

THE HONORS COLLEGE

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

winter 2012



areté

The Newsletter of The Honors College at the University of Houston

Vol. 27 No.1



Celebrating 20 Years of Great Conversations
with Honoree Jane Cizik

Honors Students: By the Numbers

areté is published by the Honors College at the University of Houston. The name is a Greek word designating courage in a warrior and civic virtue in the polis. **areté** has come to mean excellence in character and action.

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(italics indicate current Honors students)

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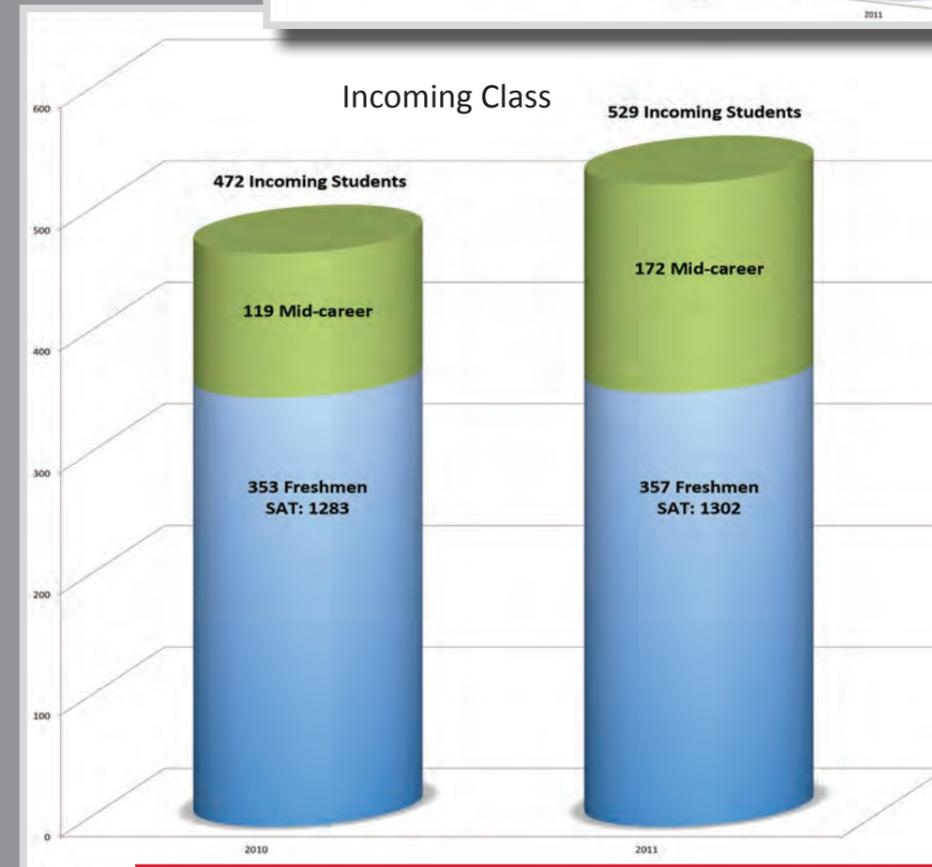
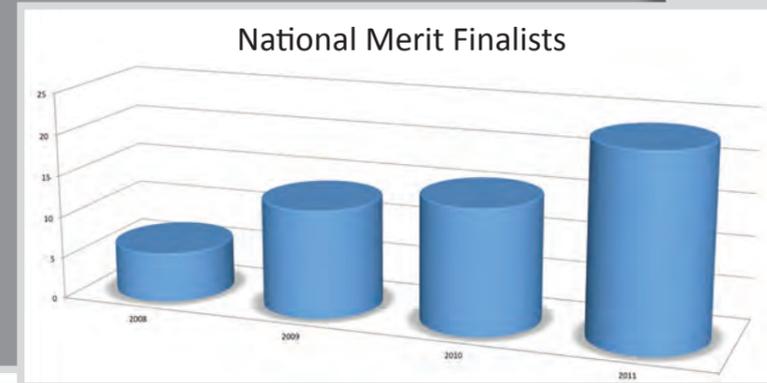
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The Honors College continues to grow—increasing class size, average SAT score, and National Merit finalists in 2011. Incoming mid-career students also reached a record high; read more about mid-career student growth and success on page 8, and review the entire Honors College incoming class profile at TheHonorsCollege.com/profile.



Explore pictures, video, and stories about the 2011 Honors study abroad trips to Ireland and Greece and see where 2012 takes the Honors crew at TheHonorsCollege.com/studyabroad.

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Twenty Years After: Jane Cizik and the Origin of *The Great Conversation*



Jane Cizik

On March 28, 2012, after a day of Human Situation discussion sections, science labs, and student conferences, University of Houston faculty will be engaging a different public: more than 300 of Houston's most intellectually curious entrepreneurs, lawyers, doctors, business leaders, and benefactors. This diverse assembly will be celebrating the 20th year of *The Great Conversation*, an award-winning fundraiser that has supported the Honors College and its students since 1993. That year it was dubbed a "feast for the mind" by *Houston Chronicle* society columnist **Shelby Hodge** for its special combination of black-tie dinner and seminar-style conversation. The one-of-a-kind fundraiser is the brainchild of **Jane M. Cizik**, Honors alumna and advisory board chair, whose unique journey and contributions to the College will be honored at this year's event.

In the 1970s, Cizik, the wife of a Houston businessman and mother of five, was a life-long reader yearning for a college education. Growing up, she had watched her mother, armed with only an 8th grade education and a reading list from a professor, pore over the classics, instilling the value of a great books education in her children. Cizik completed a course at the prestigious Katharine Gibbs Secretarial School in Manhattan and took various distance courses as she raised her children, but without a college degree her education felt incomplete. That's when a tennis friend told her about the Honors Program at the University of Houston.

So after her youngest child began his studies at St. John's High School, Cizik began studying for her SATs. She applied and was accepted to the newly configured University Honors Program in the late 70s—the program would not become a college until 1993—shortly after the arrival of founding dean **Ted Estess**. Cizik graduated in 1983, realizing her dream of a bachelor's degree and a high-quality liberal arts education.

It was Cizik's non-traditional route to Honors that inspired the idea for a "great books" gala when she was approached by Estess in 1992. Cizik had chaired many galas and charity events, and when asked to participate in a brainstorming session for a benefit showcasing the best of Honors, she knew

they would need to do something special. "In those years, gala meant something formal, and there was always 'entertainment.'" A veteran of The Human Situation, Cizik knew exactly what was special about Honors. "The best entertainment," Cizik said, "is what happens in Honors classes—Socratic dialogue."

While the Socratic model is practiced daily by faculty and students in the Honors College, it is not often used in the business world or the Houston philanthropic community. Events in support of education usually feature speeches by leading scholars in their fields followed by polite question-and-answer sessions, not the give-and-take of dialogue. "We wanted to bring together the town and the gown," Cizik said. Her idea was that members of the Houston community, led by faculty conversationalists, would have the opportunity to engage in an exploration of an academic topic—a "great book," a controversial political issue, or an intriguing aspect of the faculty member's research. The format of conversation would simulate the dialogue that takes place between professors and students in Honors College seminars. At the same time, the academics would step outside their comfort zone and into an unfamiliar world with

different rules. It was a challenge for both groups because, as Cizik said, "in a sense they were afraid of each other. I thought that meeting each other in a congenial setting would melt some barriers." Ultimately, the experiment was a success.

Working in collaboration with Estess, event co-chairs **Christopher Knapp** and **Grace Pierce**, former director of development **Marjie French**, first advisory board president **Catherine Campbell Brock**, and other members of the advisory board, Cizik served as honorary chair for the gala's first year. Members of the committee worked tirelessly to plan and promote the event—writing letters, calling old friends, and getting the word out to their respective social circles: "I got in touch with Shelby Hodge," Cizik remembered, "the society writer for the *Houston Chronicle*. I took her to lunch—in those days you could do that—and I told

College hopes to raise \$200,000 to put toward student scholarships.

Another lesson: faculty are not generally good dancers. "Some younger members of the advisory board wanted to have a band and time for dancing after the conversations concluded," said Estess. "By the end of the second year, we realized that *The Great Conversation* was not the time for dancing, at least not with your feet."

