



The Honors Connection

Volume 1, Issue 1

October 2008

Upcoming Events:

- * Any junior signed up for 498 hrs this semester must submit his or her thesis proposal by 9:00 am on Oct. 27th. Make sure to turn in a hard copy to the Honors Office and an electronic copy through the Honors BlackBoard site.
- * Thesis-in-Progress presentations will be held on Oct. 24th, on 2nd floor Alamaance from 3-5pm.
- * Look forward to the Phi Eta Sigma induction, Oct. 27th at 6:30.
- * Preregistration for Winter Term and Spring Semester classes begins Nov. 6th. Remember to schedule an advising session with your academic advisor.
- * Want to see the *Dark Knight*? What better way then to go with your Honors cohorts? We'll be meeting before the "Movie on the Lawn" starts at 9pm, Oct. 25th. Ice cream may be involved. . .

New Head Honchos: An Intimate Chat with Drs. Vandermaas-Peeler and Carignan

Alexa Milan
Class of '10

As you all know, the Honors Program welcomes a new Director and Associate Director this year. In order to become better acquainted with them and their plans for the Honors Program, they allowed me to probe their brains.



Dynamic Duo: Drs. MVP and Carignan have already developed great team collaborations.

Why did you want these positions?

Mike: On a personal level, I was at a point in my career here where moving into administering a program seemed appropriate. I've been here seven years now, and it seemed like a good time to diversify my daily life. We haven't given up teaching but we have reduced our course loads, so it just seemed like a good time for me to shake

things up and do something besides teaching and grading. But the other aspect of it is that this is already a really good program, and I personally was happy to associate myself with something that was good and hopefully contribute to it continuing to be excellent.

MVP: I have been so involved in so many aspects

of the Honors program that becoming the Director seemed a natural "next step" for me. I had been a very active mentor of undergraduate research for years, had served on the Honors Advisory Committee, and taught a first-year seminar in the new Honors curriculum. I admit that I had a few concerns about taking the job

now, as I am involved in several exciting new research projects and am still a very active mentor for research in psychology. However, in other ways the timing of taking this position now seemed very appealing. My experiences in Honors can help me forge a transition

(continued on page 2).

Message from the Director

I am very pleased to introduce this first edition of the newsletter. The idea for this publication was generated in a meeting with several students excited about possible new directions for

the Honors program. I am honestly astonished at how quickly these students moved from the idea to the actual publication. I encourage all of you to read it, to share it with your faculty

mentors and friends, and to GET INVOLVED! We are also open to your suggestions, both for the newsletter and for the program. In closing, I would like to offer a heartfelt and deep gratitude

to Dr. Mary Jo Festle and to Dr. Janet Myers, for all their hard work and excellent leadership of the revised Honors Program. Mike and I are honored to follow in their footsteps.

Collected by:

Elizabeth Leman

Class of '11

Gifted Gab

"Does your body image ever prevent you from attending social events?"

"Wait do they mean like someone says to you 'hey, you're real ug, you can't come to my social event?'"

"Were some of those words from thesaurus.com?"

"We'll see who gets pregnant!"

"He verbed those adjectives."

"I'm a unicorn stuck in a human body."

"That test raped and pillaged me."

"If you're going to make a mess, make a big mess. That's what I always say... Actually, I don't. I hate messes."

Have a funny quote to share? Send them to akennison@elon.edu

Head Honchos: (continued from page 1)

between developing a new program, as Drs. Festle and Myers worked so hard to do, and continuing to improve an already excellent program, as Dr. Carignan and I hope to do.

What plans do you have for the honors program under your direction?

MVP: I think we both realized how much work had been done by the previous directors. They really had to take the idea for a whole new program, especially with the thesis, and make it happen. There was a tremendous amount of effort that went into this program over the past five years. Neither one of us feels that we want to make any dramatic changes right now. We imagine a very smooth transition. We are obviously tweaking aspects of the program. We really want to hear from students about changes they would like to see. Students in that initial meeting said we want more community, we want to reach out more, to have a way to bring students together not just in the classroom.

Mike: I like the idea of helping stu-

dents find productive mentoring relationships. That's one of the things we both have some facility with already, because we've been in other programs at the university that have connected us with a lot of other faculty. One of our jobs is to guide students into promising directions, and I feel like that's good work to do.

What is your favorite word?

