Pursuing Their Passions
Honors Students Perform Summer Research Projects

Summer is a time for hiking, scuba diving, and extra-curricular research? While most students avoid summer academic activities like the plague, Jake Wayman, Cassidy Jones, Cooper Henderson, Danny Barber, Mai Ho, and Tyler Sutton found the time and desire to design and implement research projects all their own.

Jake Wayman and Cassidy Jones, seniors majoring in biology and English, respectively, spent time in south central Utah while they gathered materials for their projects. While Jake collected leaf samples to study oak hybridization, Cassidy compiled sources for an environmental literary history of the Grand Staircase-Escalante region, a project she sees herself pursuing in the future. “It’s truly unexpected and downright exciting,” she comments.

Cooper, a senior majoring in economics, focused his research on the new Utah Ethics Reform, excited by the opportunity to “learn about a passionate hobby.” Surprised at the discrepancies between the proposed and the actual reform, Cooper decided to perform his own analysis. He reached the startling conclusion that and had ignored key recommendations from the bi-partisan committee. On account of his research, Cooper resolved to remain familiar with the continually evolving legislation of the state and, more importantly, to take his experiences with him when he graduates.

Danny, a junior minoring in chemistry, researched the Jordan River oil spill. “When I heard about what happened,” he says, “I knew I had the unique opportunity to try something entirely new.” He developed a cost-efficient way to track residual oils in the river through a process called ‘synchronized fluorescent scanning.’ While this method is not as accurate as more expensive versions, Danny points out that “this is where teaching meets application. While it’s not quite accurate enough, it’s more versatile.” For Danny, real world applications hold more interest than a classroom lecture, and he valued the chance to learn about the responsibilities of being his own boss.

Mai, a sophomore majoring in accounting and finance, conducted a meta-analysis literature review that compared various models of business in over 200 books. After working in both the START and Career Centers, she wanted to know if existing business models could be adjusted to work on a tertiary educational level. “Information is out there,” she says, “but it’s really hard to find, and different offices aren’t as connected as they should be.” Interested in solving this dilemma, Mai hopes to design and implement a program in one of the offices here at Westminster. She says, “If we could break down the pieces of a good model, and recombine them with the strongest parts from other models, we could make the best information flow program ever.”

Tyler, a junior with a contractual major in bio-ethics, researched the ethicality of newborn screening for genetic defects. Prompted by the intriguing situations he saw on a regular basis while working at the hospital, he wondered if opt-out models played a role in the parental autonomy vs. child negligence debate. Starting by defining an opt-out model, its effects, and methods, Tyler soon found that medical practitioners often use opt-out models to subtly coerce the general populace by failing to fully inform patients of what is going on. This discovery reinforced his passion for bio-ethics. “This is why philosophy is so important to medicine in general,” he says. “It gives you another language to speak, and the tools to do it. This is especially imperative when recommending treatment. It gives us an ethical framework to build off of.”

Committing yourself to a summer research project requires more than self-discipline, dedication, and an acceptance of your inner nerd. As each of these students demonstrated, it takes a strong passion for your subject, an interest in your community, and general love of learning, all which combined to make this summer one of diverse creativity and curiosity for the Honors community.

-Caitlyn Stringham
### Honors in ASWC Engaging the Westminster Community

This year, several Honors students are serving in Westminster student government (ASWC). Among them are: Cooper Henderson, President; Tyler Sutton, Director of Clubs and Organizations; Zoey Stoddard, Attorney General; Jacob Kovac, Director of Communications; and Laura Wolf, Diversity Chair.

These students joined ASWC for a variety of reasons, ranging from thinking it would be fun to wanting to make positive changes around campus. Stoddard said she joined because she knew the other Honors students running for ASWC and liked the idea of working with her peers in the broader Westminster community. “It doesn’t surprise me that there are so many Honors students serving on ASWC,” she said. “Honors students are motivated, speak and write well, and have the skill sets to get elected … and it’s nice working with a base of people you know.”

To apply for ASWC cabinet positions, you must fill out a candidate form and campaign in the student body to gain votes, a process requiring these students to reach beyond the comfort of the Honors community. For diversity chair positions, however, the application process is somewhat more relaxed, but still requires interviews with the Vice President and Activities Coordinator. Students serving on ASWC help with freshman orientation, but the majority of their duties center on bringing together the entire Westminster community, from freshman to faculty. Larger campus events such as the annual block party and Wild Wednesdays provide opportunities for campus to mingle and make new connections. Speciality chairs, like the diversity chair, help with other events that expand Westminster’s global perspectives, including the Diversity Lecture Series and the international festival.

