Honors Students Present at National Honors Conference

Three others share their undergraduate research with a national audience

Over the past year, Honors students have been hard at work, undertaking research projects and presenting at national conferences.

Two Honors students—Courtney Hammond and Katrina England—participated in an interdisciplinary group research project this summer through the McNair Scholars Program. The student researchers involved in this project came from a variety of disciplines, including psychology and philosophy. They investigated bullying among children in the Youth City afterschool program by administering surveys to students and holding focus groups, and then proposed potential solutions to these bullying challenges.

Another Honors student, senior Yvonne Clark, carried out summer research through McNair, alongside a complementary project funded by a Westminster summer research grant. Yvonne's research began in the Honors seminar Human Culture and Behavior, when she participated in a group project examining gender roles in popular children's movies. “I started to get really interested in gender roles, how society represents them, and what that means behaviorally,” Yvonne said.

For her project, Yvonne first performed a content analysis of young adult romance novels. She expanded on this study for her McNair project, an experiment in which participants read a passage from Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* and then responded to questions that tested whether their beliefs about gender were affected by gender stereotypes in the passage.

As a result of this research, *Bitch Magazine*, a prominent feminist pop culture magazine, will publish an article co-authored by Yvonne and her faculty mentor, Dr. Christy Seifert.

Courtney, Katrina, and Yvonne, along with their fellow McNair scholars, presented their research projects at the annual McNair Symposium held in Berkeley, California. Yvonne was selected as one of the plenary speakers at the conference, where she spoke before an audience of 500 attendees.

This was the first conference experience for many of the student researchers. Courtney enjoyed the atmosphere of the symposium, saying that, “everyone was super supportive,” and Katrina added that the work on underrepresented groups among the McNair research projects was fascinating.

All of the McNair researchers in the Honors program noted that Honors helped them overcome research challenges. “We had the humanities and hard sciences [in the group], so it was hard to get all our research ideas to mesh,” Courtney said. “It ended up being a really good experience.” Katrina joined Courtney in emphasizing that their experiences in the Honors classroom helped them reconcile the perspectives that each researcher brought to the project. Yvonne credited her experiences in the Honors program with helping her carry out unconventional research. “If I hadn't experienced Honors, I wouldn't have been able to defend an interdisciplinary point of view very easily,” she said.

Honors students also presented individual research projects at the National Collegiate Honors Conference in Boston this November. The majority of the presenters this year participated in Student Interdisciplinary Research Panels (SIRP), in which students discuss their research with students from different fields whose research touches on similar themes.

This year’s submissions all originated as term papers for the Honors seminar History and Philosophy of Science. Many of the presenters noted that their discussions in class led them to make connections to topics within their respective disciplines. One of the presenters, junior Nicole Bedera, explored how the globalization of clinical research trials exploits vulnerable populations in developing countries. Lauren Johnson, a senior, criticized the work of Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger in terms of evolutionary feminism and sociobiology. Junior Melanie Long examined how changes to economic thought over time have led to contradictions between the field’s goals and the criteria for scientific inquiry.

The three presenters enjoyed discussing their research and hearing about Honors programs across the country. Nicole described meeting other Honors students as fun and valuable: “It... got me thinking about ways to improve our program to fit our students even better.”

-Melanie Long
The Honors students of Fall 2012 sit on the green during orientation.

Shaking up Orientation with puzzles, riddles, and probing questions

Junior works to make geology major a reality

Lime and talc and basalt, oh my!

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get their first taste of the phrase “find

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Now her interest in geology has

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Stanley, Green recently created an

the University of Utah, Weber State University, and Westminster College—to meet the

Riddle Me This

The peer mentor Q&A also played

Over the past few years, Honors

- Hannah Williams

Lime and talc and basalt, oh my!

Junior works to make geology major a reality

most Honors students know Aurora Green.

The blond-haired junior can regularly be found teaching cycling at the YWCA studio on Saturday mornings, walking her two-year-old golden retriever/Great Pyrenees dog, Stanley, or serving as a peer mentor for the 2012-2013 entering Honors freshman class.