MVP: My favorite word is Humuhumunukunukuapua'a. It's the state fish of Hawaii, and it's my favorite word for several reasons. One, what a cool word. It takes a while to learn to say it. The funniest thing was when I developed the Hawaii winter term course and my kids would come to orientation and meet the students. My little kids could rattle off that word and the students were so impressed. It's a nice word.

Mike: I can't top that. My favorite word is paradox. No comment.

What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?

Mike: Chocolate chip.

MVP: I really love vanilla. I'm sorry.

Mike: With hot fudge at least on top of it?

MVP: Yes I'll have anything.

Mike: Sprinkles?

MVP: I don't like sprinkles. Caramel, chocolate, anything delicious. And I also like pralines and cream from Baskin Robbins.

Who is your celebrity crush?

MVP: It's got to be Johnny Depp.

Mike: That's so predictable.

MVP: But I liked him way back with "What's Eating Gilbert Grape" and "Benny and Joon." I was an early fan.

Mike: One of my favorite things about Johnny Depp is that he's an expat. He asked himself, "If I could live anywhere in the world where would it be?" and he chose France.

MVP: The south of France.

Mike: Candice Bergen too. She's not my celebrity crush though. Mine's Cate Blanchett for sure. I like "Elizabeth," "Lord of the Rings," the other "Elizabeth," "Notes on a Scandal."

Meet the Professor: Art History Connoisseur Kirstin Ringelberg

Nichole Rawlings
Class of '10



Here is your chance to become acquainted with a professor teaching an Honors course. **Dr. Ringelberg** offers you some information about herself, discusses how

she feels about the honors students (that's you!) and also offers some words of wisdom.

What Honors class do you teach?

To Be A Sex Object: The Body, Gender, and Representation (2nd-year seminar).

What do you teach at Elon outside of your Honors course?

Art History on campus and General Studies courses abroad.

What do you like about working specifically with Honors students? Is there anything you dislike?

In class, I would say that teaching Honors students isn't particularly different from teaching other students at Elon; as in my other classes, there's a wide range of personalities, reading, writing, and oral skills, and academic interests. But in independent research projects, I've found the Honors students who have chosen to work with me to be particularly eager to learn new things for their own sake. They are very easy to mentor both because of that and because of the independent work ethic they've displayed. I think sometimes each class bonds a little too much with each other and not enough with other students, or even other Honors students in different classes—watch out for the groupthink and us-vs.-them mentality that can arise from this, which never

benefits you as much as you think it does.

When did you first start working with Honors students?

The first Honors student to take one of my classes at Elon took my Gender and Art History course way back in 2004. Since then, I've had an Honors student either in one of my classes or working on a project with me pretty much every semester. I've co-taught the "Sex Object" class with Dr. Cahill twice—once in spring 2007, and once again this fall.

What is the funniest moment you've had in class with an Honors student?

Tough question—there have been so many! I think actually the most memorable was probably watching Nichole Rawlings stand on a stone traffic divider outside of Printemps Department Store in Paris, yelling her class presentation over the mid-day crowds. She managed to do a great job, even though every bus, car, and person in Paris seemed to be trying to thwart her, and it was hilarious to watch. Pretty much everyone in the Honors class this semester has cracked me up at some point—they have a good sense of humor.

If you could propose ANY new class at Elon, what would it be?

I think I'd like to teach a class on my current research into contemporary Japanese art, but I actually really love the classes I'm teaching right now. I've also gotten to propose two new classes abroad: in the spring, I'll teach Gender & Sexuality in Renaissance Florence, and in the fall I'll teach London (Re)Imagined, a class on

both how the city has literally been reconstructed and how perceptions of it have changed in the last 20 years.

Why should students be excited to take your class?

I think our Honors class, if you're open to it, has the opportunity to really change the way you perceive yourself and the world around you. Most of the way we normally perceive gender, representation, and our bodies, both separately and in relationship to each other, is actually neither accurate nor particularly useful to us (although it certainly can be useful to others). Dr. Cahill and I do our best to break students out of the Panopticon, ha ha. But we recognize that it's not for everyone. We're happy to just help students become better researchers and writers, and I know we do that because we've seen the results. But you can't make a horse drink, right? So half of students being excited in any class is on them—bring your own sense of wonder and curiosity to the table no matter the class and chances are you'll find something in it to get excited about.

Describe yourself in one word or phrase.

