in Stuttgart, Germany. Her position will require her to investigate the effects of environmental load and design geometry on localized corrosion behavior of aluminum and aluminum-alloy automotive parts.

Shaffer said, “I’m really excited to get to work with such a well-known company in the automotive field.”
PHOTO BY EMILY BEE

Focused on the Cassy Pelton at Conferences

going all the way to the World Indoor Archery school archery team. The rest is history.”

Since then, Pelton has progressed rapidly, especially while on the pre-med track, and

Maintaining a strong academic record, Between classes and on the weekends, Rentz

in the United States before going to the Olympics.”

Pelton, "I was under the highest pressure I’ve ever felt, but that just made my

By competing on the international level against archers from all across the globe,

Pelton (biology/pre-med ’18) first fell in love with archery when she was a

pre-med students were given the opportunity to perform advanced research. Pelton

Riley Thes’s chemistry (’16) is engaged in research that reaches for the stars, and this

Cassy Pelton knows that she needs to keep her eye on the target whether she is working on

August, Pelton travelled to Lookout Mountain, Georgia, where he

In spite of the script’s ostensible simplicity, filming called for an

vox.com’s "best of the web" feature.

It is difficult to spot

While giving the talk, she said, “This molecule had the highest bond

itself for another first—her first research conference.

of zebra fish and observing how the fish

Theis’ presentation, entitled, “Spectroscopic, Structural, and Energetic Analysis of Noble

They are dealing with altering genes in the brains

Cassy Pelton

Focusing on the

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Buffering... 

Collin Daly’s (electrical engineering ’16) honors thesis deals with a problem we have all encountered—video buffering on the Internet. Many Netflix binges have been interrupted due to that pesky rotating circle, signaling a discrepancy between the bandwidth needed to play the video and the bandwidth that is actually available, but Daly’s research strives to find a solution. His thesis, entitled “Predicting Video Traffic Using Neural Networks,” focuses on using artificial neural networks to replicate how the brain works. In other words, we’re using many slower, more accurate calculations at the same time rather than a series of faster, less efficient, and more error-prone calculations so we can figure out how much bandwidth is required to play high-definition videos without waiting for them to buffer.”

This experiment involved comparing two different styles of neural networks, a recurrent system using error correction and one that did not. Of the two, the former proved to be a much better system and will be used as a basis for further research. In the meantime, Daly took his findings to both the Georgia Collegiate Honors Council conference at Augusta University and the American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) conference at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. At both meetings, Daly had the distinction of being the only undergraduate representing Georgia Southern.

“Attending both conferences gave me a lot of perspective,” said Daly. “The engineering conference was obviously much more tailored to my project, so there was much more general interest and many technical questions. It was interesting to see the other side at the general honors conference, though, because you get feedback from students coming from different disciplines, bringing fresh perspectives to your project.”

Daly’s hard work won him second place in the undergraduate research division of the ASEE conference, an award well-deserved.

“Conferences like these are really encouraging,” he said. “They give you the opportunity to realize that there is an outlet for research, and that we can contribute to conversations in our fields in meaningful ways.”

Marketing and logistics and intermodal transportation double major Taylor Yancey (’17) was recently awarded the National Retail Federation’s (NRF) Rising Star Scholarship, winning an all-expense paid trip to New York City, where she attended the NRF’s Gala, an exclusive party kicking off the BIG Show event for its corporate members.

“It was pretty intimidating being in a room full of important people; everyone in that room was a CEO. I even got to meet famous designer Tory Burch!”

Yancey first heard about the scholarship from Dr. Trey Denton, Honors Coordinator for the College of Business, who recommended her for the award.

Dr. Denton directed her to Dr. Kathleen Gruben, who helped her complete her application, which consisted of an essay about how Yancey saw herself going into retail in the future. The plans she outlined in that essay have quickly become a reality.

“By joining this ongoing project, Anderson has the opportunity to work with both biology and matters concerning public health. Their research focuses on understanding the role endosymbionts have in lice. This can help identify new treatments for lice, which are becoming increasingly difficult to eradicate, primarily through detecting an endosymbiont called Wolbachia. Endosymbionts are bacteria that live inside other cells and provide benefits to their hosts, such as synthesizing nutrients to provide the cell with nourishment, or creating an antibiotic to help them fight difficult cases of lice.

"Already-existing studies suggest Wolbachia should be present in lice," said Anderson. "Our goal is to identify it and understand the metabolic role it provides to lice. Just knowing it’s there can provide useful insight into the treatment and evolution of lice in general." Anderson’s role in this project began this January and he is excited to see where it goes in the future.

