A note from Dr. Laura Guertin, Honors Coordinator

Typically, each issue of Honors Scholars Connect! is filled with highlights of the honors activities from the recent semester. It is very easy for me to write about the amazing successes of our scholars in academic excellence and community service. I wish there was enough space to include all of our events and seminars, and I certainly want to acknowledge that there are many guest speakers and on-campus staff support connected with our program that allow us to offer a complete honors experience.

Interestingly, I keep thinking back to one of our Voices of Innovation seminar speakers from Fall 2008. Marjorie Nightingale, Executive Director of Dress for Success Philadelphia, gave a truly inspirational speech about not only her background and how she came to work with Dress for Success, but she also shared her organization’s mission—developing leaders with courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place. I wrote these words down at the seminar, and I have had the words on my desk ever since.

It seems that Marjorie’s mission is not that different from what we strive to do with and for our honors scholars. We want our scholars to be able to take all that we offer them, whether it be content knowledge or new skill sets, and go out and engage with the local-to-international community. We hope that our scholars will be leaders in initiating and sustaining change. I am proud to know that there are organizations such as Dress for Success that share a common mission with us, that we can work with all populations/communities to develop global citizens.
Academic Excellence with Integrity

FACULTY AND STUDENT AWARDS

Undergraduate Research Award
In Spring 2009, the campus instituted a new award for excellence in undergraduate research. One student researcher was selected for his/her research accomplishments since January 2008, and one faculty research mentor was selected for outstanding supervision of undergraduate research. We are thrilled to report that two members of our honors program were selected for this honor! Senior Schreyer Scholar Lindley Jones won the undergraduate researcher award for her research accomplishments that have included presenting at the Pennsylvania State Capitol and at a national conference. Honors Coordinator Dr. Laura Guertin was chosen for the faculty research mentor award for her work with undergraduates in classroom-based inquiry projects to full independent study projects that have been presented at conferences and published.

Penn State Teaching Fellow
Dr. Ivan Esparragoza, Honors Faculty Advisory Committee Member, was one of three University faculty members honored with the Alumni/Student Award for Excellence in Teaching and named 2009 Penn State Teaching Fellows.

National Teaching Award
Dr. Laura Guertin, Honors Program Coordinator, has been named the Geological Society of America’s 2009 recipient of the Donald and Carolyn Biggs Earth Science Teaching Award. The award recognizes the efforts and accomplishments of exceptional college teachers in the geoscience discipline. Dr. Guertin will receive her award in Portland, Oregon, in October and at that time she will also become a part of the geology hall of fame.

PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST WINNER FOR SPRING 2009

In Spring 2009, Paola Pedraza-Rivera was part of an honors cemetery demography research group that recorded data from the tombstones at Cumberland Cemetery across the street from campus. Congratulations to sophomore Paola for her winning entry!

“I took this picture during one of my excursions to Cumberland Cemetery. To me, this represents the “Competing Forces, Creative Tensions” honors theme because it shows two different ways of remembering the loved ones that have passed away. We have the normal way, creating a tombstone and putting their name on it. However, you also have the colorful toys in front of it. By using this unusual decoration the person who put it there is remembering the people as an individuals not as one more name on a tombstone.”

Paola will present in Spanish her cemetery research this September at a geography conference in Puerto Rico. Muy bueno!
Your Inner Fish was not only a popular book with our students but with a larger, global community. The book is currently on display as a “Curator’s Choice” at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History, and the book won Phi Beta Kappa’s 2008 Science Book Award. Here are some of the comments our scholars had about the book:

“Your Inner Fish does an amazing job taking scientific concepts and breaking them down into understandable, interesting chapters. I enjoyed seeing the similarities between my body and long dead creatures.” – Adrienne Showalter

“The book was alright. I don’t know whether it really proves anything, though. Similarities between creatures’ structures, bones, etc., can just as easily point to a common design as to evolution. There is more convincing evidence out there.” – Mary-Therese Capaldi

“I found Your Inner Fish very interesting. One of the most interesting facts was how the human middle ear bones developed. I could not believe they were once a reptile jaw. Another fact that I found interesting was the gradual development of the human eye. One last thing was how human are susceptible to disease and other viruses.” – John Formento