For other Honors students interested in joining ASWC, the current government has some advice. “I would recommend considering how much free time you have to donate,” Laura said. “It is a lot of Fun working with ASWC academic. Various “Nerd Hikes” encourage students to get outdoors after spending copious amounts of time inside working on papers. Parties celebrating holidays, such as Halloween, allow for non-academic socializing and foster some friendly competition. SHC sponsors a viewing party on Election Day for students interested in politics, and at the end of the semester, Dead Paper Society helps students to brush off bad papers by burning them. “I think they help students with college work by giving them a break from all that homework stuff,” remarks SHC Vice President Camber Stoddard.

Being in the Honors program can get you where you want to be; SHC helps make the process more enjoyable. The events they sponsor provide an opportunity for students to make friends, relax, and have some fun.

-Melody Redmond

### Study Abroad Panel Adventures, Challenges, and New Perspectives

Last spring, four Westminster Honors students packed their bags and sailed forth into new territory, their destinations traversing the globe. Caroline Hill, the first Honors student to participate in the Principia Consortium, immersed herself in the resplendent landscape of Scotland while Kayla Whidden headed south to Argentina for a change of pace. In Israel, Shoshana Zohar returned to her family roots, and Cassidy Jones headed to Africa for an adventure in Madagascar. These students reported on their experiences during an Honors study abroad panel in September. Their report gave the audience—mostly those interested in study abroad—tips and ideas for their own journeys. Although each student traveled for different reasons, they had incredible experiences and discovered new things about themselves. As a member of the Principia Consortium, Caroline participated in an interdisciplinary class similar to Honors seminars at Westminster. Her classmates included honors students from around the world at a university founded in the 15th century. Although Caroline’s program was academically intense, she didn’t spend all her time hitting the books, but found time to travel throughout Scotland and Europe.

Shoshana chose Israel primarily because of her personal connection with family members, some of whom still live there. However, she also enjoyed experiencing the complexities of such a historically rich culture. For Kayla, studying abroad provided a chance to get away from the pressures of school, but what she encountered in Argentina changed her perspective on service to others. Describing her experience, Kayla states, “I saw a lot of poverty… At first, I felt hopeless, realizing that there is a lot to change in the world and a lot of people and attitudes that stand in my way and the stupas I wanted to create.” Yet, retaining her desire to help others, Kayla emerged from this hopeless attitude and found a renewed dedication to the American spirit of service.

As a freshman, Cassidy never dreamed she would experience the wonders of Madagascar. While finding a program in Madagascar presented a greater challenge than most study abroad destinations, she did not let the obstacles of an unusual location deter her. Cassidy advises other students to pick something or someplace they love and not feel limited in their options. And while Cassidy experienced the cultural shock of a country still in the midst of development, she learned much from the country and its people.

Although all four students participated in different programs and traveled for a variety of reasons, all four have the same advice for those considering study abroad. Whether you crave an academic challenge, want to immerse yourself in a different culture and language, or simply have the travel bug, do the research, explore your options, plan ahead, and head out! -Kellei Carrigan

### Alumni News

#### Honors Alumni Entering Graduate School this Year:

- Lahdan Saeed Heidarian ('08), University of Utah's Medical School
- Colin Grebs ('99), University of Utah's Law School
- McKay Holland ('99), Brandeis University's MA program in Philosophy
- Jay Springer ('99), University of Michigan's Law School
- Omid Adibnazar ('10), University of Utah's Medical School
- Amanda Ruiz ('10), University of Arizona's Law School
- Robin Hill ('10), Stanford University's MA in International Education Administration and Policy Analysis
- Heather Dalton ('10), Creighton University's School of Medicine
- Chelsea DiFrancesco ('10), University of Washington's Masters in Library and Information Science
- Heath Pascoe ('10), University of Texas Westernmost's Ph.D. program in Chemistry

### SHC Events Not Just about Free Pizza

How can learning about Darwinism in 19th Century German Art help an Honors student take more from his or her environment at Westminster? When guest lecturer Alexandra Karl presented her findings on the subject at the first “Pizza with the Profs,” the year, I had the opportunity to find out. Watching upper classmen mingle with some of the younger students, as well as hearing the different types of questions coming from students and professors alike, it became clear that Student Honors Council (SHC) events are not just about academics. “The bonds that all of us in SHC have developed with other Honors students have been huge parts of our experiences at Westminster,” SHC Secretary Marya Smith explains. “Bonds developed between older and younger students create opportunities for mentoring relationships between professors and students allow for a lot of academics advice and some really fantastic recommendation letters.”