He said, “It’s an honor to get to work with Dr. Eremeeva. She’s got so much knowledge on microbiology—it’s amazing really. She has been very supportive, and I am lucky to have this opportunity. I can’t wait for people to see our work at the symposium next spring.”

Yancey attended a career fair while on her trip to New York and had the opportunity to speak with Ryan Foster, the Senior Director of Disdeployment at Walmart. He spoke in front of a large group of students, but Yancey knew she was only one of two students in attendance who had a focus on logistics and made a point to introduce herself directly. That initiative opened up a new opportunity for her.

“He was very excited and we talked for a minute before he said that he knew he needed to interview me. We set up a time, went through the interview, and he hired me after one interview,” said Yancey. “I traveled to Bentonville, AK this Spring Break to tour their facility and finish up some paperwork. I will be starting June of 2017. I’m very excited for this opportunity.”

Yancey feels extremely grateful to already have a job lined up after graduation. “I’m nervous but excited,” she said of this opportunity. “I can’t wait to see what this new adventure will bring!”
Club's growth allowed the club to win 8th in national rankings. "We didn't expect such a massive success, it was so cool to see everyone so excited, lights in their eyes, as we prepared for competition in Iowa," Shanken said. 

Even for a team that consistently excels, winning is not everything. One of the club's primary facets is helping its members develop leadership and communication skills. Shanken, the club's secretary, spoke about how joining Mock Mediation Club helped her see for the first time, "It all started with Ben," Flippo said. "He's one of the foremost talented writers in our department, but all his fiction is so weird that it doesn't quite fit the traditional aesthetic of most literary journals, so we thought, why not fill that space by creating our own journal?"

After coming up with a clear focus for the magazine, the students were eager to begin working on it right away. "I was so excited for our first issue," Flippo said. "It was just a few days before my birthday, so it was like an early birthday present for me." Pride said, "This just proves to me that if you want to do something, all you have to do is commit yourself to it and go for it."

With a successful April issue and several pieces already lined up for the June edition, the editors are optimistic for the future of Moonglasses. "I can see us really expanding in the future. I'd like for us to start accepting submissions, even拜 early next year," said Flippo. "I just want Moonglasses to bring as much joy to our readers as it brings to us."

Visit www.moonglassesmag.com/submission-guidelines for information on submitting work to Moonglasses Magazine.
SEARCHING FOR BLOOD SUBSTITUTES

Sarah Roessler (chemistry ‘16) is on the leading edge of the search for blood substitutes administered in treating traumatic injuries. Her research on click reactions in certain polymers used in these substitutes is the focus of her thesis and a recent presentation at the American Chemical Society (ACS) in San Diego. Roessler’s poster presentation in the Chemical Education Division (CHED) provided an overview of her research project, titled “Incorporation of TEMPO and PEG functionalities into ROMP polymers via click reaction.”

This research focused on the development of ROMP (Ring Opening Metathesis Polymerization) polymers containing the functional groups 2,2,6,6-tetramethylpiperdin-1-oxyl (TEMPO) and polyethylene glycol (PEG). Both of these functional groups are known to have a detoxifying effect on cell-free hemoglobin and effect vasodilation in the bloodstream.

“This was interesting to me because, when bonded to cell-free hemoglobin, the polymers may be useful for the treatment of severe traumatic brain injuries as they convert the reactive oxygen species (ROS), in particular the superoxide anion, released by the cell-free hemoglobin into less harmful species,” said Roessler.

“Such modified hemoglobin solutions could be used as a blood substitute with a better shelf life than donor blood, also while possessing a high compatibility with any recipient.”

Her mentor, Dr. Hans-Joerg Schanz, commended Roessler’s initiative on the project. “Sarah was an extremely interested and motivated researcher student who personally invested a lot of time and energy into the understanding of the click reaction with the ROMP monomers,” he said. “Not only did she optimize the reaction conditions for the click, but she also managed to synthesize the first polymers in this project. She was taking us a real step forward in advancing the area of cell-free hemoglobin-based oxygen carriers.”

Presenting at the conference gave Roessler the opportunity to network with peers and experts in chemistry and related disciplines as well as broader her appreciation for scientific research.

INQUIRY IN IRELAND

This May, Dr. Peden and two returning students from last year’s trip—Leah Anderson (recreation ‘18) and Garrett Metropol (mechanical engineering ‘18)—will lead a group on a weeklong trip to Cumberland Island.