Having our campus so close to the city of Philadelphia certainly has its advantages—especially when the Inner Fish fossil, Tiktaalik, currently resides at the Academy of Natural Science! One of the fossil discoverers, Dr. Ted Daeschler of the Academy, was kind enough to give all of our honors scholars a private lecture on the discover of Tiktaalik. Then, he brought us behind-the-scenes at the museum to see the real fossil! While behind-the-scenes, we were also able to view specimens from Thomas Jefferson’s fossil collection and other vertebrate “megafauna.” We rounded out our visit by going through the special exhibit on Hadrosaurus foulkii, the first complete dinosaur skeleton discovered in the United States—right over the state line in Haddonfield, New Jersey!

Left: GEOSC 021H students posing in front of Hadrosaurus foulkii. Right: Scholars in the Academy’s auditorium for a private lecture by Dr. Daeschler.
One Scholar's Journey Through GeoSci 021H (Earth & Life)

Contributed by IST major Jonathan Hartline

My GeoSci 021H course this past semester covered a lot of ground; from the beginnings of the Earth to how we evolved into the human beings we are today. I was wondering how our class would address competing forces and creative tensions, the theme that would be the focus for honors classes during the academic year. It turns out that competing forces and creative tensions have a lot to do with everything we covered in class.

First, we covered the competing forces that caused our solar system to form, known as the solar nebula theory. After this, we learned about the geologic time periods and what forms of life started to come into existence at each time period. Around this time, we started to answer questions about Your Inner Fish, the literary launch for the spring semester. Before this point in our class, I was wondering what this book had to do with competing forces and creative tensions. It was easy for me to grasp the tensions involved in making a living in our fall read, Nickel and Dimed, but what forces does a prehistoric fish discovered in the Arctic have to do with competing forces? It was only after I started reading the book that the answer to this question became clear in my mind. Tiktaalik, as Neil Shubin describes it, is a very distant cousin of all of us. All life that is on land today evolved long ago from animals that lived in the water. It is the competing forces of the water-dwelling creatures of the time that caused creatures that could not defend themselves such as Tiktaalik to evolve lungs in order to temporarily escape their predators. Evolution as a set of competing forces and creative tensions can best be seen in chapter four of Shubin’s book, in which he discusses the evolutionary development of teeth, which developed over time in order to tear apart the flesh of other species in order to survive.

While we were reading about how certain parts of our bodies evolved over time from other creatures, we were also reading about a different set of competing forces and creative tensions through Great Feuds in Science, which documents “Ten of the liveliest disputes ever.” While we only discussed the feuds that involved concepts and theories we were reading about, this documented a whole different aspect of competing forces and creative tensions. Whether it was Galileo arguing against Pope Urban VII and the Catholic Church in favor of a heliocentric universe or the constant debate about Charles Darwin’s theories on evolution, people’s opinions and heartfelt beliefs collided in several arguments, most of which had little or nothing to do with what they were arguing about. This put a human perspective to the class, as well as helped to set the stage for our final project.

Our last project for the semester made a personal connection to the competing forces of nature and the creative tensions of human beings through the use of the Genographic Project. We read Spencer Wells’ Deep Ancestry, which told us what the Genographic Project was all about through the stories of six people from different areas of the world. Each person in the book had a question about their ancestors they were curious about, and the answers to these questions were determined after analyzing their DNA taken from a cheek swab in their mouth. In February, our class did these same cheek swabs and contributed our DNA to the Genographic Project, which took
about a month to analyze. We then took the information that we gathered about our own genetic history and mapped out the approximate locations where our ancestors had once lived using Google Earth. It has been determined through Genographic Project research that all humans originated somewhere in Africa from a female source known as Mitochondrial Eve and later spread to the other places of the world. What caused our ancestors to spread as far as they did? It was the competing forces of nature that formed large ice sheets in the North and South poles during the earliest of human times. This caused water supplies to dwindle, and people traveled where they could find what they needed to survive. Later, it would be the tensions between people or job prospects that would cause them to leave their homelands for a better life.