Participation in events where the professors take the lead, such as Pizza with the Profs and Profs Pick the Flick, provide an opportunity for students to investigate topics that do not come up in class. The SHC presidency hopes that these types of experiences will get students interested in unique subjects, possibly opening doors they may never have found. However, not all SHC events are fun. Various “Nerd Hikes” encourage students to get outdoors after spending copious amounts of time inside working on papers. Parties celebrating holidays, such as Halloween, allow for non-academic socializing and foster some friendly competition. SHC sponsors a viewing party on Election Day for students interested in politics, and at the end of the semester, Dead Paper Society helps students to brush off bad papers by burning them. “I think they help students with college work by giving them a break from all that homework stuff,” remarks SHC Vice President Camber Stoddard.

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#### Study Abroad Panel

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- Alexandra Karl
- Laura Wolf

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**Student News & Notes**

**Mai Ho and Kayla Whidden** are participating in the Opportunity Quest Business Plan Competition with the project Micro-Finance Institution in the Dominican Republic.

**Demetrios Coombs** presented research findings at the 110th Annual Meeting of the American Society for Microbiology and the 24th Annual Symposium of the Protein Society.

*The Spiffire Grill* featured three Honors students in a cast of eleven: Fehmi Yasin, Annie Brings, and Hailey Henderson.

**Christina Della Iacono** was accepted into the McNair Scholars program, and also joined the selection committee for the new neuroscience/honors faculty search.

**Christina Della Iacono**, Fehmi Yasin, Jeff Pedersen, Jackie Wilson, Natalia Noble (’10), and John Cook (’10) toured Ireland with the Westminster Chamber Singers in May.

**Tracy Hansford** walked over 200 miles on the Camino de Santiago, a pilgrimage ending in Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

**Sam Webster** was the first intern for Salt Lake County’s Open Space program over the summer.

**Cassidy Jones, Jared Christensen, Caroline Hill, Tyler Sutton, Mai Ho, Cooper Henderson, Hailey Henderson, and Christopher Roundy** attended the 2010 Conference of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) in Kansas City, Missouri.

**Samuel Wilkinson** is currently studying economics and Mandarin Chinese at Nankai University in Tianjin, China.

**Sarah Passmore** was accepted into the McNair Scholars Program.

**Laura Wolf** attended the National Association of Campus Activities in California to help look for upcoming acts on campus with ASWC.

**Megan Hecker** has been accepted to present at Western Michigan University’s International Congress on Medieval Studies this May.

**Jackie Wilson** ran a child care program in Crested Butte, Colorado over the summer.

**Jacob Wayman** is the first Westminster student named as a MGLA Scholar Athlete.

**Marie Robinson** (’07) accepted a position at the University of California Riverside working with the Dean of the Graduate School of Education.

**Yvonne Clark** was accepted into the McNair Scholars Program.

**David Murser-Gonzales** is interning with the Utah Council for Citizen Diplomacy.

**Jessica Hawks** worked for the National Park Service over the summer in Moab.

**Lauren Johnson** will be traveling to Scotland to participate in the Principia Consortium at the University of Glasgow this spring.

**Camber Stoddard** was awarded a TRAILS fellowship and spent 5 weeks this summer living at NYU in Manhattan.

**Cooper Henderson** visited Russia around the country to meet with young Russian leaders.

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**New Honors Students Find Friendship at Orientation**

At first, August 19 did not feel different than any other day— but then it hit me: I was going to college. But I knew it was too late to turn back, so I packed myself into the car with the rest of my belongings. Arriving on campus after driving from Ogden, I was absolutely petrified. I was seriously toying with the idea of running back home when I saw my roommate, an Honors student herself. I looked again, and there was another Honors student moving in, and another one! I was not alone.

Cera Cantu, another entering Honors freshman, recalls a similar experience. “I remember starting Honors orientation being completely worried,” she said. “I was still surprised that I had even made it into the program.” Watching a group of upper-class Honors peer mentors, she noticed, “They seemed like the best of friends. I couldn’t help but wonder if our class was ever going to get to that point.” It wasn’t until the end of orientation that Cera realized “even though everybody in our class is different, there is something connecting us: we love to learn.”