Students volunteered at Daniel Boone National Forest doing cleanup and maintenance. The National Park Service strives to promote the management of natural resources, so Yun felt this was a good match for the University Honors Program. “The honors program focuses on civic responsibility and we wanted to reproduce that in the wilderness, too,” Yun said. On the way back from Kentucky, the group stopped in Boone, North Carolina, and took inflatable kayaks down Wilson Creek.

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PROJECT PURA VIDA!

The Program returned to Costa Rica this past March for the second year of Project Pura Vida! Six students joined Dra. Leticia McGrath in volunteering at the Costa Rican Humanitarian Foundation (CRHF) in La Carpio. Students met with CRHF founder Gail Nystrom and learned about the work that organization does in assisting the Nicaraguan refugee community.

Bailey Kirk, who went on the trip last year and this year returned in a leadership role said, “I don’t know what was the most amazing part of the Pura Vida trip, meeting new people, being in the gorgeous environment, or interacting with the people of La Carpio.”

Students worked on various physical improvements in the community, including painting a house for one of the older residents. “This year, we were given the opportunity to help with the elderly of La Carpio,” Kirk said. “We heard their personal stories of arriving to Costa Rica from Nicaragua and how their lives have changed drastically. There is so much more to be done within La Carpio, but with the Costa Rican Humanitarian Foundation they are well on their way to becoming a great community.”

CAMP BLUE SKIES

At Camp Twin Lakes

The Honors Alternative Break Trip to work with Camp Blue Skies at Camp Twin Lakes had another successful spring break. Now in its sixth year, the longest running Honors trip took 20 students to work at camp as cabin counselors and activity leaders for adults with developmental disabilities.

Dr. Brent Wolfe, who leads the trip with Dr. Jerri Kropp, describes Camp Blue Skies as “a place where those typically ignored and marginalized by society are embraced and accepted. These amazing individuals become the therapists and counselors for all the volunteers and teach us the value of life and what it means to be human.”

Students participated with campers in all sorts of outdoor and recreational activities from arts and crafts to yoga and zip-line. This year, Sarah Holmes returned for her fourth year of work at the camp. Erica Teihaber and Madison Monk (also multiple-year participants), completed honors thesis projects that involved research focused on Camp Blue Skies at Camp Twin Lakes.
In the Eidson House kitchen, a sign tacked to the bulletin board reads “Please keep our kitchen clean! Remember…your mother doesn’t live here!” Under this admonition, an anonymous Honors student scrawled their rebuttal: “Mrs. Rushing is our mother! But she doesn’t live here!” Under this admonition, an anonymous Honors student scrawled their rebuttal: “Mrs. Rushing is our mother! But she doesn’t live here!”

Even if she did not literally live at the Eidson House, administrative assistant Linda Rushing served as a maternal figure for students from both the Bell Honors Program and University Honors Program for the past fourteen years.

“Linda has truly been the constant for the Honors Program since the turn of the century,” said Dr. Abell. “She always knew exactly who to call on when it came to knowing who to call on for anything.”

According to Dr. Joiner, Rushing reciprocates that niceness: “She’s just really warm and outgoing and treats everyone nicely. It’s genuine, not an affectation. For some people, it’s a mask, but not with Linda. She just gets along with everyone.”

Carter echoes this sentiment, “She’s one of the friendliest people I know. She’s always interested in hearing about what’s going on in your life.”

In addition to befriending all the students, Rushing also seemed to be acquainted with everyone at Georgia Southern. “I really learned a lot from Linda, especially when it came to knowing who to call on campus whenever I needed something,” said Dr. Abell. “She always knew exactly who to get in touch with.”

Dr. Joiner agreed with this point, “She literally knows everyone on campus.”

At Georgia Southern, we often talk about the “small-feel” of the campus, said Dr. Engel. “Well, it’s people like Linda who give us that feeling. She cared for the students as individuals—often patiently listening to their concerns and worries. We all miss her very much.”

In regard to Rushing’s relationships with everyone both in the Honors Program and across the University, it is easy to see why she initially had reservations about retiring. “I never really planned to retire, but I think while I’m in good health I should get out and do things I don’t have time to do while I’m working,” said Rushing. Her plans include visiting family and friends, volunteering at a local church camp this summer, and, perhaps most important, spending time with her two grandchildren, Cal and Lucy.

Even though they’re little, we’ve already started talking about college,” said Rushing. “They said they’re coming here so they can live with me.”

While looking forward to spending retirement with her family, Rushing said she’ll miss the family she has within the Honors Program.