Really? Sheesh. Voracious, maybe? I'm interested in pretty much everything and everyone, both intellectually and emotionally.

Do you have any advice for Honors students as they continue on in their Elon journey?

Try, try, try to get over what you think you're supposed to do, think, say, or write, and take some risks. Make connections across the disciplines and across the various parts of your life—that's where the big picture becomes clearer and more meaningful. Most of all, don't be afraid to fail. We all do, and frankly a productive failure is far more beneficial to your growth than a routine success.

Is there a professor you'd like to see profiled? Send in his or her name, and we'll see what we can do.
nrwlings@elon.edu

What You Didn't Know About . . .

Amanda Kennison

Class of '10

The Lumen Prize:

For those of you that don't know about the Lumen Prize, let me take this opportunity and introduce you.

Elon introduced the Lumen Prize last year. Basically, it is an amazing opportunity offered to second year students. Formed to promote, "the truly exceptional scholarly achievement of upperclassmen," the Lumen is a prize valued at \$15,000.

Lumen recipients can use this money for tuition purposes, study abroad, or any research costs related to their proposed project. This leads me to my next point. The Lumen isn't some fluff award you randomly apply to one night and stand a chance of winning.

To better acquaint you with Lumen's expectations and application process, let me map out the requirements. Besides being a second year student at Elon, applicants must have a GPA of 3.50 or above, be nominated by a faculty member, be in good standing at the university (no punching squirrels in the face), and students must be planning to attend the university for two more full years.

Applicants are expected to detail background experiences, propose a project of some sort, and design a narrative detailing how you plan to spend your next two academic years. Add in a feasibility report which offers a budget and timeline, and you have yourself a Lumen application.

A lot of you are probably thinking that it's way too soon to be thinking about Lumen. But, thinking about the type of project or research you want to propose, why that research is important, and how you're going to go about completing the research is key when competing for the Lumen Prize. The better you know your topic, the more comfortable you'll feel when it comes time to write about and discuss your project.

Even if you do not win the prize, the process proves invaluable in many ways. As Honors students, we'll all be required to complete a thesis, which dovetails nicely into the Lumen process. The Lumen application and thesis proposal are similar procedures. Applying for the Lumen, which will be done in the spring semester of your sophomore year, greatly prepares you for the thesis proposal come junior year. You will have all the main parts of your thesis figured out: the topic, the rational, proposed methods and a feasibility report. Participating in the Lumen offers a strong foundation to build a thesis upon.

In spring 2008, seven Honors Fellows were inducted into the inaugural class of Lumen Scholars: Nichole Rawlings, Cindy Goodson, Amelia Helms, Jonathan Mahlandt, Christopher Staskel, Katie Strickland and Hannah Williams. If you are interested learning more about the Lumen Prize, please contact one of these fellows, or visit the Lumen website: <http://www.elon.edu/e-web/administration/president/lumenprize/background.xhtml>.

Global Views: Thoughts from Abroad

At Elon, study abroad has become an experience that a majority of students want to complete before they graduate. Honors students are no exception in following this trend, and the program has been and is proudly represented by students studying in such varied places as Scotland, France, Denmark, Germany, Japan, Peru, Ireland, Italy and Ghana. In each issue we will highlight students' experiences while abroad. If you have any questions you would like to pose to someone abroad, drop a line at akennison@elon.edu



Kirby Sypek, a junior Elementary Education major, is currently residing in Copenhagen while traveling Europe in her spare time. She has this to say about her time out of the country:

"I never thought that studying abroad would be this fun! I love studying in Copenhagen. I have also already been to Barcelona, and in these next three weeks I'm going to The Netherlands; Florence, Italy; London, England; Dublin, Ireland; and Prague, Czech Republic. I can't wait to explore the rest of Europe."



Sarah Vavreck, a junior human services major, is spending her semester abroad in Ghana, along with fellow junior **Katie Strickland**. According to her:

"Studying abroad has been a more mind blowing experience than I could have ever expected. I have been

challenged to try new things, see the world in new ways, change my sense of time, and even so much more. I travel almost every weekend in Ghana, and I have spent the last 9 days in Egypt. The world has so much to see, but I am finding that there is a world of knowledge in the individual people you meet along the way."

Want to learn more? You can visit Sarah's blog at www.sarahjaneinghana.blogspot.com, or Katie's blog at www.ghanawanderer.blogspot.com.