Jessie Aragon shares a story about meeting her roommate before moving in. “I was absolutely driving from Ogden, packed myself into the car with the rest of my friends, but I didn’t want to turn back, so I drove from the people that I would end up becoming great friends with.”

Wyatt Jackson also discovered the importance of friendship during orientation. For one of the activities, the new students split into groups to play a game. Each group had to answer an obscure question, then everyone would vote on which answer was the best. By the end of the game, Wyatt’s group was in last place and knew something had to be done. When the question “How would you describe the smell of coffee in the morning to your friend that can’t smell?” Wyatt, hidden upstairs, called out “It’s like the rugged voice of Clint Eastwood.” As he walked into the room, everybody was smiling. His group still lost, but “we ended the game with a bang!” And the best part? “I earned a little respect from the people that I would end up becoming great friends with.”

Many other Honors freshmen had experiences just like these. Honors orientation, and the friends we made, became great friends with.” Other students call it “cozy.”

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**Fighting Freshmen Fears**

**The Living Arts**

**Where Honors Students Come Alive**

*On August 31, the Honors freshmen class settled into Nancemaker Place for the first Living Arts seminar of the year. We sat around the table, on the floor, and in haphazardly placed chairs and love-sacs, expecting to be shuffling aside as the class started. Much to our delight, we weren’t. A professor none of us recognized from orientation moved to the front of the room, struggled with the projector a little, then taught us how to play Roulette and understand the mathematics behind the game. Since then, Honors freshmen have rock climbed, watched film clips, learned how to treat a head wound, meditated, explored our ecological footprints, and took a moonlight hike to look at the stars. “It’s a new thing every class,” commented Cera Cantu, one of the students in Living Arts, at a table of other first year Honors students who all nodded along with her statement. Wyatt Jackson added that Living Arts is always interesting, remembering being turned into a mummy as the model for bandaging methods.*

*“Living Arts lets me learn about all the things I wanted to, but never had the time to,” said freshman Catie Wagner.*

*Honors freshmen also use Living Arts as an extra study tool. After class, circles of students can be seen discussing the prompt due in Humanities the next day or making fun of Socrates. “It provides a break from the monotony of everyday class,” commented Wyatt, who said that the refreshing class helps his academic load seem a little more manageable.*

*First year students unanimously agreed that the most beneficial part of the class is bringing the two sections of Humanities together to get know each other outside of the typical classroom environment. “It helps the two classes to unify,” said Wyatt, who had just had dinner with a student from the other Humanities class.*

*Samantha Kilpack, a freshman, mentioned the structure of Nancemaker Place itself and the way Living Arts utilizes it, calling it comfortable and “a unique place where Honors kids can connect.” Other students call it “cozy.”*

*Upperclassmen in the Honors program marvel at how the program evolves every year. Victoria Valencia, a junior, said, “When I was in Living Arts it was just starting up; it was really different than it is now. It improves and gets more eclectic each year.” Living Arts provides Honors freshmen a way to build friendships while learning about the things that a typical college class cannot fit into the curriculum. While the class will look different every year, Tuesday nights in Nancemaker Place will always be a comfortable home for first year students in the Honors program.*

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**Honorable Mention was recently awarded first place in the “Student Published” category of NCHC’s National Newsletter Contest.**
Until this October, I had never been further east than Vernal, Utah, so it was a bit disorienting stepping off the plane in Kansas City and seeing the virtually identical buildings. I wasn't particularly excited about this year's National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) conference being held in the Midwest, but my mind began to change on the car ride from the airport. The city skyline drew my attention with its mix of old industrial buildings and modern glass structures. We didn't have to spend the evening exploring, and ended up in the Power and Light district. It's a place to go to find all kinds of restaurants, music venues, and theatres.

Thursday was free until the opening session, and we decided to get some famous Kansas City barbecue. We walked through downtown and the Crossroads Art District. This is where I really started to appreciate the city. What caught my attention were two large murals spreading across two buildings. They depicted the history of Kansas City culture, focusing on the major blues scene. There were also several works of street art and many other large paintings on the sides of buildings. We ended up at Jack Stack, a Kansas City original, and it definitely lived up to all the hype.

Badenhausen asked us to attend other sessions. Chris Roundy and I attended one on peer mentoring, where we realized our program is very strong. We have a higher ratio of mentors to freshmen, so we can work on a more personal level.