But when she is not busy with those responsibilities, she is

taking care of Stanley, Green is likely planning her schedule for

next year, when she will travel

between three universities—

the University of Utah, Weber State University, and Westminster College—to meet the credit requirements for Environmental Geology, a contract major Green created during her freshman year.

Would Westminster not offer a

major and about halfway through

my freshman year, I realized that

environmental studies and paleontology

majors did not fit with what I wanted to do with my life,” Green said. “So I made my own major.”

Green attributes her interest in geology to her father, Scott Green, who, during her youth, would normally stop the car during long car rides to look at rock formations.

“At the time, I would always roll down my windows whenever my dad pulled over to look at [the geologic formations],” Green said. “But after my first geology class, I realized how much I was missing.”

Now her interest in geology has escalated to an almost dangerous point, as Green experienced in the Zion Red Rock Relay this past September. “I was so busy looking at the rocks that I almost ran off the road!” Green said.

Green feels that her passion for geology is worth the additional stress of registering at two additional colleges, though she acknowledges her life would be much easier if Westminster offered a geology major.

“Driving between three different universities will definitely be a hassle,” Green said. “I don’t want any more

Westminster students interested in geology to have to do the same.”

Green has turned her desires into action. Since last spring, Green has worked with Honors professor, Dave Goldsmith, to bring a geology major to Weston.

“The process is slow,” Goldsmith said. “Both the full faculty and the board of trustees must approve any major curriculum changes at Westminster. Geology is just beginning the process of being approved.”

If everything goes according to plan, students can expect to see a geology major at Westminster by the 2013-2014 school year.

“It just makes sense to have a geology major here,” Green said. “The Wanship Mountains are in our backyard and have so many visible geologic features. Southern Utah has a lot to offer, as well.”

But Green and Goldsmith encourage students interested in a geology major to sign up for Intro to Geology in the spring and to complete their Honors requirements early.

“Making a contract major is definitely a lot of work, but it isn’t awkward for anything,” Green said. “I cannot imagine my life without geology.”

- Hannah Williams

You can find him chatting with

“Dr. Brian” Levin-Stankevich, the recently

born in New York, “Dr. Brian”

is in her first semester of the PhD in

Marie Martin (‘08)

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For her quarter project, she’ll explore molecular

Christina Della Iacono (‘12) is currently attending

University of Oregon, pursuing her PhD in Neuroscience. For her quarter project, she’ll explore molecular mechanisms of synapse formation in zebrabis.

Christina Della Iacono (‘12)

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Jessica Hawks (‘11) is currently working for the Utah Symphony | Utah Opera in the Education Department.

Katelyn Shackle (‘11) works for Nuimsi Bioscences, which does virtual histology for pharmaceutical companies.

Meghan Nestel (‘10) is in her first semester of the PhD in English Literature program at Arizona State University.

Allie Roach (‘12), since graduating last May, has moved to Seattle where she works as a Research Scientist for the University of Washington’s BMD lab, which is internationally recognized as one of the foremost leaders in researching and developing modern treatments for chronic kidney disease.

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NEWS

New Face at Westminster: Dr. Brian Levin-Stankevich

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Becoming a Leader on the Frontline

Adamson Lecture Series Hosts Eric Greitens

Eric Greitens spoke to Honors students during a private talk about his role and experiences with leadership.

Each August, a new cohort of Honors freshmen arrives from many different places and backgrounds. This year’s common read, The Heart and the Fist, gave those students both their first shared academic experience and a unique perspective on leading a meaningful life.

In the book, author Dr. Eric Greitens shares his experiences working with humanitarian causes, studying at Oxford, and serving in the Navy SEALs. As young college students, we may not share such extraordinary accomplishments, but we can certainly relate to Dr. Greitens’ desire to serve others.

Freshman Chris Klimler found Dr. Greitens’ stories applicable to adapting to college life. Chris wants to attend medical school because he loves working with people, and he thought that Dr. Greitens’ perspective on helping others was something that everyone should consider.