Last Semester, Geosci 021H was one of my favorite classes not only because of what I learned about the process of finding fossils and what happened in the past, but also because of what I was able to learn about myself. The Genographic Project allows people to trace either their father’s genetic history through the Y-chromosome (males only) or their mother’s genetic history through mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA). Because my mother didn’t know much about her own genetic history, I chose to test my mtDNA and found out that I belong to Haplogroup U. While this can only trace my maternal ancestors to the continent of Europe, the Genographic Project promises to offer more information to its participants as they learn more about the research they are doing. I like how they can trace everyone to one particular female ancestor, showing that we are all related. In this light, the only thing that separates the human race is the cultures and customs of a particular country and not genetic structure.

GEOSC 021H WORDLE FOR “EVOLUTION” - BEFORE AND AFTER

GEOSC 021H (Earth & Life) students were asked on the first and last day of classes to come up with six words that, to them, define "evolution." Below is the comparison of frequency and relations of the terms as generated by Wordle. Note that on the first day (left), “adaptation” was stated repeatedly by the students, but was not as frequent as “time,” “traits,” and “growth” at the end of the semester (right).

Credit: http://www.wordle.net/
In February, honors scholars from the Brandywine, Berks, and Beaver campuses participated in a photo collaborative in flickr. Scholars used this online photo sharing tool to submit photos and discuss the theme EVOLVE. In addition to uploading a photo, scholars were asked to provide some information and a description as to how they felt their photo connected with the theme EVOLVE.

The photos ranged from trees to technology. Some photos were taken locally, while others were taken overseas. The discussion board in this flickr group allowed the students to share their thoughts and new perspectives on the term EVOLVE, especially after viewing what their peers submitted.

Images may still be viewed at: http://www.flickr.com/groups/pennstateevolve/

Stay tuned, as we will be doing another honors flickr collaborative in Spring 2010!

SOCRATIC SYMPOSIUM SPRING 2009

Each semester, all honors scholars come together for our Socratic Symposium, a celebration of the academic scholarship in the honors courses, in honors option projects, and in honors independent research projects. The following are the titles of the posters presented for honors option and honors independent study projects:

- An Independent Study of Honors Concepts of Discrete Mathematics, Daniel Sprik, MATH 311M
- CRM Past, Present and Future, John Formento, MIS 204/SCM 200
- Robotics Lego NXT Mindstorm and MATLAB, Tuan Ngo and Qian Ye, E E 210
- Multiple Narratives of the Christiana Riots, Dana Gibson, ENGL 310H and AM ST 296
- International Business and the Australian Jewelry Industry, Diane Paolo, I B 303
- America’s Middle Class, an Attack on the Heart, Christopher Collins, PL SC 496
- Using the Grid System to Document Smithsonian Dinosaur Type Specimens, Jennifer Choi, EARTH 496

Images include: John Formento (left), Dana Gibson (middle), and Dr. Charles Helou with his honors advisee Dan Sprik (right).
Scholars from NRHC (left to right): James Wang, Paul Cheung, Chris Collins, guest scholar Town Crier Frederick, Jen Choi, Kyle Lauser, Teron Meyers.

The honors program had six students presenting at Northeast Regional Honors Conference (NRHC), Annapolis, MD, March 27-29, 2009. Presentations included:

- Kyle Lauser, “A proposal to eliminate urban hunger with community involvement and an innovative food distribution system.”
- James Wang, “Effect of ECG electrodes on ECG signal detection and interpretation.”
- Jennifer Choi, “Using the grid system to document Smithsonian dinosaur type specimens.”
- Christopher Collins, “The deconstruction of America’s middle class: an attack on the heart!”
- Teron Meyers, “Cultivating the Arts at Penn State Brandywine.”
- Paul Cheung, “The contradictions of a ‘one country, two systems’ policy.”