The conference began on Friday, and we were excited for the opportunity to come together, share research, and discuss ideas for improvement. Four groups from Westminster were presenting, and Dr. Badenhausen asked us to attend other sessions. Chris Roundy and I attended one on peer mentoring, where we realized our program is very strong. We have a higher ratio of mentors to freshmen, so we can work on a more personal level.

On Saturday, Tyler Sutton and I gave our presentation on contractual majors. Both of us spent the majority of last year building ours, and we talked about how the Honors program philosophy influenced our processes. Our session was about students taking an active role in their education, and we were paired with students who created their own classes. We got positive feedback and some directors trying to start contract major programs asked us questions.

Later, we attended a plenary with speaker Aron Ralston, the man who got pinned by a boulder and had to cut his own arm off. He gave us some interesting things to talk about, since two of our group had relatives directly involved in his situation.

To finish off the conference, Dr. Badenhausen took us all to a great soul food restaurant with live blues music called The Peachtree. We spent dinner talking about our experiences and our impressions of Kansas City.

NCHC isn't just an academic experience; it's a chance explore a new environment and meet other students from around the country. It provides an opportunity to learn about yourself and find inspiration by discovering what's underneath the surface of an exciting new city. -Jared Christensen
Jamie Resnick

Jamie Resnick is no stranger to Westminster’s Honors program, though she is only a freshman. Jamie plans to major in biology and is also considering minors in physics and chemistry. Even before she came to Westminster, she had seen what it is like to be an Honors student from her brother, Jesse, who recently graduated from the Honors program. Jamie knew that Honors would be a challenge, but her brother reassured her that the benefits would far outweigh the difficulties.

But Jamie is no stranger to difficult environments. She has grown up in an environment where there is variety and she knows she will be challenged. She sails from New Mexico and worked with a division of the National Laboratory in Los Alamos analyzing stable isotopes and carbohydrates of tree rings. Outside the classroom, she is also a solo whitewater canoeist, skier, rock climber, and artist among other things. Jamie works on ski patrol in the winter and bike patrolled in the summer, and has found that she loves caring for people in an environment where she never knows what will happen next.

New challenges require Jamie to adapt to new environments, and she has been able to use her skills from outside the realm of academics to help her adapt to the Honors atmosphere. When asked about her experience as a new Honors student, she responded, “adapting to new writing skills, writing arguable claims, and defending them has been a challenge.” But even though it’s hard, Jamie says, “My honors experience has been great!” She enjoys the professors, other students, and the intellectual discussion we have in class. I have enjoyed improving my critical thinking skills.

The things Jamie will continue to gain in the Honors program will benefit her in her career of choice. She aspires to be a trauma surgeon, and is excited about the opportunity to help people with life-threatening injuries in an unpredictable environment. But Honors skills do not just pay off in the future; even now, Honors has helped Jamie in other courses. She explains, “I find myself looking at other texts from other classes critically. Also, in reverse, I find myself using knowledge from all the facets of my education in discussion in class.”

Outside the classroom, she is also a solo whitewater canoeist, skier, rock climber, and artist among other things. Jamie works on ski patrol in the winter and bike patrolled in the summer, and has found that she loves caring for people in an environment where she never knows what will happen next.

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When asked what inspires them, most people won’t say that they are “inspired by failure.” But for Film Studies and Honors professor Dr. Sean Desilets, failure is exactly what drives his passion for films. As other movie-goers simply laugh, cry, or shrug, Dr. Desilets uncovers a movie’s meaning by looking for the “warring things” within it that “negatively” create meaning. He finds a film most interesting when it “can’t say what it wants to say.” It is this unique approach to cinema that Dr. Desilets has brought to the film studies department at Westminster.

Yet failure certainly isn’t on Dr. Desilets’ mind when he is in the classroom. He describes the interaction between himself and his students as a mutual learning experience. Not only does he share his expertise on films with his class, but he also benefits from the insights of his students. “When you teach something,” Dr. Desilets says, “you pay really close attention to it.” So, when students pointed out surprising similarities between the Hollywood blockbuster Jaws and the 1948 Italian classic The Bicycle Thief, he had an “opportunity to notice something really interesting that [was] going on.” This interaction between students and professor helps Dr. Desilets balance his dedication to teaching with his other academic pursuits.

Films have fascinated Dr. Desilets since he was young. His parents brought him to the theatre frequently, and Dr. Desilets remembers one particular post-movie discussion that awakened him to the possibilities of analyzing films. After his parents watched the Steven Spielberg film adaptation of The Color Purple, his father remarked to a group of friends that the movie included too many “ Spielbergisms” – that is, it was too gimmicky. This was the first time that Dr. Desilets beheld the magic of critical analysis, of making the hidden elements of movies and texts visible. He hasn’t hesitated in his devotion to film studies and the broader art of interpretation since then, receiving his Bachelor’s degree in English from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1992 and his doctorate from Tufts University in 2007.