“I liked how his book really brought out the human aspect of what you can do to impact and change society,” he said, “even if it is not your primary goal or the way that you originally intended to do it.”

Eric’s account of Karen, an aid worker in post-genocide Rwanda, offers one example of how people can serve others. Karen brought her passion for religion to her work with an astonishing intensity. While Karen wasn’t a perfect person, she dedicated her life to helping those in need and improved the lives of many Rwandans. Everyone can appreciate Karen’s dedication and attempt to bring the same passion to their own ambitions, whatever their beliefs or goals.

Later in the semester, Dr. Greitens personally shared his passion for service with Westminster students at the Kim T. Adamson Lecture in International Studies. While fighting on the frontline in combat, he challenged each of us to step up to our own frontline somewhere in our community and make a positive difference. He promised that at each of our frontlines, we would encounter fear, pain, hardships, but pushing through those obstacles will strengthen us and help us find a passion for changing lives.

After living away from home and taking on difficult classes for the past few months, Chris relates to the way Dr. Greitens and his comrades approached SEAL training. “He stayed optimistic through his training. We can all relate through tough times, a positive outlook helps you push through the pain,” Chris said. “Everyone can find a way to serve others in their life and overcome the obstacles they will inevitably face, even if those obstacles don’t involve swimming miles through an ocean.”

- Chris Cunningham

Conflict and Change in Ireland

A Witness to One Community’s Struggle to Build Bridges of Peace

Because I’d spent my childhood in Utah where the rule of thumb is throw a stone and hit a church house, I’d seen more than my fair share of the steep-leaved buildings. But after the two mile trek to church that first Sunday in Ireland, I looked up and immediately recognized this meeting house as something new and different. The building that loomed before me was gated, locked—barred. It was a Protestant church on the Catholic side of town.

I’d arrived in Ireland with the intention of studying “read,” Irish traditional music. I’d returned to America well-versed in conflict and change.

I’d learn that while stamping the conflict in Ireland as one rooted in religion proves an easy label, it is also a misleading one. In reality, the conflict is too deeply steeped in the centuries-old political clash between England and Ireland to be irreparable, not truly a religious conflict at all.

And while the tension always existed, it was brought to a head in the northern half of Ireland in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, particularly in Londonderry (my temporary home) and Belfast. Since then, the violence has mostly tapered off, leaving a residue of antagonistic feeling. I often found myself in difficult conversations where it became necessary to pay attention to which words tumbled out of my mouth—whether I called the city LondonDerry or Derry, whether I currently lived in Ireland, Northern Ireland, or the UK, as these were all conversational cues that gave away political associations.

Luckily, I’d experienced a few difficult conversations before, in Honors classrooms. My experience in those classrooms enabled me not only to handle these challenging conversations and situations, but by exposing me to new ideas and various international issues, they helped me view the situation objectively.

One conversation in particular remains fresh in my memory. My roommate Karnataka once remarked that her friend Thomas, a student from London, needed to be careful at night; his English accent could spark trouble with certain crowds at local pubs. By contrast, my own American accent often got me off the hook, I was an outsider to the political turmoil.

Even as an objective outsider, I could not help but notice the division in what could have been a united, amicable city. Instead, the river divides two halves of a whole, the police station resembles a fortress, armed to the teeth and heavily guarded, and an unassuming church house requires padlocked gates.

But things are beginning to look up. The city of Derry built the Peace Bridge, a pedestrian bridge that spans the River Foyle, connecting the Catholic and Protestant sides of the river. On one side stands a statue depicting two individuals shaking hands, padlocked gates.

While building peace requires more than erecting a bridge across a river, it is a start. The Peace Bridge, which opened in 2011, connects both halves of the city, across the River Foyle.

- Chris Cunningham

Education

Student News & Notes

Yvonne Clark presented her research on Sextile Affective Characteristics in Young Adult Romance novels at the national McNair Scholar’s Research Symposium at UC Berkeley in August.