They also learned that while ornate floral arrangements are lovely in a ballroom, they do not make ideal centerpieces. "That first year the arrangements were so tall," Estess said, "they blocked everyone's vision across the table." The next year they selected more modest centerpieces, and eventually turned over the role of table decorating to Honors students, who for the past 15 years have made a creative project of designing thematic decorations for each table.

wondered how this difficult topic could be made interesting for my guests, but to my delight and surprise, Dr. Chu turned out to be one of the best conversationalists we've ever had. His intent wasn't to lecture. It was to engage and guide."

A community of receptive learners, joined together in conversation and guided by a gifted teacher—this has long been the hallmark of an Honors College education. But in 1993, the conversational model was "a new breed of fundraiser," as Hodge wrote at the time, and the pairing of donors and dialogue attracted its share of attention. In 1994, *The Great Conversation* was awarded the Outstanding Fund Raising Program Award by the Houston chapter of the National Society of Fund Raising Executives. Judged by the NSFRE committee to be "an innovative and effective example of enlisting financial support from the community,"

"We got the word out. This wasn't your ordinary gala. This was something special."

her about this idea we had. She was fascinated, and she gave us some much-needed publicity." Clearly impressed by the novelty of a conversation-based benefit, Hodge noted in her article the event's goal to "involve people in a meaningful way, appealing to their intellect rather than their vanity."

The publicity worked. Donor contributions exceeded that year's target—\$25,000 for a teaching fellowship—and the committee learned a few valuable lessons. For example, to trust in the generosity of the Houston community. Fundraising goals have since become more ambitious, and for *The Great Conversation* 2012, the Honors

The early years of *The Great Conversation* featured a few other surprises as well. "I was amazed to discover that the professors were anxious that first year," Cizik said, "coming out of their classrooms to talk about what they do to a totally different audience. They thought they were on trial." But the community and the academy soon embraced one other. "After that first exposure, the faculty realized it wasn't so bad," said Cizik. "The conversations were enjoyable."

One memorable year, Cizik was seated at a table with **Paul Chu**, a renowned physics professor and researcher in superconductivity at the University of Houston. "I

The Great Conversation joined the ranks of previous winners like the Hermann Hospital Employee Campaign for Life and the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center Jubilee Gala Ball.

Cizik hopes that the next twenty years of *The Great Conversation* continue to bring in new conversationalists, new ideas, and new participants. But some things, Cizik said, will never change: "We must never lose the continuity of the name or the intimacy of a small event. And most importantly, we must not lose sight of our mission: to engage the greater Houston community through an evening of sociability and conversation."

by Mallory Chesser





Campers on a photo scavenger hunt

College Hosts Cougar Junior Scholars Camp

This summer the Honors College held its first Cougar Junior Scholars camp. As part of the Honors and the Schools (HATS) community engagement initiative, seventh and eighth grade students from around Houston were invited to apply for the three-day “college” camp. “Students were selected based on teacher recommendations and responses to several questions about their academic interests and goals,” said camp coordinator **Mallory Chesser**. Since the aim of the camp was to give students a taste of campus life, each day simulated a regular day in college. In the mornings, students took classes in biology and engineering, and after lunch they finished with political science and English. In addition to classroom lectures, students explored the campus and engaged in interactive educational activities, including a photo scavenger hunt that focused the students’ attention on artwork and sculptures throughout the campus.

“You’ll get a completely different perspective of college life.”

According to **Dr. Christine LeVeaux**, the camp’s faculty organizer, the goal of the program is to identify talented students in the Houston area: “We want academically talented students in our area to be aware of the opportunities available to them at the University of Houston through the Honors College.”

Honors College students **Diego Lopez** and **Katie Teeters** served as camp counselors: accompanying students to class; touring students around campus, including a stop at the crowd-pleasing Fresh Food Café; and

sharing their enthusiasm for the University and the College with the students. On the first day, Diego taught the students several spirit chants, and by the last day, the scholars easily filled the Commons with their Cougar pride and spirit.

Several Honors College professors taught the Junior Scholars this summer, including **Drs. Stuart Long, John Harvey, Anna Newman**, and LeVeaux.

Professor Long’s engineering class engaged the students in hands-on experiments and activities that included what was possibly the most popular activity of the camp—making a stereo speaker out of a paper plate.

Professor Harvey encouraged students to create their own mythologies in his English class. Focusing on the elements usually present in mythology, students used their imaginations to write, and then stage, their own stories.

Students showed off their competitive sides in a series of debates held in Professor LeVeaux’s American government class. Gun control, capital punishment, and the Pledge of Allegiance were just some of the topics students researched and argued in the debates.

In Professor Newman’s biology class, students learned a little more about themselves as they explored the world of genetics. Students learned how hereditary information is passed from one generation to the next, and how the physical appearance of

offspring is determined from the combinations of genes received from their parents. The students then applied what they learned to themselves and their families.

Students also tested their knowledge during the camp’s culminating activity—the Quiz Bowl. Each of the four professors provided questions, based on class lectures and activities, to be included in the competition. Students contended against each other in teams to win prizes and, of course, bragging rights. Chosen for their academic achievement, campers impressed everyone present, including Honors faculty, staff, and students, as well as members of the larger University community.

At the end of the program, the students received certificates recognizing them as Cougar Junior Scholars and left the Honors College with a broader understanding of how college works and a greater appreciation for the University of Houston.

Said **Harold Owens**, one of the campers, “It opens up your eyes and it can expand your imagination and how you look at things and you’ll get a completely different perspective of college life.”

Next year, the camp will be extended to a full week in June. Check the website at TheHonorsCollege.com/camp to hear Cougar Junior Scholars talk about their summer experience in a *UH Moment* and to find details about next year’s camp.

Honors Mentorship Program Builds Community and Cougar Pride

Since its inception in the fall of 2010, the mentorship program at the Honors College has helped provide an entrée into the College’s community for many new students. However, the program does far more than introduce newcomers to the busy social events schedule—it offers academic benefits to mentees, maintains the close family feeling of the College, inspires pride in Honors and the University, and builds student involvement in the Honors College community.

Brenda Rhoden, the College’s director of student affairs and creator of the mentorship program, said, “Transition into the first year of college can be difficult for many students; research tells us that during the first semester, students decide whether they will ultimately proceed to graduation.” The mentorship program has been designed to help students feel included and successful in the Honors community—and to reduce the feelings of isolation at leaving home. **Tyler Swensen**, a current mentor who was a mentee in his first year, said, “My mentor helped me understand the importance of getting involved and gave me the sense of belonging that a new student needs. I can only hope that I was able to provide that same experience for my mentees.”

Each mentor guides 15-20 new students through the hazards of the first term, with weekly meetings to discuss problems, fears, and opportunities for getting involved. Students quickly meet others of their class going through the same transition, as well as upperclassmen who can offer advice. **Nhon Le**, a freshman and mentee of **Conner Lund**, described with enthusiasm how Conner was always interested in how they were doing and that “he always answered questions quickly and really well.”

Franco Martinez, this year’s mentor coordinator, organizes events and gives mentors problem-solving techniques, activity ideas, and sharing strategies to get students comfortable in their group. Other Honors College events augment the mentor schedule to encourage new students to get involved with the College. Football games, the Halloween party, and bowling at the UC sit alongside Fall Convocation and “academically purposeful” activities, like tutoring and study-a-thons, in the mentoring calendar.

Adventuring off campus has also proven popular: Tyler took his mentees to a Corn Maze at Dewberry Farm, for example, and fellow mentor **Diego Lopez** took his group to the Texas Renaissance Festival. Diego describes how wearing red when out and about in the city inspires pride in the University and bonding within the group. “Once the students take pride in the institution, the rest falls into place.”

While interacting with professors during the highly regarded Dinner with the Professors week, mentees not only experience the delights of Houston landmark restaurants like Star Pizza and Kanomwan, but also build confidence that translates into the classroom through their casual, off-campus interaction with professors.