This is Dr. Desilets’ third year at Westminster, during which time he has taught English, film studies, and gender studies courses, as well as the Honors seminar “The Arts in Performance.” Dr. Desilets calls Honors students “interesting people” and says he enjoys observing the unique way that they “think about themselves” and make themselves an active part of the Westminster community.

Lesa Ellis, PhD
Professor of Psychology

The course of my life changed right here at Westminster, not in the classroom. Instead, it occurred in the restroom... the second floor restroom in Converse, no less. Here’s how: I started Westminster a non-traditional, part-time student with a vague idea to change my life and no idea how to do it. I decided to major in English since I quite liked to read. It seemed right enough at the time.

My first semester I took English 101 (for obvious reasons) and Psychology 170 about Freud and dreams and such. By midterm, two issues came to light. First - I liked English and did it quite well. Second – people in psychology thought I was too one of those people. She was what one would think a brain scientist should be –absent minded, disorganized, and her lecture style was tangential at best. And I loved, loved, loved every minute of her class. My second semester, I took English 220 and an upper division course on BRAINS!!! By midterm, two issues came to light. First – I still liked English and did it quite well. And, second, I loved brains but brain class was hard! My psych midterm was a bear, and I was nervous about my performance. Once graded, the professor didn’t turn them back until the end of class and I desperately needed to pee. By the time she handed me my exam I shoved it in my backpack and sprinted for the door. I barely made it to the restroom... the one in the middle of the hall - with my backpack and papers in hand. I don’t even remember what I thought or did, but I made it to the women’s room in time. After I’d finished, I stood in front of the child-sized sink and pulled my exam from my bag. Flipping through pages in search of my score. There it was and I had done very well, but the professor had added a note below: I can see it today – the red ink, her surprisingly tidy script, in the weak winter light as it came through the window. “Great job,” it said. “You have an excellent mind for this kind of work. You should consider it as a career.”

And everything changed. No longer was I a non-traditional, part time student with a vague notion of why I was there. I was a woman with an excellent mind who could learn about BRAINS!!! And here I am, twelve years later, learning and thinking and teaching about brains. I’m a bit absent-minded, disheveled, tangential, and utterly content with what I do. Sometimes life-choices have a way of working out, at strange times in very strange places. Even the women’s room. Go figure.

People

Student Profile

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Professor of Psychology

The course of my life changed right here at Westminster, not in the classroom. Instead, it occurred in the restroom... the second floor restroom in Converse, no less. Here’s how: I started Westminster a non-traditional, part-time student with a vague idea to change my life and no idea how to do it. I decided to major in English since I quite liked to read. It seemed right enough at the time.

My first semester I took English 101 (for obvious reasons) and Psychology 170 about Freud and dreams and such. By midterm, two issues came to light. First - I liked English and did it quite well. Second – people in psychology thought I was too one of those people. She was what one would think a brain scientist should be –absent minded, disorganized, and her lecture style was tangential at best. And I loved, loved, loved every minute of her class. My second semester, I took English 220 and an upper division course on BRAINS!!! By midterm, two issues came to light. First – I still liked English and did it quite well. And, second, I loved brains but brain class was hard! My psych midterm was a bear, and I was nervous about my performance. Once graded, the professor didn’t turn them back until the end of class and I desperately needed to pee. By the time she handed me my exam I shoved it in my backpack and sprinted for the door. I barely made it to the restroom... the one in the middle of the hall - with my backpack and papers in hand. I don’t even remember what I thought or did, but I made it to the women’s room in time. After I’d finished, I stood in front of the child-sized sink and pulled my exam from my bag. Flipping through pages in search of my score. There it was and I had done very well, but the professor had added a note below: I can see it today – the red ink, her surprisingly tidy script, in the weak winter light as it came through the window. “Great job,” it said. “You have an excellent mind for this kind of work. You should consider it as a career.”

And everything changed. No longer was I a non-traditional, part time student with a vague notion of why I was there. I was a woman with an excellent mind who could learn about BRAINS!!! And here I am, twelve years later, learning and thinking and teaching about brains. I’m a bit absent-minded, disheveled, tangential, and utterly content with what I do. Sometimes life-choices have a way of working out, at strange times in very strange places. Even the women’s room. Go figure.