Catherine Mullin has been accepted into the fall 2012 cohort of McNair Scholars.

Elizabeth Nelson was interviewed on KBYU’s “Vote Utah 2012 - Election Night” show about her exit poll experience.

Lauren Johnson is presenting her research paper about sociobiology, evolutionary feminism, and Margaret Sanger at the National Collegiate Honors Council annual meeting.

Nicole Bedra, Pratik Raghuv, Abbie McKinney, Kayela Horrocks-Beyeler and James Strum competed with the Westminster College mock trial team.

Aurora Green trekked to Mr. Everest base camp on a May Term trip.

Morgan Anderson has been accepted to the Great Basin Chapter of the Air & Waste Management Association’s scholarship program.

Kartina England was named a Daktronics-NAIA Scholar Athlete for outdoor track and field.

Megan Peters represented Westminster’s Student Activities Commission at the National Association for Campus Activities Mid-America Conference in Grand Rapids, MI.

Abigail Speicher has started Daakye, a company which buys handmade purses and wallets from Ghana, Africa and sells them online. Money earned goes toward funding children's educations in Ghana.

Feltini Yasin is studying Astrophysics and Spanish in Antofagasta, Chile.

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Kartina England conducted summer research about bullying with the Ronald E. McNair Baccalaureate Achievement Program.

Caitie Wagner has become an Associated Residents Secretary for the Associated Residents of Westminster College.

Marlayna Townsend will present her summer research at the Occasional Temperament Conference held at Westminster in January. Her research explores a project examining the effects of specific gene polymorphisms on attention and emotional reactivity.

Doug Bergquist has been conducting research studying yeast cell metabolisms with the goal of making good-tasting beer with a low alcohol content.

Alicia Foster was selected as a Resident Advisor for the 2012-2013 school year.

Lauren Johnson is the editor-in-chief of Ellipsis, Westminster’s literary magazine.

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News

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Force base, healthcare reform, and campaign strategy, among many other topics. As one student posted on Facebook after the visit, “It. Was. Awesome.”

Always at the center of their own learning, each Honors student in the “Presidential Elections” is responsible for tracking a specific battleground state. During the week, students read and watch the news in their state. Then in class, students give a recap of the happenings in their state, report on changes in the polls, and give their own thoughtful analysis about the connections between the two.

“I have found it fascinating to learn how the politicians try to affect the swing states, such as [employing] pointed ads,” said freshman Sierra Kane. “I love analyzing what the two politicians do, and how even their smallest actions, can affect the race. I don’t think I would have understood the significance of these actions without this class.”

For many in the class, this is the first year they are eligible to vote. “Presidential Elections” offered these students an opportunity to educate themselves. “I wanted to be more politically informed, engaged, and aware” remarked Samantha Kilpack. Others signed up to build on an already solid foundation of political knowledge. “I signed up for the class to gain a better perspective for how I ought to fulfill my obligations as a citizen, young person, and voter,” said James Steur.

“Presidential Elections” offers Honors students the opportunity to grow as politically-minded citizens and to cultivate a life-long passion for civil service. “My ultimate hope was simply learning more about the political sphere that would change my perspective for the rest of my life.” In the case of this class, it’s mission accomplished.

-Katrina England

To some, election season is a time to chuckle at gaffs, judge presidential outerwear, and consider possibly moving to Canada. But ask the Honors students in this semester’s “Presidential Elections” class for their opinions and they’ll have quite a few more thoughtful things to say. This year, 13 Honors students, about half of whom are freshmen, signed up to talk politics and follow the race for the presidency in real time.

“Presidential Elections: Substance and Strategy” is a three credit Honors course offered only once every four years. Co-taught by Republican Roger Livingston and Democrat Randy Horiuchi, the class stays true to the Honors tradition of putting competing perspectives in conversation with one another. “I was really excited to have both the Republican and Democratic perspectives on the elections,” said sophomore Jasmine Carlson.