Katie Jewett with mentee Michelle Xie

The Honors mentorship program has a growing presence within the College. From the pilot year last fall, this year’s program reflects the additional preparation time and careful thought that has allowed for improvements. Right from the beginning freshmen are brought into the mentorship fold. As early as orientation, they have contact information for both Franco and their mentor, and a planner of upcoming events. As Brenda said, “That first semester can be an emotional rollercoaster, and it is beneficial to have lifesavers out there.”

“That first semester can be an emotional rollercoaster.”

As the program grows in popularity, the number of mentoring applications has soared. A further interview stage has been added to ensure each mentor has the time and ability to best help their mentees, as often the mentors are already involved with the College, through Honors Ambassadors or the Student Governing Board. If chosen for the program, mentors are guaranteed a highly coveted retreat counselor position, and retreat groups become mentor groups as the semester begins—continuing the relationship from orientation, to retreat, and throughout the semester. Brenda concluded, “We believe that participation in the program provides both academic and social support that are essential for student persistence,” ensuring new students have a home here, know the resources and opportunities open to them, and feel a personal connection to the College.

by Lucy M. Bonner

Honors Continues to Grow Attracts Mid-Career Students

The Honors College entering class of 2011 was not only large (529 students), and not only exceptionally talented (with an average SAT score of 1302 and with 60% in the top 10% of their high school class), but it also included the largest cohort of mid-career students ever to enroll in the College.

Dean Bill Monroe and the recruitment team recently recognized that Honors was not significantly recruiting or matriculating mid-career students, and that these students did not have a clear curriculum path if they did join the College. To bring these talented students into Honors, the College created a separate application for mid-career students, defined as those who did not enter Honors immediately following high school or who completed college hours outside of Honors. “This separate mid-career application focuses on college credits,” said admissions counselor **Sarah Bhojani**. “It allows the admissions committee to accurately evaluate the experience of mid-career students and predict their success in Honors.” Additionally, the recruitment staff continues to visit community colleges and has increased its outreach to exceptional students at the University of Houston. This outreach takes the form of invitation letters to those with GPAs over 3.75, as well as recruitment and orientation events in January and October to help these students streamline their application and advising process.

Additional changes that make Honors more welcoming to these mid-career students are the new curriculum options that allow students to graduate with Honors by completing an Honors minor or a reduced coursework option—one that still includes a semester of the cornerstone Human Situation course—and a new graduation designation for those who complete these options, Collegiate Honors. While many mid-career students, including most of those in the Bauer Honors and Honors Engineering programs, complete the full Honors curriculum, Collegiate Honors offers a choice for those who join Honors with their core courses already complete.

Now that mid-career students are a focus for Honors, the College reaps the benefits of these students in the classroom and the community. Three mid-career students were recognized, for example, among the Outstanding First Year Students at the 2011 Fall Convocation: **Adam Brewer**, **Keri Myrick**, and **Mason Biamonte**. Brewer was also acknowledged for an Outstanding Human Situation Essay for his paper “Frankenstein: Of Monster and Man.”

Read about the contributions and experiences of two mid-career Honors students at right.



Mid-career students Nicholas Leschke and Katherine Berry

Nicholas Leschke

Nicholas Leschke entered the Honors College in fall 2011 after 16 years as a professional ballet dancer. Because he always intended to continue his formal education after he retired from dancing, Nic took classes on and off during the majority of his career, and enters the College—and his engineering major—with 84 credit hours.

While he won't take his first semester of Human Sit until spring, Nic has jumped into Honors life this first semester, taking three Honors classes in engineering, attending Honors Retreat and the Halloween party, and participating in a recent Habitat for Humanity build with his Honors Engineering Program colleagues. Nic appreciates the “smaller family inside the University” as well as the “sense of community and smaller class sizes” that the Honors College has offered him so far, and hopes—after experiencing classes like engineering math with **Dr. Matthew Nicol**, statics with **Dr. Mo Li**, and intro to engineering with **Dr. Diana de la Rosa-Pohl**—for more Honors engineering classes to take as the Honors Engineering Program grows.

Katherine Berry

Katherine Berry admits that she “picked the Honors College hoping they'd pick me back” when she came to the University of Houston to continue her study of accounting after a few semesters at Wharton County Junior College. Like many students who choose Honors, Kat was looking to

challenge herself, so in addition to appreciating Honors for the smaller classes and the help of the dedicated faculty and staff, she was excited to learn about the Human Situation course. She said, “I wanted to be a better reader, writer. I wanted to be better at critical thinking and to be a better person when I'm done,” and knew that Human Sit would help her reach those goals.

Kat has been a work-from-home mom for the past 20 years and knew she wanted to have as much of the college experience as possible. So when she joined Honors, she attended Honors Retreat and highly recommends it—especially for mid-career and non-traditional students. She said, “I found that none of the freshmen treated me differently and that everyone was welcoming. Getting that feeling even before starting classes made everything easier.” Part of that sense of ease came from being in a retreat group, and a mentor group, specifically populated with mid-career students and counselors. “The transfer students have a slightly different mindset, they've already had some stumbles, and the transfer mentors understand that.”

Kat's favorite thing about the College is definitely the people, she said. From a Human Sit study group where everyone shared notes and “wanted to help each other rather than being cut-throat” to the SGB committees for the Halloween party and other socials, she feels welcome at the College, and excited to let other people know about her experiences in Honors.

Honors in Phoenix

In late October, faculty, students, and staff from the Honors College traveled to Arizona for the 2011 annual National Collegiate Honors Council conference. The conference was ideally situated in downtown Phoenix, where, in between conference presentations, the group could squeeze in trips to local downtown eateries, including the legendary Pizzeria Bianco, where the group enjoyed the “best pizza outside of Italy,” and Portland's, which hosted an exuberant Honors alumni group for dinner.

Presentations by the University of Houston group included “Beginning in Honors,” an annual teaching workshop for new deans and directors, conducted by **Dean Bill Monroe** and Honors founding dean **Ted Estess**. Human Situation coordinator and faculty member **Dr. Richard Armstrong** took part in a thought-provoking panel on academic honesty and integrity with Honors administrators from institutions across the country.

Sophomore **Katie Teeters**, senior **Diego Lopez**, and **Brenda Rhoden**, director of student affairs, gave an exceedingly well-received presentation on the College's successful first-year mentoring program (now in its second year; *read story on page 7*); while **Sarah Bhojani**, admissions counselor, and **Jodie Köszegei**, assistant dean, introduced fellow delegates to the College's new opportunities for mid-career Honors students (*page 8*). Creative Work students **Megan Harrington** and **Kristen Flack** debuted their 12-minute film chronicling the evolution of the Artists and Their Regions class and retreat. **Dr. John Harvey**, director of the Center for Creative Work and the course's instructor, described the film as “an inspiring combination of cinematography and story.”

In keeping with the experiential learning component of the conference, the Honors group journeyed to the Grand Canyon and enjoyed a guided tour of the Musical Instrument Museum with **Justin Karim** ('06, Marketing), director of operations for the MIM. Among the displays were the piano on which John Lennon composed “Imagine,” the world's tallest bass (18' tall), heritage displays of instruments arranged by country of origin, and the MIM's famous air guitar display.

Diego Lopez described his time at the conference this way: “To come here and share with other schools my Honors experience, and my wonderful experiences as an Honors College mentor, has been truly rewarding. Visiting another Honors campus [Barrett, the Honors College at ASU] and being part of a broader honors community has only reinforced my belief in how lucky we are to have the Honors College at the University of Houston.”