Faculty Response

Stacy Blaylock
Class of 2011

The Honors program encourages students to make the most of the multiple opportunities available to them on the Westminster campus. Our fellow Honorables have held office in the SLC, edited the Echidna, and been editors for their respective staff members, and coordinated awareness and fundraising events for multiple causes. Honorals have shaped and defined the environment of Westminster outside of the classroom.

My first year at Westminster, V-Day swept me into its arms. V-Day is a global movement to stop violence against women and girls, centering on Eve Ensler’s controversial one-act play, The Vagina Monologues. Over the past eight years, V-Day at Westminster has raised more than $60,000 to support survivors of sexual violence, directly benefiting the Rape and Sexual Trauma Recovery Center in Sugarhouse. V-Day hosts a variety of events outside The Vagina Monologues: bake sales, workshops, auctions, and trainings. Needless to say, V-Day volunteers show passion and dedication to the cause.

In 2009, the previous organizer asked me to take on V-Day and coordinate the ever-growing campaign. Frankly, I was terrified. What followed was a year-long journey, with fulfillment where inspirational men and women worked together to reveal the stories behind the statistics of abuse. Most important of all, I learned about the cruelest we use against one another and the compassion we use to heal. I grew as a human. I came to Westminster as an unsure English student and I will graduate as a confident woman. I’m more than proud to represent the red and black of a Vagina Warrior.

I believe Honorals students, with our creativity and desire to excel, can discover ways to enrich our college experience. Perhaps we will find an experience that shapes us, one which we can embrace wholeheartedly. I understand now that, beyond my major and my grades, I belong to a community of wild, fierce, and unstoppable activists. The need to contribute meaningfully to the lives around me will always drive me. That the Honors program has provided me with the confidence and resources to create my own path. No matter what future I create, I will create it with the dignity and passion that V-Day has given me.  

Student Response

Describe an instance when an on-campus opportunity inspired you to create a new path for yourself. How do college experiences shape students’ personal pursuits?

People
Honors Independent Summer Research Grants

The Honors Program makes three $2,500 Independent Summer Research Awards annually. These awards are designed to support Honors students who are conducting high level research during the summer in lieu of a full-time summer job. These projects should lead to conference papers or publishable work. The application process takes place during the spring of each year and is administered by the Honors Council. Abstracts from the 2010 awards follow:

“The Institutional Incentive for Corruption within Utah State Government”
Cooper Henderson • Senior • Economics

In January 2009 corruption within Utah's state government became a huge focus for policy makers, the local media, and citizens alike. The state of Utah suddenly reflected about corruption within state government. Whether this corruption was real or perceived sparked legitimate tension within the state and amplified public interest in this story. People across Utah debated about the condition of their government and engaged in a thought experiment to identify the characteristics of an ideal state government. This research interprets the end results of this sudden focus on corruption in Utah, particularly the ethics reform passed in 2010 by the Utah State Legislature. To offer perspective for the ethics bills signed into law during 2010 this research explores the events and actions from the fifteen months immediately prior to the ethics reform in question. First, this research explains the abrupt focus on corruption by recounting the buildup to the 2009 General Legislative Session and cataloguing the ethics bills signed into law in 2009. This research then analyzes key events after the close of the 2009 General Legislative Session, especially the formation of the Governor’s Commission on Strengthening Democracy. The final report from this Commission presents a thorough and bipartisan analysis of state government in Utah, which this research utilizes to provide a reference point for the ethics reform passed in 2010. After dissection of the Commission's final report, this research recounts the buildup to the 2010 General Legislative Session and then catalogues the ethics bills signed into law in 2010. This enables a comparative analysis between the bipartisan recommendations offered by the Commission and the partisan legislation passed by the Utah State Legislature. The inconsistencies revealed through this analysis yield insight into the condition of state government in Utah. Finally, this research then uses John Rawls’ Theory of Justice to interpret the contradictions between the Commission’s bipartisan recommendation and partisan legislation passed by elected representatives.

“Art and Activism in Escalante Country: An Environmental Literary History”
Cassidy Jones • Senior • English

The Grand Staircase-Escalante region of south central Utah is an area at once rich and burdened by natural magnificence, cultural heritage, and national approbation. In 1996, acting under the jurisdiction of the Antiquities Act of 1906, President Bill Clinton established 1.7 million acres of desert, rivers, and rocks as Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, a federally protected parcel of wilderness study area and open space and the first national monument to be managed by the Bureau of Land Management. This historical development and the events that followed in its wake—abrupt designations of nationally protected resources, forced limitation of animal husbandry, and mounting popularity with backcountry recreation enthusiasts—make Escalante country an interesting and timely setting for environmental thought.