But although neither professor is shy about their sometimes-differing political positions, Livingston and Horiuchi demonstrate a deep respect for one another. “They present issues in a surprisingly civil manner,” commented junior Samantha Kilpack.

Both Livingston and Horiuchi bring a wealth of political experience to the classroom—Livingston served in the military, as a judge, and as an advisor to Orrin Hatch. Horiuchi currently serves as a Salt Lake County Council member. Because of their connectedness to the community, the professors have been able to round up some interesting guest speakers, including a political pollster, a worker for the Clinton administration, and a campaign worker for President Obama.

The highlight, though, was probably the hour the class spent with Senator Hatch the day after the presidential election. After discussing Force base, healthcare reform, and campaign strategy, among many other topics. As one student posted on Facebook after the visit, “It. Was. Awesome.”

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-Katrina England
André Biscaye, Junior

Biology major André Biscaye has brought a deep cultural understanding to Westminster’s Honors program. Because his father worked in development in West Africa, André spent much of his childhood there. When the time came to start high school, however, André moved to Colorado to live with his mother.

But it wouldn’t be long before he returned to the other side of the world. André received another opportunity to visit Africa with his father and he eagerly accepted. “It was interesting to see the developing world through a new lens,” André reflected, especially on a microscopic level,” he said. André plans to major in biology and has considered pursuing either a medical or educational career.

“As a junior in the Honors program, André has certainly evolved in his college years. “I have become more true to myself. I’m a little more confident, and I’m better at choosing what I want to do and saying no to what’s not really me.” Through the help of teachers whom he respected and admired, and supportive fellow students, André has found confidence in his future. And while he has not proclaimed any concrete goals for the years to come, he shares an intriguing outlook on his life. “As long as I’m passionate in what I am doing and am doing something I am genuinely interested in, then that, to me, is success. I feel like I’m flexible, so having a specific goal doesn’t really make sense. I can see myself going in several directions. I want to live in Africa as an independent adult someday, once the right opportunity presents itself.”

With his positive views and strong incentive to learn, André has opened his mind to new opportunities. “I’ve found that Honors students tend to really engage in the coursework and provide thoughtful insight into assigned readings and classroom discussions. To be sure, all the students at Westminster are great, but in my experience, Honors students are particularly invested in class discussion and participation. Since I began teaching in the Honors program, I’ve incorporated more discussions into all of my classes and I have learned to talk less and listen more. You could say I’ve been thoroughly indoctrinated into the Honors seminar style of teaching and learning. And while one might think such an approach wouldn’t work so well in a math class, in fact, tossing out something of a prompt and seeing what happens often leads to a more interesting and informative classroom experience for everyone. Last semester, I pushed this style of ‘teaching’ quite far in one of my senior level math classes. I spent most of the semester sitting in the back of the classroom, making the occasional comment or critique, but mainly I just let the students do the talking. I found that when students adjusted to this style of learning, they enjoyed being part of a very intelligent and interesting conversation. We all learned a lot and it was certainly more fun than simply listening to a lecture. I probably wouldn’t have thought to conduct class this way had it not been for my ongoing involvement in the Honors program.”

Richard Wellman
Professor of Mathematics

In what ways has your experience in the classroom been incorporated into your life and activities, and how has that changed your perspective?

Richard Wellman
Professor of Mathematics

I’ve had the pleasure of teaching the History and Philosophy of Science seminar with Geology professor Dave Goldsmith for the past three years. Teaching a class where discussions are completely unpredictable and can range from super computers and the world’s latest infrared camera to the latest music video fads has been great fun. But aside from just being fun, these class discussions often challenge common conceptions and provide a mechanism for students to voice their own ideas. Because of this, I have learned a lot from both Dave and the students in the class.