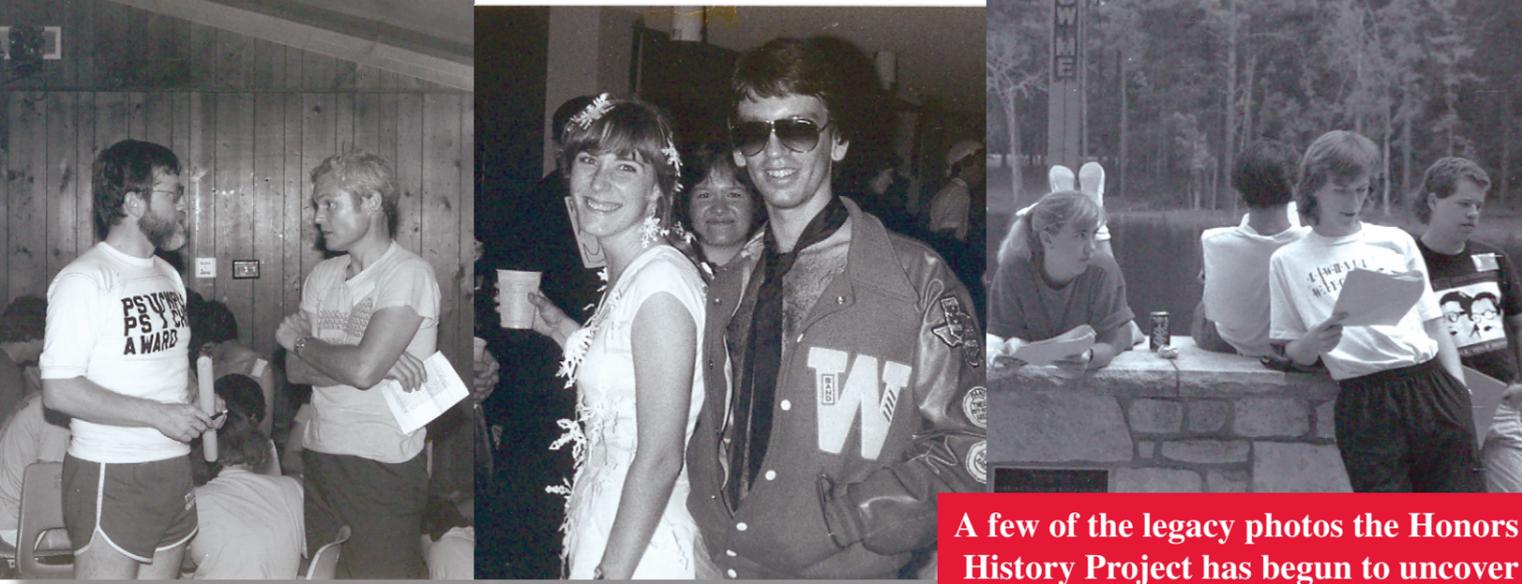
by Jodie Köszegei



Taking a break from the NCHC Conference, Jodie Köszegei, Katie Teeters, Diego Lopez, and Sarah Bhojani join museum guide (and alumnus) Justin Karim to tour the Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix.



Brenda with the group at the Grand Canyon



A few of the legacy photos the Honors History Project has begun to uncover

Honors Launches History Project

In September 2011, a major initiative in the Honors College began to take shape. Like many fresh ideas, the *Honors History Project* began in the mind of a student doing independent research with the encouragement of a teacher.

Keri Myrick was recruited to the College in 2011 as a high-achieving mid-career student, and in her first semester she took Human Sit Modernity and travelled with the study abroad group to Ireland. Excited by the challenge and quality of her Honors experiences, the 33-year-old non-traditional student decided to minor in Creative Work—she is an art major still deciding on a painting or photography concentration—and signed up for a newly developed Honors course that would allow her to work directly with **Dr. Joe Pratt**, the editor of *Houston History Magazine*.

“The Path to Tier One” is Professor Pratt’s working title for a special issue of the magazine devoted to the transformation of the University of Houston into a nationally-recognized research university with high-quality teaching, undergraduate research opportunities, and student success at every level. Given Myrick’s enthusiasm, Pratt suggested that she draft an article on the development of the Honors College.

“When Dr. Pratt made the suggestion,” Myrick said, “I immediately jumped on it. I was excited and kind of surprised that the story hadn’t been written yet.” When Myrick came to **Dean Bill Monroe** with the idea, he suggested that she begin her research by interviewing founding dean **Ted Estess** and assistant dean **Jodie**

Köszegei. He also offered access to the College’s archival material and decided to seek donor support for the project. “As soon as I talked to Keri, the wheels began to turn,” Monroe said. “I began to imagine a long-term project that would go well beyond a single article.”

Monroe turned to Honors College supporters **Matthew** (’00, Chemical Engineering) and **Tamara** (’99, Chemical Engineering) **Steele**, who quickly made a lead gift to launch the multi-year project. “Bill got me a proposal on Friday afternoon, and Tami and I thought about it over the weekend,” Steele said. “We liked the idea of an Honors College history and decided we would help.” The Steeles’ gift will allow the College to begin to hire interns—the first will be Myrick herself—to support coursework in the areas of oral and public history, and sponsor undergraduate research opportunities such as the PURS and SURF grants for students interested in working on the project.

Monroe is as encouraged by the possibilities inherent in the process as in the various products that might come out of the project. An additional resource will be writer **Robert Cremins**, who has been teaching in the Human Situation sequence, led the study abroad to Ireland, and recently joined the College’s academic advising team (see page 15). “Robert wrote the recently published history of Strake Jesuit College Preparatory, and he knows the process,” Monroe said. “We see the project as an opportunity to bring alumni together with others in their era and with

current students. We want to hear and record their stories and make copies of their photographs. Our long-range plan is for conference presentations by students, print publications, electronic media—maybe a dedicated website—feature articles, and eventually a book.”

Monroe envisions a series of reunions, probably based on the first year of matriculation, which would be sponsored by the new Honors College Alumni Association. The HCAA is being organized by alumnus **Aly Capetillo** (’08, Economics), senior analyst at Main Street Capital, and **Beth Kungel Borck**, director of development for the College. “Aly, Beth, Keri, and I will be in touch soon, so be expecting a call or email,” Monroe said. “We hope that the HHP will be a project with encounters, developments, and discoveries that will tell us where we’ve been, what we’ve done, and who we are.”

The College seeks story ideas and photographs as well as additional gifts to support the HHP. Inquiries can be directed to HHistory@central.uh.edu.



Keri Myrick

Alumni Association Reignites

“Stewardship, solidarity, and the continuation of the Honors tradition” are the tenets of the recently re-formed Honors College Alumni Association as described by leader **Aly Capetillo** (’08, Economics). Driven by a desire to continue his Honors journey, Capetillo approached **Dean Bill Monroe** in fall 2010 about leading the charge for an alumni association.

Capetillo and Monroe, working with

director of development **Beth Kungel Borck**, laid the groundwork for an organization for all Honors alumni. These efforts led to a kick-off event at the Homecoming day Academic Tailgate, a wonderful mix of intellect, whimsy, libations, and laughter as only Honors can do; a calendar of alumni socials to give the fledgling association opportunities to bring alumni together; and the Honors History Project (as described on page 10). “The desire to create an organization that connects alumni interests

with College activities and initiatives is what drives the alumni association and a mission we hope alumni embrace,” said Borck.

For more information about how you can get involved and for a list of all upcoming alumni activities—including an alumni social at The Den (UH campus, 4835 Calhoun) on January 12, 2012, at 5:30 p.m.—please visit us at TheHonorsCollege.com/alumni or contact Beth Kungel Borck at 713.743.3220 or bkborck@uh.edu.

Advisory Board Update

Members of the Honors College advisory board have long served as ambassadors for the College, supporting the Honors mission by taking leadership roles in fundraising and connecting the Honors College with the Houston business and civic communities. This year, the advisory board wanted to play an even more active role in the College and increase its interaction with students, faculty, and staff. On October 1, members embraced this ambition with an advisory board retreat.

Attended by 14 board members and hosted in the Honors College Commons, the retreat featured lively roundtable discussion and breakout sessions, as well as special performances by students of the College. “Honors has a great group of very talented and ambitious students,” said advisory board president **Steven Hecht** (’98, Accounting). “The retreat was an excellent opportunity to learn more about them.” One achievement of the retreat was the creation of working committees, formed on the basis of current funding priorities and member interest.

The Lencian committee, headed by board member **Jeff Dodd** (’76, Political Science), aims to perpetuate the legacy of Ross Lence through the annual Lence Master Teacher Residency and ongoing student scholarship support.