“The students I originally started working with are all grown up, and some are married and have children. Seeing what they accomplished after graduation is so awesome. They’re like my children,” said Rushing. “It’s a bitter-sweet goodbye when they leave, and I’m going to feel the same way when I leave.”

It was bitter-sweet goodbye for both the students and faculty in the Honors Program, as well, because for us, Linda was not just an administrative assistant, she’s family—even if she does not actually live at the Eidson House.
One of the Honors Program’s missions is to provide bright and motivated students with an interactive, academically-enriching community, and this year’s inaugural Honors Living Learning Community (LLC) took that experience to the next level.

**HONORS MOVES**

Last August, Honors freshmen settled into their new home away from home in Centennial Place Building 2. Their transition to dorm living was made easier by Honors volunteers, including Community Leaders and upperclassmen residents of the Honors LLC, who helped unload cars and transport students’ belongings to their new dorm rooms.

“The volunteers at move-in day were extremely helpful,” said Lilly Donnell (English & writing and linguistics ’19). “I appreciated having people there to help me get my stuff moved upstairs. It made me feel very welcome here.”

Following move-in day, members of the Honors LLC participated in a day of activities designed to get new students acquainted with one another and the Honors Program. The morning kicked off with Campus as Text, which required students to explore campus to formulate an understanding of how individual locations create one unified campus. Students shared their insightful findings with their peers and gained new perspectives on Georgia Southern University.

“It was a good time to interact with my peers in a fun way we might not be able to in class,” said Connor Rentz (film and production ’19). “It was a great way to get to know my classmates.”

**HONORS COMMON READ**

The day’s events also featured a discussion of the common read for Honors freshmen, The World Beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction by Michael Crawford. The conversation was led by Dr. Steven Engal and Dr. Fred Richter, who discoursed with students on topics inspired by the book, ranging from distraction in the digital age to writer David Foster Wallace to what it means to be an honors student.

The book continued to be a focus in discussions in the Honors FYE classes and among the students in the community. The program is already looking forward to next year’s book.

**HONORS IN THE LLC**

The faculty who teach honors sections of the First-Year Experience course hosted various events in the Cafe and Community Rooms in the LLC. Dr. Chris Caplinger held a primaries debate watching party for his course on Modern Political Debate, and Dr. Jerri Kropp and Dr. Trent Maurer met with their Animal-Assisted Therapy class to watch the film Dogs on the Inside about the use of therapy dogs in prisons.

The faculty who lead the Honors Program’s study abroad and alternative break trips held information sessions in Centennial Place, giving the students an opportunity to learn more about these trips and how to apply to participate. Dr. Leticia McGrath talked about Project Pura Vida! Honors in Costa Rica with the help of students who participated in last year’s trip. Dr. Jerri Kropp and Dr. Brent Wolfe recruited participants for Camp Blue Skies at Camp Twin Lakes. And Dr. Steven Engal and Dr. Howard Kaeley presented on the Honors Inquiry in Ireland study abroad trip.

**HONORS COOKS**

One of the more popular events during the year was Cooking with the Profs. Not quite a cooking show, but not exactly the classroom either, these events brought students and faculty together around food and fun. Faculty could share favorite meals and maybe a little history of the dish, and students helped out with the process and told their own culinary stories. Dr. Francis Desiderio kicked off the series with his recipe for marinara sauce. Dr. Howard Kaeley showed the students how to make pizza. Fried shrimp was on the menu when Dr. Brad Edwards visited. And Dr. Nathan Palmer created a bean dip.
Eisenhart’s initial goal was to work in television production, but he’s content with the unexpected turn his career has taken. For now, he plans to stick with acting, but he’s open to whatever comes his way.

“Since Georgia’s film industry has grown so much, I may stay here,” said Perez. “But if opportunity knocks, I’m willing to take it.”
KELSY KEANE

After completing her English degree at Georgia Southern a little over a year ago, Honors alumna Kelsey Keane packed her bags for Kosovo, a small country located in Southeastern Europe. Keane settled into Mitrovica, Kosovo in September 2014, where she worked as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant for nine months.

“...I was a cultural ambassador to high school and university students in Kosovo,” said Keane.

“While abroad, my greatest responsibility was to implement Western classroom models with the city’s public high school encouraging engaged learning through student participation, extracurricular activities, and innovative curriculum development.”

Her positive impact on Mitrovica was not limited to the classroom as Keane served as a guest lecturer at local nonprofits and universities concerning American culture and its higher education system. She also participated in teacher training programs, summer camp development, and community service projects throughout the city.