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Richard Wellman
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Giancarlo Panagia, Assistant Professor of Justice Studies

Faculty Response

Annie Brings
Senior

Student Response

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Giancarlo Panagia, Assistant Professor of Justice Studies

This semester, Giancarlo and Russ Costa are exploring the relationship between society and crime in their team-taught seminar, Human Culture & Behavior. Giancarlo loves team teaching and says he feels fortunate to work with Costa, because they can present material that they both feel is important to share. The two professors agree on many things, from grading students’ work to deciding what information is most important to share. But even through grading and teaching has been both exciting and challenging for these two, team teaching is still a process of trial and error.

This native Italian living being here at Westminster for many reasons, though he says that nothing here can compare to authentic Italian cuisine (except for maybe Settebello). He recently returned from a May Term trip exploring Italian foods. You can never go wrong with good food and exceptional professors! -Caitie Wagner

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"I’ve had the pleasure of teaching the History and Philosophy of Science seminar with Geology professor Dave Goldsmith for the past three years. Teaching a class where discussions are completely unpredictable and can range from super computers and the world’s latest infrared camera to the latest music video fads has been great fun. But aside from just being fun, these class discussions often challenge common conceptions and provide a mechanism for students to voice their own ideas. Because of this, I have learned a lot from both Dave and the students in the class.

I’ve found that Honors students tend to really engage in the coursework and provide thoughtful insight into assigned readings and classroom discussions. To be sure, all the students at Westminster are great, but in my experience, Honors students are particularly invested in class discussion and participation. Since I began teaching in the Honors program, I’ve incorporated more discussions into all of my classes and I have learned to talk less and listen more. You could say I’ve been thoroughly indoctrinated into the Honors seminar style of teaching and learning. And while one might think such an approach wouldn’t work so well in a math class, in fact, tossing out something of a prompt and seeing what happens often leads to a more interesting and informative classroom experience for everyone. Last semester, I pushed this style of ‘teaching’ quite far in one of my senior level math classes. I spent most of the semester sitting in the back of the classroom, making the occasional comment or critique, but mainly I just let the students do the talking. I found that when students adjusted to this style of learning, they enjoyed being part of a very intelligent and interesting conversation. We all learned a lot and it was certainly more fun than simply listening to a lecture. I probably wouldn’t have thought to conduct class this way had it not been for my ongoing involvement in the Honors program.”

Richard Wellman
Professor of Mathematics

Annie Brings
Senior

Most of us know how unique the tone of an Honors class can be, between the inside jokes, the frustrating or inspiring readings, and the often intense discussions, students and professors form a bond that transcends what the majority of college students experience in their most intimate classrooms. An expectation of preparedness, an inspiring level of dedication from professors, and the camaraderie between fellow students all contribute to the classroom tone. But above all, when students in a classroom have time to catch up to one another, I believe communication and learning are heightened to an incredible degree.

Admittedly, I am a loud student. I love contributing to discussions, sometimes to a fault. Many of us have been trained from a young age that “participation” means talking, and when all of our Honors classes involve some sort of participation score, it is easy for loud students to get carried away.

Somewhere along my Honors journey, I realized that constantly talking, formulating witty comebacks, and jumping on other people’s comments did not serve me as well as I thought it did. I got good points in participation, but oftentimes could not recollect the full arc of a class discussion. I only remembered what I had said. I decided to sit back for a couple of classes and really listen to my peers. I found that when I really listened, the class became electric; it became so exciting to follow the points of the conversation, and my comments stopped sounding like attempts for attention. Instead, I was eager to respond honestly to my peers and friends, and when I had a class full of people who were focused on listening and participating, our discussions reached new depths and we were able to focus at a level of detail that I had previously not experienced.

I wonder, often, if our society lost the skill of listening when we increased the availability of technology. We spend most of our time communicating by text these days, which makes it easy to forget the benefits of face-to-face communication. I know, though, that revisiting my idea of listening improved my skills as a theatre student and increased my awareness in daily life, in my relationships and my other classes. I learned the value of listening in an Honors classroom.
Ovarian Cancer in Utah: Incidence, Mortality, and Risks
Elizabeth Nelson

Despite medical advances in cancer diagnosis and treatment in recent decades, the prognosis for women diagnosed with ovarian cancer remains poor. This is primarily due to inadequate screening methods and resulting late clinical diagnoses. Research has shown that survival improves if women are diagnosed early (Stage 1), suggesting that appropriate screening tests combined with better identification of at-risk groups could significantly improve mortality rates in this devastating disease.