The *One Thousand Years of Honors* committee, headed by board members **Vince Foster** and **Benadetto Bosco**, supports the new *One Thousand Years of Honors* scholarship fund. As described in *Areté’s* spring 2011 issue, this fund aims to provide \$1000 scholarships



Honors Alumni Association members gather for Happy Hour on Dec. 1.

to 1000 students over the next 10 years—thereby supporting a thousand years of Honors education.

The *Great Conversation* committee, led by honorary event chair **Jane Cizik** (’83, Spanish), event co-chair and board member **Connie Simmons Taylor** (’91, English), and board members **Craig Enochs** (’94, Psychology) and **Karen Webster** (’95, Management), supports the College’s most important fundraiser. Funds generated by *The Great Conversation* provide essential student scholarship assistance and special support to Honors faculty and programs.

Advisory board member **Trey Wilkinson** (’94, Marketing) heads the College Ambassador committee, whose mission is to assist the College in the recruitment of future students and spread the word about the Honors College in the business community.

Martin Cominsky (’80, Journalism) leads the Bylaws and Nominating committee,

whose goal is to revise advisory board bylaws and investigate, cultivate, and nominate new members. As these committees grow, the board hopes they will be filled with a mix of both board members and other members of the Honors College community, creating a cohesive group of enthusiastic individuals striving to perpetuate the mission of the Honors College.

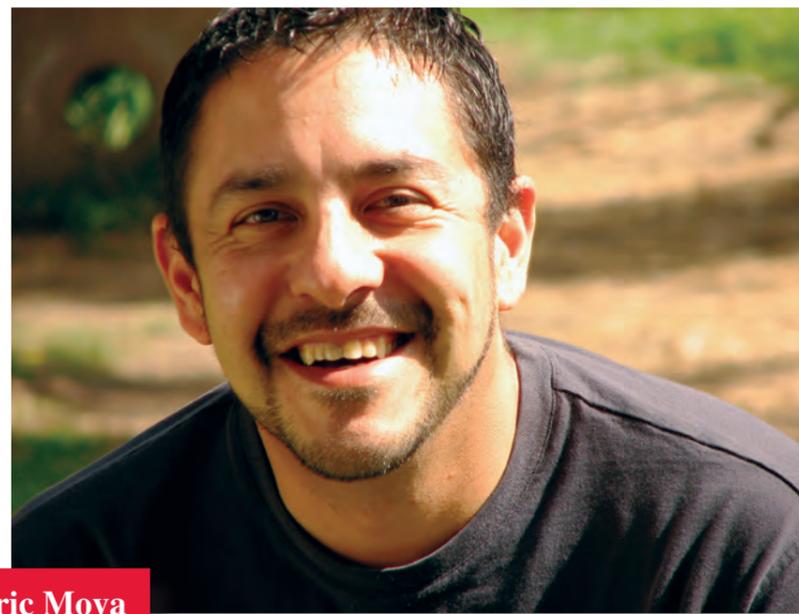
Hecht praised members of the board for their commitment and desire to work on behalf of the College: “The advisory board has been such a strong supporter of Honors and its goals. I am proud to be associated with such a caring and supportive group. I believe these new committees will enhance the board’s effectiveness and allow us to maximize its contribution in the years ahead.” For more information about the advisory board, the committees, or how you can participate, please contact Beth Kungel Borck at 713.743.3220 or bkborck@uh.edu.

The Moya Family Legacy

When asked their favorite thing about the Honors College, students and alumni frequently focus on the feeling of family. Sense of community and mutual investment in success within Honors unifies a diverse population and transcends the boundaries of age and personal experience. Those who join Honors—alumni, students, faculty, and staff—become “descendants” of the Honors experience, irrevocably changed by the intersection of its lineage with their own. For some, however, this family is a literal one as well. Like the Patterson family featured in the spring issue of *Areté*, and like many other families who have a legacy in Honors, siblings **Paula** and **Eric Moya** brought their family into the Honors family.

Paula Moya ('91, English) was the definition of a non-traditional student—a working mother with two small daughters—when she applied to Honors at the urging of another non-traditional student, Honors alumna **Mary Evelyn Sorrell** ('81, Art). Paula credits the Human Situation course and her interaction with faculty members including **Drs. Ted Estess, Lois Zamora, and Robert Zaretsky** with helping to shape her career trajectory. She said, “The engagement of the faculty, coupled with their enthusiastic engagement with ideas of the mind, allowed me to admire them even as it allowed me to imagine myself pursuing a similar kind of life.”

Now the associate professor of the Department of English and director of the Program in Modern Thought and Literature at Stanford University, Paula’s scholarly work focuses on the socio-historical concept of race, and the approach she



Eric Moya

takes is heavily influenced by the lessons she learned in Professor Zamora’s class on the apocalypse as well as the valuable skill of close reading learned from both Professors Estess and Zamora. “Close reading, and an appreciation for the power of foundational narratives, are things that I can trace back to the Honors Program; both remain at the core of my work today,” Paula said.

As he approached graduation from high school, Eric Moya ('95, English) faced the usual uncertainties about whether to pursue a small teaching college or a large university, but with sister Paula’s encouragement, he began to focus on the Honors College at the University of Houston. “I liked the idea of a small college feel—as I was accustomed to an invested faculty—within the confines of a large diverse university.”

Of his many great experiences, the Honors trips he took bring back the fondest memories. A winter trip to France with Dr. Estess and then-associate dean **Bill Monroe**, as well as a Flannery O’Connor van pilgrimage with Dr. Monroe, informed and exemplified his Honors experience.

Eric, now director of education at the Esalen Institute, therapist, and lecturer/instructor for the Upledger Institute, said, “In every class I teach today, I try to find ways to engage my students—give them opportunities to be successful, to feel cherished, and to feel like they have something to offer—all lessons I took away from my experience in the Honors College.”

Both Paula and Eric have the sense of a lifetime home in Honors, and that feeling resonated with their father as well. The support, education, and success both the children enjoyed through the Honors College, coupled with the investment in the individual success of each student provided by Honors faculty, inspired the family to pledge to give back. That pledge led to the eventual creation of the Moya Family Scholarship, a fund that supports first generation students in the Honors College. And so, a new generation of Honors students continues to benefit from the legacy and journey of one family and expands the Honors family circle year after year.

Share Your Honors Story

The Honors College would like to feature your story in the next issue of *Areté*—perhaps your family is part of an Honors legacy story, or maybe your career and life have been influenced by your time in Honors. Perhaps you took a study abroad trip with Honors or helped found one of the traditions we uphold today. Whatever your Honors story, we’d like to hear it...and share it.

Share your stories by contacting **Libby Ingrassia** at lingrassia@uh.edu or 713.743.3714 or **Beth Kungel Borck** at bkborck@uh.edu or 713.743.3220.

Minors and Programs: Center for Creative Work

The Aletheia

A new undergraduate journal—*The Aletheia*—has premiered at the Honors College through the Center for Creative Work. The publication’s goal is to provide an artistic venue for undergraduates at the University of Houston.

“In Greek, ἀλήθεια means truth or unconcealed. We want to take this idea and apply it to the journal to highlight the importance of creative student voices,” said **Kristen Flack**, senior web designer, editor, and co-founder of *The Aletheia*.

To stay true to this vision, *The Aletheia* accepts all forms of artistic expression, ranging from literary art to visual art to even film and music, and displays them through multiple mediums. *The Aletheia* website allows for varied formatting possibilities and offers an opportunity to re-imagine how a journal might normally run. Each month, *The Aletheia* online works like an art gallery, featuring work not only from students, but also from faculty and alumni working in the arts.

The bi-annual chapbook, which comes out at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters each year, consists of student art, fiction, and poetry. “We wanted the chapbook to be representative of the student-run, student-featured element of *The Aletheia*,” said **Reyes Ramirez**, senior chapbook designer, editor, and co-founder.

In addition, *The Aletheia* sponsors a reading and visual arts series, “In the Garden,” held every third Wednesday from 7-9 p.m. at AvantGarden on Westheimer. Student writers published in *The Aletheia* also appear on Coog Radio on the second Sunday of the month.

These artistic opportunities create a community that is unique and rewarding for undergraduate students.