Sage Words of Wisdom: From Someone Who Knows

Jenna McNair

Class of '10

It's that time again. Midterms. So close to Thanksgiving and Christmas, but still so far away. You've been running on little to no sleep, fighting off the germs running amok through the dorms, trying to get more involved in extra-curriculars, worrying about thesis proposals (if juniors), worrying about the thesis defense (if seniors), worrying about finding a thesis topic (if sophomores), and worrying about whether or not you should be worrying about the thesis (if freshmen). Not to mention, attempting to pursue some semblance of fun in your life. So, what's an Honors student to do?

Procrastination. It will happen. I have acknowledged this fact, which is of course the first step to healing. So, since we all will procrastinate, why not be semi-productive when doing so? When on the computer and wishing to take a "break," but not to completely emerge from the haze of writing-induced frenzy, visit these fine and educational websites good for whiling away the hours:

192 UN Member Nations in 10 Minutes

(<http://andys.org.uk/countryquiz/>):

Extremely educational, this page will provide hours of fun as you try to increase the number of nations you can name. You will most likely astound yourself with your lack of memory. This will then encourage you to attend to your studies. As a bonus, the countries you missed will magically appear at the end of the ten minutes.

Desktop Tower Defense 1.5

(<http://www.kongregate.com/games/pr eecep/desktop-tower-defense-1-5>):

Argh! The horrid, disease carrying germs are determined to make their way across your cluttered desk. You must stop them with the various armaments provided. Don't die in the meantime! This game, um, reinforces geometry. Yes. Because you have to calculate angles and everything. *In your head.*

ImprovEverywhere

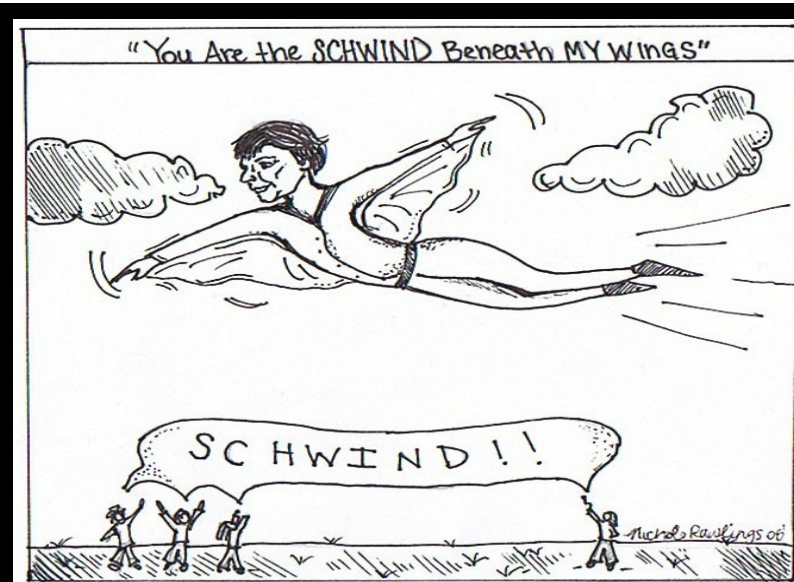
(<http://improveverywhere.com>): This improv group will make your day happy because that's what they do: interject fun into everyday life. As you explore the New York subway's annual (unofficial) NoPants day, flash mobs, Frozen Grand Central, impromptu food court musicals, and, especially, the question of why the Abercrombie model can be shirtless

but the customers cannot, you are guaranteed to smile.

Also think about rearranging your iTunes playlists. Or your pictures. Or your kitchen.

Friends: They can be your greatest asset, or your largest liability. Use them wisely. They can be either procrastinated with or riled against as they force you back to your studies. But seriously, it is easy to reinforce each others' bad moods, particularly when everybody is stressed. Institute a policy of positivity. Don't allow whining or dire predictions of doom. Instead, ask everyone to say a good thing that happened in the day. For instance: "Even though I received an 'F' on the paper that I turned in the other day, Octagon had my favorite pasta for lunch." Corny, but it works. Try it.

Getting out of the room: An essential, yet often overlooked, method of preventing yourself from going insane. Changing venues can be a rejuvenating experience. And, it's fun! Go have a picnic, ride the carousel, bowl, roller skate, ride a bike, fly a kite, sit by the lake, get chased by crazed swans, and, most importantly, enjoy life. The stress isn't worth it.