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“In the early 1960’s newborn screening (NBS) was handed off by the federal government to the states for the purpose of testing infants for treatable disorders. Although this initiative was mandated by the federal government, the manner in which the program was implemented was left up to the individual states. Some states declared newborn screening a vital public good and exercised the program with force, mandating that all babies must be screened, while other states chose to use an opt-in model requiring clinicians to get permission from parents to perform the test. Complicating this variability was the introduction of mass-bio-sample research. Newborn screening is an ideal program for the gathering of a mass amount of genetic information within a given population. The problem is the permission to do this research (and the retention of samples) has been combined with the consent process in newborn screening. The permission for using someone's genetic information for study and research is essentially leeching off the permission granted from newborn screening. Research should be separated from the clinical application of newborn screening, and different consent models should be used. However, for the purpose of my research I worked only in the context of the clinical benefit of newborn screening and the consent processes that govern it from state to state, ignoring the varying attachment of research permissions and specimen retention. I specifically analyzed and evaluated the opt-out approach to newborn screening and illustrated that the model does not fulfill the requirements of an opt-out consent program and how the function of this model neglects parental autonomy and ultimately coerces parents into consenting. In concluding my research I compared the problems the public vaccine initiative is experiencing to what could become the problems of newborn screening and advised that, in creating a national consistency for newborn screening, education and effective communication between clinician and parent is necessary for the success of the program.”

Tyler Sutton • Junior • Bioethics

In an age of overdevelopment, urban sprawl, and environmental exploitation, understandably romantic notions surround open space initiatives. Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument is no exception; the Bureau of Land Management presents the monument as a national public asset for recreation, research, education, and preservation. However, Escalante is remarkable in the sense that the other side of the story seems unwritten. Environmental literature concerning other gems of Utah landscape abound as intriguing records of changing cultural perceptions about environment and wilderness. As of yet, Grand Staircase-Escalante seems devoid of similar creative examination. Whether skipped, skirted, or omitted, Escalante is simply missing from much literature and history about the state of Utah. Awareness of and accessibility to texts about Escalante are distinctly lacking; thus, this study was principally designed to uncover and compile literary works of a place that seems both an ideological and a geographical frontier. Though scarcely referenced as of yet, works of Escalante environmental literary history offer ideas that resonate with Utahns as people living in enigmatic and endemic terrain. This project intends to present material and conceptual evidence that Grand Staircase-Escalante has a place in Utah's state history and its current identity.
Dear Honorable,

We could not be more excited to welcome you to another amazing and fun-filled year in the Westminster Honors program! As this semester has progressed, we have been thrilled with the enthusiasm we see both from returning classes and our new class of freshmen. So many of you have already chosen to make this program your own and that is exactly what honors is all about. We encourage you to continue to involve yourselves with the activities and events that will enrich your college experience however you allow them to. As always, we are here to facilitate that experience and would love to speak with any and all of you whenever you like.

With Honor,

Your SHC (Jake Wayman, Camber Stoddard, Marya Smith, & Hailey Henderson)

From Your Editors

Dear Colleagues,

As each year brings a wave of new faces to the Honors program, we are reminded of the diversity within our group. Some of us snowboard and some ski, some analyze proteins and some dissect literature, some are quiet and pensive and some outgoingly boisterous, but we are all bound together by our shared passion for learning.

Each semester as we set about editing Honorable Mention, we find ourselves once again amazed at the variety of accomplishments made by our fellow students. From completing summer research projects to participating in student government to presenting at conferences, your list is impressive and inspiring. But the best part of learning about your accomplishments is noticing how inspired each of you has been by your fellow students, your experiences here at Westminster, and your lives outside the classroom. You find a passion and pursue it, and we commend you.

As this semester draws to a close, we must bid farewell to one of our editors, Meghan Hekker. We wish her luck in her future endeavors and hope she finds as much inspiration in her pursuit of graduate school as she has in her time here at Westminster. We hope you all have a good break, and continue to find your own inspirations and, in turn, inspire others.

Honorably Yours,

Meghan Hekker
Cassidy Jones
Jackie Wilson
Elizabeth Nelson
Co-editors of Honorable Mention

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