For more information and to read online issues of *The Aletheia*, or to submit your work for publication, go to TheAletheiaJournal.com or visit them on Facebook at facebook.com/thealetheiajournal.

by Megan Harrington with John Harvey



“Auctioneer” John Harvey at the Honors College Book Swap Auction

Book Swap

As a kickoff event this year, the Center for Creative Work sponsored a Book Swap Auction in which Honors College faculty and staff donated prized books for auction and students brought their own books to offer in exchange. Close to a hundred books were put on the block, and more than double that amount were used for bidding. The “proceeds” were then donated to St. Joseph’s House, an organization that supports those with mental disabilities. The event was a huge success and will be held each fall.

Artists and Their Regions

This year at the National Collegiate Honors Council conference held in Phoenix, AZ, the Center for Creative Work presented the Artists and Their Regions class, which is the capstone course for the Creative Work minor. The course, taught by **Dr. John Harvey**, is centered around the study of regional literature and the creation of an artistic project inspired by the region. CCW’s presenters for NCHC this year were seniors **Kristen Flack** and **Megan Harrington**.

For more information on the Artists and Their Regions course and to see part of the NCHC presentation, visit TheHonorsCollege.com/aatr.

Dionysia

Every spring, the Honors College *Dionysia* celebrates the festival of Dionysus in ancient Athens by creating a new interpretation and performance of a classic Greek play. Students and professional actors have performed works by Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles over the past three years. In spring 2012, the *Dionysia* presents a new production of Aristophanes’ comedy *The Frogs*. **Karen Farber** at the Cynthia Mitchell Woods Center partnered with the Center for Creative Work in bringing **Aaron Landsman** to Houston to direct this new production. An acclaimed director from New York, Aaron specializes in unconventional plays and spaces. *The Frogs* will be performed in the Rockwell Pavilion and basement of the M.D. Anderson Library. For more information on the *Dionysia*, visit TheHonorsCollege.com/dionysia.



Paula Moya



Iain Morrisson lectures at Craft Talks.

The Human Situation

The Human Situation, the gateway course to the Honors experience, continues to thrive with a participating faculty of 14 professors this fall. Team Omega got into an Egyptian swing in honor of the King Tut exhibit hosted by the Museum of Fine Arts Houston (MFAH). They used the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* to begin the term's discussion of "The Living and the Dead," the theme for this year's Omega booklist, which included the Biblical book of Exodus, *The Odyssey*, Sophocles' *Antigone*, Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Plato's *Phaedrus*, *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius, and the *Qur'an* (with special lectures by the University's new professor of Arabic, **Dr. Emran El-Badawi**).

All Human Situation students enjoyed a guest lecture by **Dr. Bob Brier** of Long Island University, who related his experience performing the first mummification in over 2000 years of a real human cadaver using only ancient Egyptian methods and tools (a feat that has earned him the nickname "Mr. Mummy"). "It was a perfect presentation for Halloween weekend. It was very interesting and delightfully grotesque, and the students really enjoyed it. I always thought you had to make a slurry of the

by Richard Armstrong

brain to extract it through the nose, and I was overjoyed to be proved right," said **Dr. Helen Valier**, who helped sponsor the lecture under the auspices of the Medicine & Society Program. Omega's Egyptomania culminated in a final lecture at the MFAH with a visit to the King Tut exhibit.

Alpha students focused on the theme of "Punishment," and in addition to *The Odyssey* and *Frogs*, read the Book of Job, Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, Thucydides' *History*, Plato's *Apology of Socrates* and *Crito*, Vergil's *Aeneid*, the Gospels of Mark and Luke, and Epictetus. Professors were whipped into an Aeschylean chorus in **Dr. Kim Meyer's** *Eumenides* lecture, and students performed their impersonations of professors during **Dr. Gabriela Maya's** lecture on the *Frogs*. The aria "Dido's Lament," from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, was sung by Honors student **Alyssa Weathersby** as a special treat in Dr. Meyer's lecture on the *Aeneid*. Perhaps the best surprise was the appearance of two Honors students in the roles of Dionysus and his slave during **Dr. Ted Estess's** lecture on the *Frogs*, fully... equipped, shall we say, with balloons in the appropriate Dionysian places.

As the course continues to Modernity this spring, Alpha's theme will be "Voices from the Edge," featuring works by Shakespeare, Hume, Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Brontë, Turgenev, Yeats, and a contemporary Irish play by Brian Friel, *Translations*. Omega forges on with "The Soul and the Self," and has lined up an all-star booklist of Dante, Shakespeare, Locke, Hume, La Mettrie, Emily Dickinson, Tolstoy, Yeats, Primo Levi, and Akhmatova; ending the game, fittingly, with Beckett's *Endgame*.

The Craft of Writing

In addition to the usual combination of plenary lectures and intimate seminars, Human Situation students also flocked to a set of extra lectures by seasoned professors in our Writing Craft Talks. Professor Kim Meyer lectured on the art of passionate reading, **Robert Cremins** explained the delicate art of formulat-

ing an interesting thesis, Professor Gabriela Maya explored the use of textual evidence, and **Dr. Iain Morrisson** contended that writing a paper is a creative process. The Craft Talks are part of a larger Honors Writing Initiative attached to the course, which includes a cohort of 16 student peer tutors to assist Human Situation students in drafting their many papers for class. Cremins, an organizer of the Writing Initiative, will also be taking the crafts talks on the road to area high schools to help spread the gospel of good writing and the mission of the College. "We were actually contacted by area high schools about these talks, so it seemed a natural thing to do," said Cremins.

Profblog

Another Human Situation perk this term is the *Omega Profblog*, a place for reflection on the course theme and beyond by Human Situation professors, colleagues, and friends. The theme of the "Living and the Dead" yielded some fascinating entries. Cremins wrote about death in Ireland and penned an original short story in dialogue with the biblical Joseph story; **Dr. Sue Collins** reminisced about the banshee in the Irish-Canadian culture of her youth; **Dr. Jonathan Zecher** shared Orthodox Christian beliefs about death and burial; **Dr. John Harvey** chimed in with personal remembrances about his parents' deaths and stories about dead goats in a green truck; Professor Kim Meyer shared her experiences traveling in the Sinai Desert; **Dr. Richard Armstrong** pondered the meaning of memorials at Ground Zero and Marathon; and as a special guest, Armstrong's brother, the poet **James Armstrong**, contributed from far off Minnesota a poem cycle, *The Tower Variations*, a rumination about the post-9/11 world centered on the indelible and horrific image of one of the attack's falling victims. Omega students chimed in enthusiastically with their comments on the blog, as the reader is also encouraged to do, by going to <http://omegaprofblog.blogspot.com/>.



Announcing the Honors College's Newest Academic Advisor: Robert Cremins

Prizes and Awards

The Human Situation continues to offer the Best Human Situation Essay Prize, a contest that highlights outstanding student work. At the 2011 Fall Convocation, **Dean Bill Monroe** recognized **John T. Kramer** and **Adam Brewer** for their outstanding Human Situation essays from the 2010-2011 academic year. In addition, the Human Sit faculty members offered honorable mention to essays by **John F. Kramer**, **Nicholas Heisig**, **Maryam Burney**, **Katie Teeters**, and **Savannah Freeland**.

This year, however, the students also get a chance to pick their own winners in the first Human Situation Best Lecture awards. A student committee for each Human Sit team will select the best lecture, based upon nominations made by all the team's students.

Visit TheHumanSituation.com to read about the winners.

Robert Cremins

When he began in the Honors College nearly two years ago, **Robert Cremins** said he was "delighted and excited" to be joining the Human Situation teaching team. A few semesters later, professor Cremins' enthusiasm has made him part of the life of the College: leading study abroad trips, working with the recruiting and admissions committees, and helping to launch the Writing Craft Talk series as part of the College's writing initiative.

This semester, Cremins has taken on an expanded role—one that is new to the College—as a second academic advisor. He has already "jumped in at the deep end" by working on graduation certifications, "learning the grammar of our degree plans," participating in priority advising week, and opening his schedule for general advising and walk-in appointments.