The honors program had five students presenting four posters at Sigma Xi (The Scientific Research Society) Research Symposium, Saint Joseph’s University, Philadelphia, PA, April 17, 2009. Poster presentations included:

- Pedraza-Rivera, P., Collins, C., Showalter, A., Lafauci, J., Guertin, L., Gender differences as perceived on Cumberland Cemetery tombstones. Presented by undergraduate authors C. Collins & P. Pedraza-Rivera.
On January 22, the Honors Scholars were treated to a private tour of the photography exhibit created by CEO and Founder of Traveling Mercies, Aldo Magazzeni. Aldo was born in Italy yet began his undergraduate career at Penn State Brandywine (then Penn State Delaware County). In October 2007 he founded Traveling Mercies (http://www.travelingmercies.org/index2.html), a non-profit 501(c) (3) foundation "dedicated to helping others, while creating a vehicle to remove barriers between cultures so that individuals can share their strengths, assets and blessings with each other. Human equality is most important and can only be achieved through compassion, love and sharing our life experiences."

Aldo exhibited his photographs from the people he has met and his work in Kenya and Afghanistan on campus during the spring semester. Aldo led two discussion for the scholars on the use of photography to communicate a message and how one can help others and have a global impact.

Thank you, Aldo, for inspiring us!

Although this is project is not one organized by the honors program, it would not have had the success it did without the outstanding leadership of one of our honors faculty members, Dr. Phyllis Cole, and Schreyer Scholar Dana Gibson.

With just weeks to go in the semester, students in Dr. Cole’s Women's Studies 400 class decided to make a difference at an international level. Aldo Magazzeni, Penn State Delaware County alum and photographer of Afghanistan, personally builds water systems for villages there with money contributed by American supporters. The students decided they wanted to follow up their experience of Aldo’s exhibit in our library and hosting of extraordinary Afghan "Woman of Courage" Suraya Pakzad by actively raising the $7000 needed to supply one village with a new water supply.

Through the efforts of leaders such as Dana and Dr. Cole, the campus raised $6,075 towards building a water system in the outskirts of Herat. Penn State is proud to support the efforts of Aldo Magazzeni, Suraya Pakzad, and others that are making a difference in the global community. The honors program will continue to support the efforts of Aldo and Suraya and others in the future.
Cooper Scholar Emily Robb is on a mission—to increase the number of volunteers that create huggy pillows for Chester County Hospital’s Cardiac Recovery Unit. Throughout 2009, Emily will be arranging several events for the campus and outside community members to learn how to make the heart-shaped pillow, essential during the post-op phase of heart surgery.

Emily’s first huggy pillow event took place in January. In conjunction with the Martin Luther King Day of Service, Emily organized a huggy pillow sewing event. Members of the campus and community, of all ages and sewing abilities, came together and sewed over 120 pillows for the hospital. Emily then delivered the pillows and was able to give one of the patients at the hospital his pillow after surgery. Stay tuned, as there will be more pillow-making events in the fall semester! To learn more, visit: http://tinyurl.com/huggypillow/

Left: Emily Robb with her huggy pillows.

Each semester, the honors scholars participate in National Honors Service Day. This spring, the group, under the leadership of first-year student Lauren Orner (pictured in the image standing on top left), the scholars decided they wanted to hold a volunteer event where the entire campus could participate. The scholars decided to pick up their scissors and cut coupons for a cause!

The scholars adopted a U.S. Navy base in Ikego, Japan, that was requesting donations of manufacturer’s coupons. From 11:30AM to 8:30PM, members of the campus and community came together to cut, sort, and add up all the coupons cut. The initial goal the scholars wanted to raise was $5,000. In the end, with the efforts of all involved, over $13,022 worth of coupons was shipped to the military service men and women and their families. Way to go, Lauren and all!
Literary Launch for Fall 2009

Scholars should begin reading our fall selection for the honors common reading, *Three Cups of Tea*. This book will be an excellent fit for our honors theme in the fall, which connects to the United Nations Millennium Goal of universal primary education.

May graduates?

You may be wondering what happened to the recognition for our May 2009 honors graduates. Interestingly, we did not have any scholars graduate in May! But stay tuned, as we have one (our first!) campus Schreyer Scholar graduating in August, three scholars graduating in the fall, and then five scholars graduating in May 2010. Speaking of our summer graduate....

Thesis defense for Lindley Jones

Be sure to stop by the campus on Thursday, July 16, at 7PM to hear Lindley Jones defend her thesis! Lindley’s defense will include a jewelry show of her own designs, inspired by her trip to Spain and Morocco. The defense will be in the Tomezsko Building Lounge.