Have a cartoon idea? Send it
in to
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Connection Staff:

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Do you enjoy writing, photography, designing? Want to contribute to the newsletter? We'd be glad to have you. Just email: akennison@elon.edu

Getting to Know You: A Closer Look at Your Fellow Fellows

Shanna Van Beek

Class of '12



"The Z"

Tyler Zoda is a freshman from Raleigh, NC. He is undecided in his major and research interest, but he knows he would like to travel to Italy to study abroad. If Tyler had to fight for one issue, he would devote his life to providing education opportunities to the impoverished. If you asked "The Z" for advice, he would tell you his favorite quote, "You have to trust Tyler," - Fight Club. And trust you should. Tyler is able to juggle being an Honors Fellow and playing football for the Elon Phoenix. He describes the experience as, "extremely time consuming and both mentally and physically demanding," but claims balancing both is "exciting, rewarding, and such a good experience." Tyler's optimistic nature leads him to be most annoyed by "Negative Nancies," so if you run into this fellow, offer him a smile but do not take up too much of his time. He needs all his spare time for a favorite pastime on campus— napping. Do not be afraid to swing by Chandler or shoot him an email sometime, tzoda@elon.edu, if you are in the mood for a good verbal debate. "The Z" fears not the horns of the bull that is a mental, physical, or ideological challenge.



"Molls"

Molly Strayer, sophomore representative on the Honors Advisory Committee, is a Biochemistry major from Calvert County, MD. She decided to join the Honors Program for the "truly unique academic experience that sets [her] apart from science majors at other schools." This winter term, she is excited about going to Greece and being able to "think where the original thinkers thought." For research, she is especially interested in a class of neurodegenerative diseases called "prion diseases." She says, "whatever we can learn about these strange protein interactions could possibly bring light to other diseases or help us to figure out treatments." She feels there is an abundance of [scientific] knowledge, "but the action being taken is not proportional to the knowledge we have acquired." Molly plays goalie on the club lacrosse team and belongs to the American Chemical Society. Molly is all about avoiding stress: "Do spontaneous things with friends and pick up activities for fun." Want to have fun with Molly? Shoot an email to mstrayer@elon.edu. Take a trip to CookOut and she'll be a happy camper, so long as her milkshake comes out correctly.



"Topher"

Christopher Staskel is a junior from Charlotte, NC, studying Music Theatre. Chris was honored last semester with the Lumen Prize, a substantial aid for his thesis project. He chose to be a part of the Honors Program because he wanted both a conservatory-like training program and liberal arts curriculum. He explains, "being a part of the Honors Program gives me the opportunity to take challenging courses outside of my major, which will only make me a better, more informed performer in the end." Chris spends most of his time rehearsing for acting and dancing projects. He also sings with Catholic Campus Ministry and performs with Elon University's improv troupe, Technical Difficulties. Chris's life is not all theatre, though. If he had to dedicate his life to one issue he would take a stand against domestic violence and dating abuse. Looking for advice? He might tell you to learn the rules first so you may break them, or quip a favorite quote: "As you slide down the banister of life, may the splinters be pointing in the other direction." You can contact Chris at cstaskel@elon.edu, and be sure to ask him how his musical is coming along. Just make sure to not scratch any silverware or fingernails on ice, as this bothers him to no end.



"Bre"

Breanna Detwiler is a senior hailing from Warrenton, VA. She is an Environmental Studies major researching how community gardens of the North Carolina Piedmont increase social capital. Bre is a 2008 Truman scholar and a 2008 Udall scholar. The Truman scholarship is a graduate scholarship for students pursuing careers in public service, and the Udall scholar program is a national undergraduate fellowship for students working on and around environmental issues. Bre visited Ghana last winter term to study the history and geography of the country, and she plans to travel to Belize this coming winter term to study field biology. Outside working in the community garden, she enjoys reading beach fiction and running. Bre also she likes to "cause a ruckus in Students for Peace and Justice." While Bre's focus is the environment, she is all for change in other aspects. Her current favorite quote elucidates this poignantly, "The need for change bulldozed a road down the center of my mind." -Maya Angelou. If she could bring about change in one area, she would fight for domestic food justice, because "[everyone] should have access to whole nutritious foods." Final mantra from Bre? "Make change and take naps." Contact Bre at bdetwiler@elon.edu.