The primary focus of this new position, however, will be advising for the College's three minor programs. The minors are growing by leaps and

bounds and will continue to do so. In addition to the 50 alumni who have already graduated from the minor programs, there are 150 students currently enrolled in the programs—in 2009, 30 students joined the minors; by 2011, over 100 students entered. Combine the growth of these programs with the growth of the College as a whole (*see story on page 8*), and it was definitely time to add another advisor to serve the needs of the students. Assistant dean **Jodie Köszegi** said, "Robert is a great complement to our advising team. His calming presence and great sense of humor immediately put students at ease. His extensive teaching experience will enhance and inform his work on behalf of the Honors minors, both as an advisor and in providing program support to our teaching faculty."

Cremins will take an active role in the minor programs, from helping the directors manage the programs' growth and development to assisting with recruiting new students into the programs. "We get a lot of people coming for general academic advising, and we can match up someone who has a strong interest in one of these areas with the right minor program," Cremins said.

Cremins sees two aspects to his work with the students. "Part of it is the very practical nuts and bolts part of the business—the mechanical aspect—and part of it is mentoring, trying to understand the vocational interest of the students," Cremins explained.

This two-pronged approach to working with the students mirrors what he sees as his role in the College. Similar to what he experienced in Jesuit education, he sees his job as a balance between the "cura personalis," or care of each complete student, balanced with the "cura apostolica," or care of the overall mission of the College and its programs. Cremins, who will continue to teach in The Human Situation, will take advising appointments on a walk-in basis on Fridays and by appointment on Monday to Thursday between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Josh Ellis

Honors senior **Josh Ellis** wanted to be ready for medical school when he graduates, but he also wanted “something away from the common biology major.” When he chose his history major, he also chose a Medicine & Society minor because “keeping pre-med, it just made sense,” he said. “It allowed me to perfectly blend my interest in history with a pre-med curriculum.” Describing his experience in courses such as Readings in Medicine & Society, Josh said, “I love the outlook it has provided me on the medical profession.”

Beyond the minor coursework, Medicine & Society students like Josh often do internships and research to enhance their undergraduate careers. Working with **Dr. Helen Valier**, coordinator of the Medicine & Society Program, and responding to the many opportunities he receives through the program’s regular listserv messages, Josh applied last spring to an internship position with **Dr. Teresa O’Connor** at Baylor College of Medicine’s Children’s Nutrition Research Center, where he spent both the spring and summer working on a study focused on the physical activity of Hispanic children.

The study’s goal is to look at both environmental and parental influences on the physical activity of Hispanic preschool children in an effort to understand how they affect childhood obesity. In a two-pronged approach, the study uses data from GPS and activity monitors, as well as the results from questionnaires about their neighborhoods and environmental influences and parental practices around physical activity. Josh worked with the group as a part-time intern during the spring and, through the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF), as a full-time intern last summer. Through these internships, he helped organize the database, helped translate and proofread the questionnaire, created flyers, and helped recruit subjects for the study by posting flyers and speaking at community health fairs.

Because the project is bilingual and Josh worked so much with the questionnaires and flyers in Spanish, Josh’s inter-



Josh Ellis at Yale University

est in Spanish was sparked. “When you post enough Spanish flyers, you really start reading them. I definitely practiced a lot of Spanish, in anticipation of studying abroad. By the end of it I could recruit subjects in Spanish and most of the time I was speaking in Spanish,” he said. While he wishes he had started taking Spanish courses earlier, he is taking Spanish this year and plans a study-abroad trip to Mexico over winter break to increase his fluency. “By the time I’m a doctor, Spanish will be such a prominent language—how could you not be interested? I’m committed to being fluent by the time I graduate.”

As part of his pre-med preparation, Josh also attended a summer medical education program at Yale Medical College. The program is intended to help students get into medical school by offering an intensive introduction to the courses they will take, an opportunity to shadow doctors and research physicians, and exposure to medical workshops. In addition to his time in classes and seminars, Josh shadowed an ER doctor and a cardiovascular surgeon, visited Columbia medical school, and traveled to New York and other areas around Yale.

Josh has spent his time in the Honors College deeply involved—from

his work with the Medicine & Society Program to time in organizations from Model Arab League to Invisible Children (which he founded at the University of Houston) to Honors Ambassadors. As he approaches graduation, he plans to take the talents and skills learned in Honors and its organizations to medical school or to the Peace Corps.

Verghese Lecture

The Medicine & Society Program was one of the co-sponsors when **Dr. Abraham Verghese**—noted physician and best-selling author—delivered the 2011 John P. McGovern Endowed Lecture in Family, Health, and Human Values. Dr. Verghese addressed his work in medicine and patient care and told stories about his education and experiences, from Ethiopia to the United States.

The Ether Dome

In September, students and faculty from the Medicine & Society Program went to see *Ether Dome* at the Alley Theatre. The play chronicles the introduction of ether and anesthesia into 19th-century America and the conflicts over ownership, patents, ethics, and addiction.

Fall Classes

As the Medicine & Society Program continues to grow, the cornerstone course for the program—Readings in Medicine and Society—continues to grow as well. The course, which introduces students to emerging trends in health and medicine from a variety of disciplines and perspectives, was so popular in fall 2011 that a second section, taught by writer **Dr. Laurie Lambeth**, was introduced.

Also running in the fall was the interdisciplinary research course Health in Harris County. The course, which was funded by a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Curriculum Development Grant written by program coordinator Dr. Helen Valier and **Dr. Courtney Queen** of the Abramson Center for

the Future of Health, brought guest speakers such as **Rocaille Roberts** from Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services and faculty from the Institute for Medical Humanities at UTMB.

Taught by Honors research professor **Dr. Dan Price**, the course focuses on areas of health in Harris County. According to Professor Price, students engage primarily in “social science research such as surveys, interviews, and scientific literature reviews, but applying critical skills learned in the humanities to the social sciences.” Students presented posters about the Jung Center, M.D. Anderson hospital and cancer center, and childhood obesity at the Honors College on December 6.

Death and Dissection

The Honors College and the Medicine & Society Program have collaborated with UT Health Medical School to buy two cadavers to be used in a new clinical anatomy class this summer. Tentatively titled Death and Dissection, the summer class with **Dr. Kathryn Peek** will combine the anatomy and dissection course with students’ ongoing journals about how they feel about death. “I am delighted to see this new class emerging from the ever-closer ties between the Texas Medical Center and the Medicine & Society Program,” said Professor Valier. “The Honors College continues its work in bringing the ‘great conversation’ regarding the medical humanities and the practice of medicine to our pre-health professions students.”



Stuart Long presents an Outstanding Poster Award to Hannah Parham at Undergraduate Research Day.

Photograph by Thomas Campbell

Minors and Programs: Office of Undergraduate Research

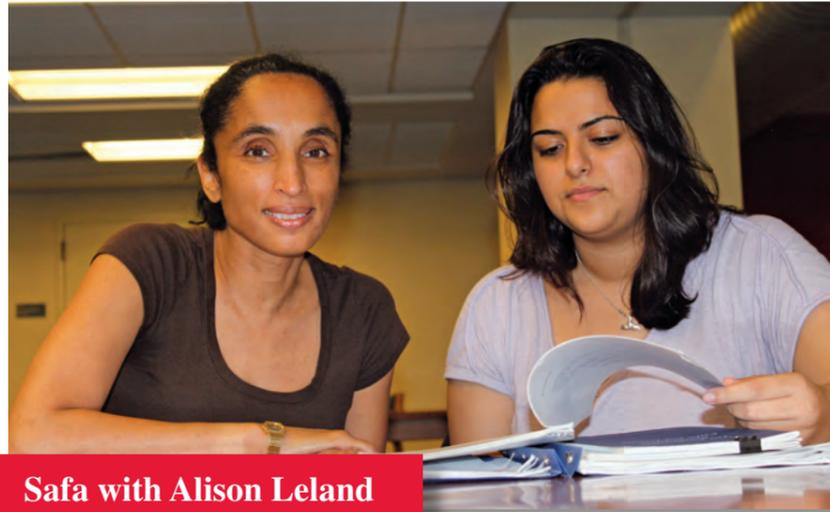
Safa Ansari-Bayegan

“Everyone has a strong opinion about the death penalty,” said Honors junior and undergraduate researcher **Safa Ansari-Bayegan**, including herself. But when she took a political science class from **Dr. Alison Leland** during her first semester in Honors, Safa realized she had not only a “more informed opinion by the end of the class,” but also an ongoing interest in the topic.