I conducted a descriptive epidemiological investigation of ovarian cancer in Utah using data from the Utah Cancer Registry obtained through the Utah Cancer Registry. Seer*Stat software was used to generate incidence, mortality, and survival rates for ovarian cancer within a cohort of women diagnosed from 1973-2009. De-identified data was extracted from Seer*Stat to conduct multivariate and multivariable models of cancer incidence and survival to assess the impact of specific demographic and clinical factors. The conclusions of this research uphold many of the general theories regarding ovarian cancer, although the data is unique specific to Utah. As age at diagnosis increases, the incidence rates of ovarian cancer also increase. The most significant increase in incidence occurs between the 30-39 age group and the 40-49 age group, perhaps indicating the best time for preventative testing. As age at diagnosis increases, five-year survival rates decrease in a predictable, linear fashion, highlighting the need for successful screening methods. Interestingly, the overall trend in incidence rates from 1973-2009 reveals a decrease in the number of cases in Utah, whereas the number of deaths has increased. This emphasizes the need for earlier diagnosis. Furthermore, information on social factors such as smoking or alcohol use, number of children, and age at first child, number of sexual partners, diet, etc. must be collected in order to understand the complex nature of this disease and accurately predict associated risk factors.

Total Mercury and Methylmercury in Water and Brine Flies from Two Distinct Great Salt Lake Sites
Jeff Collins

The Great Salt Lake has some of the highest mercury concentrations ever measured in US surface waters. The accumulation of high levels of mercury, particularly in more toxic and readily biomagnified derivative, methylmercury, has been recorded in many species that inhabit the Great Salt Lake (GSL), including several waterfowl. However, a direct connection between mercury levels in the GSL birds and other organisms that do not live or feed directly in the GSL has never been established. Instead, the transfer of mercury from an aquatic ecosystem to a terrestrial ecosystem has only once been clearly demonstrated anywhere. As brine flies have been shown to contain significant levels of mercury, they may be a major contributor to mercury accumulation in animals that feed on them.

Samples of surface water and brine flies (larvae, pupae, and adults) were collected once each month between February and July at Antelope Island. Samples were collected from two distinct sites: Gilbert Bay on the west side of the island and Farmington Bay on the east. All samples were analyzed for methylmercury (MeHg) and total mercury (HgT) concentration. On average, HgT concentrations are greater in water samples from Farmington Bay compared to Lady Finger Point. MeHg and HgT levels in brine flies displayed the same trend, with higher levels at Lady Finger Point than at Farmington Bay. The HgT and MeHg levels in water and brine flies will be compared to those in shoaline arachnids and birds studied over the same time period to determine if contaminations exist among these groups. So far, arachnids show the same trend as brine flies, with higher mercury levels at Lady Finger Point than at Farmington Bay. This may suggest brine flies are a major source of mercury for Great Salt Lake spiders, but more data is required before any definitive conclusions can be drawn.

It's tough to write the story of "my life since graduation" even if it has only been a year, so I'm going to talk about people—appropriate because anyone who knows me in college knows I'm sort of overeagerly social. But I'd really like to do this as my way to truly value the relationships I made in Houston. They helped me get a Fulbright, prepared me to interact with a diverse, bright new group of peers, and influenced my teaching style. Not to mention that the art of interdisciplinary conversation I learned in my classes and from spending time in the Honors community helped me learn an enormous amount about Turkey and the region.

Early in my junior year of college, Westminster hosted a session about national fellowships and other sponsored post-graduate opportunities. Though it didn't help me, it made me more interested in going abroad. My interest really piqued in October of my junior year when I met a friend from another university at a national Honors conference who had just applied for a Fulbright ETA. Alban from Western Kentucky University eventually received the grant. We kept in touch while he worked in Nepal, and he helped me apply for mine. Though it started out as a floating notion about going abroad after college, my interest morphed into a natural next step. And Honors peers made it so.