Keane’s recent return to her hometown of Savannah has provided her with the opportunity to fight economic inequity at home. She currently works as a loaned associate for the United Way of the Coastal Empire annual giving campaign, a local organization whose mission is to combat poverty in certain counties of Southeast Georgia.

While Keane is not currently planning to work abroad in the near future, she is preparing for her next big adventure: law school.

“Nine months living in Kosovo provided the context to establish my ideas on communal transitions from negative to positive peace,” said Keane. “My observations also led me to commit fully to the study of law as my research interests expanded to exploring legal codes impact on post-conflict societal progress.”

KATHYNN (BRENHAM) SCONCERYS (UHP, Early Childhood Education, 2012) taught Pre-K at Gabriel’s House, a foster home in Midway, GA for two years, and is currently teaching at Julia P. Bryant Elementary. She was married in November of 2014 and began her Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education in January of this year.

PHILIP STEVENS (UHP, Physics, 2012) is currently a Junior Engineer at Bill Austin and Associates in Indiana.

BENNY RATLIFF (UHP, Music, 2014) is currently a graduate assistant with the Ole Miss Pride of the South band at the University of Mississippi. He is working on his Masters of Music in Music Education, and assists with all aspects of the band program, both marching and concert band. After grad school, he plans to teach high school band for several years before returning to school to earn his PhD in Music Education.

DORA SUAREZ (UHP, Philosophy and Modern Languages, 2014) will join the New School for Social Research in New York City to pursue a doctorate in Philosophy. She has been awarded the Prasad Scholarship.

ARIEL VIPOND (UHP, French, Anthropology, 2014) accepted a position with Canine Companions for Independence in Santa Rosa, CA, as an Instructor Assistant in August of 2014. In May 2015 she was promoted to Apprentice Instructor and is currently training her first string of assistance dogs. The trajectory of Ariel’s post-collegiate career is due in large part to her involvement in Dr. Jerri Krapp’s and Dr. Trent Maurer’s Animal-Assisted Therapy FVE course for three years of her undergraduate career; first, as a student, then later as a Peer Leader and a Service-Learning Facilitator.

TY VON PLINSKY (UHP, Information Technology, 2014) interned twice at NDR since his graduation from Georgia Southern, and is currently a Technical Support Specialist at Discovery Communications.

JAMES DEVLIN (UHP, Writing and Linguistics, 2015) is currently a graduate student at Georgia Southern University studying Student Affairs. He has started an assistantship with the Office of Student Organizations.

KAITLYN HAMLEY (UHP, Biology, 2015) is currently pursuing her Masters of Science in Biological Sciences at Clemson University. Her research is centered on studying projected populations of American pike populations in the Greater Yellowstone Region due to warmer climates.

KORI WILLIAMS (UHP, Biology, 2015) is working a research assistant for the Associate Dean of Nursing Research in the College of Nursing at Augusta University. She is involved in piloting a study that tests the implications of diet changes for individuals affected by diabetes and colorectal cancer. The study includes clinical research, direct interaction with patients, and analysis of samples collected. In addition to this, Kori is undergoing training to become a Phlebotomy Certified Technician.
### Honors by the Numbers 2015-2016

#### Honors 2015-2016 Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honors Students</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(34% Men, 66% Women, 77% White, 23% Non-white)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Residents</td>
<td>443</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hours of Service and Leadership</td>
<td>20,818</td>
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<tr>
<td>93% Freshman Retention Rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>140 Faculty Teach Honors Courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>98 Honors Courses Offered</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### 2016 Incoming Freshman Class Projections

- 134 New Freshmen
- 122 Georgia Residents (91%)
- 1245 Average SAT
- 28.8 Average ACT
- 3.81 Average GPA (Unweighted)

#### Honors Students by Academic College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts and Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science and Mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering &amp; Information Technology</td>
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<td>Business Administration</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Public Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undeclared</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Honors Freshman Retention Rates

- Fall 2005 Cohort: 90%
- Fall 2006 Cohort: 88%
- Fall 2007 Cohort: 94%
- Fall 2008 Cohort: 91%
- Fall 2009 Cohort: 91%
- Fall 2010 Cohort: 92%
- Fall 2011 Cohort: 87%
- Fall 2012 Cohort: 88%
- Fall 2013 Cohort: 93%
- Fall 2014 Cohort: 94%
- Fall 2015 Cohort: 93%

#### Number of Honors Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2006</td>
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<td>Fall 2007</td>
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<td>Fall 2014</td>
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<td>Fall 2015</td>
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</table>

### Invest in Honors

You can invest in the outstanding students of the University Honors Program by visiting our website and clicking ‘Invest in Honors.’