Where are they on campus?

At the end of the spring semester, several of our honors faculty had to leave their offices in the Main Building and relocate due to asbestos removal. You can now find Dr. Goldschmidt, Dr. Cole, and Dr. Markley in the Vairo Library. Dr. Kennedy, our spring honors instructor for ENGL 001, is also in Vairo for the academic year.

Dinosaurs in London!

The campus is leading an international trip over Thanksgiving week. We will be offering an honors course on this trip—EARTH 150H, Dinosaur Extinction and Other Controversies. The course description is included here. Contact Dr. Guertin (guertin@psu.edu) with any questions.

For the majority of students, this will be the first true scientific introduction to dinosaurs. There are no prerequisites for the course, designed for non-science majors. Course content includes: life during the Mesozoic Era; the origin and classification of dinosaurs; dinosaur biology and behavior; the warm-blooded/cold-blooded debate; and the mass extinction that killed the dinosaurs. Additional topics include the important role early dinosaur paleontologists played and their international discoveries, and examining how dinosaurs have been portrayed in the media – accurately and erroneously. The most exciting part of the course will be visits to view original dinosaur fossils and sculptures in London. The class will visit London’s Natural History Museum and tour its Darwin Centre, visit the world’s first dinosaur sculptures at Crystal Palace, and visit Down House (home of Charles Darwin). Course multimedia projects include creating a podcast toast to Darwin, designing your own Jurassic Park, and a service-learning project using Flickr/Blurb to create a journey to the original dinosaurs.
SCHREYER SCHOLARS AT UNIVERSITY PARK

Dr. Guertin was able to visit with some of our former Brandywine students—now Schreyer Scholars—at University Park. Alex Lampros and Emily Helms (right) joined Dr. G at Golden Wok for dinner and discussed everything from world hunger to reminiscing about submitting their thesis proposal report.

A VISIT BY DR. OZMENT!

The campus was honored to have hosted a visit by the Associate Dean of the Schreyer Honors College, Dr. Judy Ozment (left in image). Dr. Ozment joined us on campus for our spring Socratic Symposium, campus undergraduate research symposium, and Academic Achievement Ceremony. Thank you, Dr. Oz, for taking the time to visit us at Brandywine! Pictured with Dr. Ozment are the campus Schreyer Scholars: Lindley Jones, Teron Meyers, Dana Gibson, and Adrienne Showalter. Missing from photo: Joseph Lafauci.

OTHER NEWSWORTHY ITEMS

Hats off to the GEOSC 021H students for participating in Absolutely Incredible Kid Day! On the third Thursday of every March, adults are asked to write letters to children to tell them how incredible they are. The GEOSC 021H students wrote dinosaur-themed letters for the children at Shriner’s Hospital in Philadelphia. (image of students writing letters on back of newsletter)

At the Student Leadership Recognition Night, our scholars made us Penn State Proud! Teron Meyers won the Deborah J. Erie Student Leader Award, Emily Robb won the Outstanding Community Service Award, and Paola Pedraza-Rivera won the Barbara Jackson-Williams Award for Cross-Cultural Understanding. Congratulations to all!

Lindley Jones and Teron Meyers were selected to represent the University at the Undergraduate Research Day at the State Capitol in March. Lindley and Teron were two of four Penn State students selected for this honor, presenting their research from the Solar Decathlon and Smithsonian dinosaurs. (image on back of newsletter)
Once you are a part of the Penn State Brandywine honors community, you are ALWAYS a part of our community, even when you graduate! We encourage all alumni to keep in touch with us. We welcome updates on what you have been up to since graduation. Please continue to share your experiences with us and the scholars that follow in your footsteps.

For students that begin with the Cooper Honors Program and transfer to University Park to finish as Schreyer Scholars, we want to hear from you, too!

Please send all changes of address and updates to:
Mrs. Gail Wray, Academic Affairs,
Penn State Brandywine
25 Yearsley Mill Road
Media, PA 19063

Or email: HONORS@BRANDYWINE.PSU.EDU