When I arrived in Ankara, the Fulbright community reminded me very much of my 2007 Honors orientation—the immersion, the newness, the trying to play it cool. My Fulbright peers came from all over the country and from varied phases of life. Many of us were 22 or 23 years old, fresh from undergraduate experiences; others were close to 30 with master's degrees and Peace Corps tours under their belts. In my site alone, the seven of us brought academic backgrounds in literature, art history, religion, government, linguistics, math, and German. Some people's credentials and alma maters left me star struck, but much like at Westminster, I learned from my friends and soaked up their expertise, seeking out their opinions about world issues and cultural phenomena. By early November, we were back to back packing trips along the Mediterranean coast with two Yale grads and a Stanford man (as well as visiting Westminster Grad Jake Wayman), I finally got to it. During this trip, I engaged in young people who liked the outdoors. How cool was it that we could all be on the same footing, enjoying each other's company, and talking about big ideas?

While I loved chatting with friends and hiking around fascinating landscapes, the things I learned from my teaching experience and students are world-view-altering. My students were from all over Turkey and its border countries—Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Azerbaijan. I worked to help them feel comfortable speaking English and tried my best not to get political. But as it turns out, students like to talk about what's important to them. (Sound familiar?) Since talking was my main goal, I drew on my own discussion-based classroom experiences and went with it. I can't tell you how often I thought about my Westminster professors and attempted to model myself after them in tough teaching situations. Sometimes that situation was reining in the loquacious know-it-all, sometimes it involved listening uncomfortably but sincerely as my student from Baghdad talked about his relationships with US soldiers. And while I didn't often do it during class, some heavy classroom conversations prompted me to check in with my Syrian students—something I still do as their families' cities remain under siege. In many ways, I had no idea what I was getting myself into when I moved to southeastern Turkey, but even if I had, I could have never predicted what my kids would teach me and how we would connect through the classroom. They were my number one source of education and getting to know them is one of the coolest things I've committed a year of my life to.
Dear Honorable,

At the start of another new year, we warmly welcome back the upperclassmen from their summer endeavors, as well as a fantastic group of interesting and bright new freshmen. We look forward to the new year and the promises it holds. Starting with Honors Orientation, the freshmen have shown a great level of enthusiasm, curiosity, and engagement that has continued throughout the semester, benefiting the Honors community as a whole. Involvement from both new and old Honors students has led to the success of this semester's Honors events. This semester included the traditional event, Profs Pick the Flick, where Professor Iñaki played the fascinating film También la Lluvia, which drew a huge crowd. We hope that our strong Honors community will continue to grow, and we also hope to aid that growth in whatever way possible. We look forward to a successful year with our favorite Honors community!

Hot cocoa-like regards,

Your 2012-2013 SHC
Sam Wilkinson
André Biscaye
Jeff Collins
Max Rutherford

Dear Colleagues,

Since its inception, the Honors program at Westminster has witnessed change in everything from new buildings to new faculty, and in doing so, has evolved into a stronger, more effective program. Similarly, Honors students witness changes themselves—from new presidents on campus to experiencing cultural conflict abroad. But they’ve done—and are doing—so much more. They’re not just witnessing these changes, they’re effecting change in everything from new majors to researching ovarian cancer and mercury in brine flies and innovation in community projects.

As the Honorable Mention staff, we hope to follow the lead of so many of our peers and effect change. We aim to not only capture the best of our peers’ doings, but to bring about change ourselves. In this vein, we are pleased to present the first issue of Honorable Mention to ever appear in full color. We hope the changes and efforts put into this newsletter accurately reflect the changes and efforts our colleagues put into their own endeavors. Thanks, fellow Honorables and alumni, for your continued awesomeness and support.

Keep on keepin’ on,

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