The class included a visit from **Kate Black** of the Texas Defender Service, a non-profit organization that represents many death penalty cases, and when Safa heard that the group accepted undergraduates as interns, she began a multi-semester campaign to connect with them. Her persistence paid off with a summer internship, which, combined with a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF), allowed her to simultaneously work with the organization and pursue a research project.

After consulting with the organization on what area of the death penalty would be helpful research for them, Safa settled on an examination of a specific aspect of the Texas statute called future dangerousness. “It requires the jury to predict whether the defendant would be a continuing threat to society,” Safa said. Safa’s research had three goals: to examine any inherent problems with the question of future dangerousness, to understand its implication in sentencing, and to investigate how it plays a different role in Texas and other death penalty states.

During her internship, Safa summarized transcripts and examined court records, drafted motions and clemency petitions, and visited with clients on death row. She combined this work with interviewing experts on future dangerousness. “It’s kind of rare in the liberal arts to be able to go out in the field,” Safa said. But she was able to immerse herself not only with the lawyers at the Texas Defender Service, but also with members of the district attorney’s office, a defense attorney, a judge, and death row inmates, to get a “holistic view of things from people who deal with the death penalty and future dangerousness at different times in the process and with different motives.”



Safa with Alison Leland

“Most of the research on future dangerousness has focused on an informative and statistical point of view, but I wanted to look at more of the philosophical question,” Safa explained. After extensive reading and interviews, her research found that many terms in the jury charge are vague and undefined and that the statute does not take into consideration the “changed conditions” the convict would face in prison.

Her SURF project has snowballed into ongoing statistical research with law school professor **David Dow** on the “question of whether future dangerousness has played this limiting role that it was intended to” and “whether the question positions a jury towards an automatic response—how much bias is in the question.” This research takes the form of “looking at the jury charges in life sentences without parole from 2005-2010 to see how those sentences were determined.” From a list of all life sentences over those five years, Safa calls the court clerks to obtain the jury charges, the document on which the jury foreman has indicated whether they found future dangerousness and whether they found mitigating circumstances. She looks to see how many times a life sentence was handed down with future dangerousness, how many where a jury saw no future dangerousness, and how many were based on mitigating factors.

While she continues to feel that there are no simple solutions around the

death penalty, she said her research and time visiting with inmates has brought the “seriousness and poignancy” of the death penalty to her in a more personal way. “On the outside, people look mostly at the victim’s point of view, but now I also look at the defendant’s perspective.”

SURFers

In 2010-2011, the Office of Undergraduate Research supported a record 54 students in its Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program, an increase of approximately 25% from the previous year. Projects ranged from measuring atmospheric ozone levels and meteorological data, to assessing and testing how hotel rooms are cleaned, to implementing a new tool to mathematically analyze and understand ancient masks.

Two 2011 SURF students had the privilege of presenting their research projects to the University of Houston System Board of Regents’ Academic and Student Success committee meeting on November 15. **Hamza Hallal** spoke about his visual processing research project conducted under the mentorship of **Dr. Haluk Ogmen**, from the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. **Iris Edelen**, who worked with **Dr. Norman Johnson** from the Department of Decision and Information Sciences in the Bauer College of Business, talked about her research project involving best practices for companies utilizing Facebook.

continued on page 20

Minors and Programs: Phronesis

Debating Conservatism and Progressivism

This fall, the *Phronesis* program has taken on the task of exploring the history and effect of conservatism and progressivism in American politics. This ambitious task was spearheaded by **Dr. Jeffrey Church**, who launched the Conservatism and Progressivism in America lecture series. The goal of this series, Professor Church said, is “to elevate political discourse by turning to history and the basic principles of conservatism and liberalism. The lecture series serves as a counterweight to the shouting matches all too often seen on television and in contemporary politics.”

By inviting scholars and public intellectuals of the left and right to speak about the principles, history, and future of conservatism and progressivism, the series seeks to create a deeper understanding of the issues, while enriching modern political discourse and taking an intellectual, historical, and philosophical approach to our political debates. “All too often,” Professor Church said, “students either grow cynical and apathetic about politics, or else latch on to a certain political viewpoint that they understand. Both the extreme political apathy and dogmatism are symptoms of the same problem: our society doesn’t give the youth a political education. Given this, this lecture series demonstrates that there is a way for us to thoughtfully engage in politics.”

In early October, the program welcomed **Dr. Thomas Spragens**, a professor of political science at Duke University and author of *Getting the Left Right: The Transformation, Decline, and Reformation of American Liberalism*. Dr. Spragens lectured on “American Liberalism: Recent Problems and Future Challenges.” Later that month, **Dr. Patrick Deneen**, associate professor of government and the Markos and Eleni Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis Chair in Hellenic Studies at Georgetown University and author of *Democratic Faith*, lectured at Honors on “Different Sides of the Same Liberal Coin: The Consensus of ‘Conservatives’ and ‘Progressives.’”

The series has been popular across the academic community, each lecture bringing more than 100 attendees to the Commons. February’s visit from **Dr. William Galston**, the former deputy assistant for domestic policy to President Clinton, should provide an exciting capstone to the series.

Read excerpts from Phronesis students’ response to the visits, at right.

by Adrienne Huntsman, Catrina Kim, and Sydney Nguyen



Patrick Deneen lectures in the Honors Commons.

Response to Thomas Spragens

Thomas A. Spragens’ lecture, which kicked off the lecture series on October 7, provided insights on the origins and evolution of progressivism in America, contrasting an older, ideal liberalism with today’s rights-based liberalism.

Emily Zinsitz, a political science major and *Phronesis* Fellow, found Spragens’ lecture engaging. Having read excerpts from *Getting the Left Right* through the Fellows program, Zinsitz said, “I have always had a nagging distrust in the ‘liberal’ insistence on correcting social ills though broad, equalizing programs, versus focusing on the citizens themselves. It was fascinating to encounter the idea that this is perhaps not true liberalism, but a distortion of it based on changing social and historical conceptions of the public.”

While political theory students are often asked to connect the theoretical with the practical, **Bruce Hunt**, a graduate student in political theory, explained that many political science departments “compartmentalize politics, political science, and political theory.” In laying out two different forms of liberalism and seriously engaging with these models, “Spragens’

lecture presented to us a model for how these things can be put together thoughtfully and responsibly.”

by Catrina Kim, piano performance and Phronesis junior

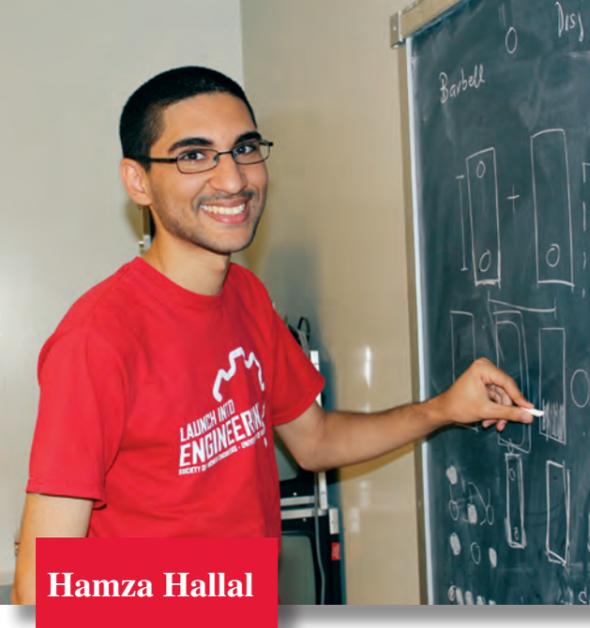
Response to Patrick Deneen

During Patrick Deneen’s short visit on October 25, he made a bold statement about his view on progress and diversity in America. He resolutely stated that because the idea of progress has become an ideology and a democratic faith, diversity is dwindling in America.

He explained his idea of progress by referring to John Dewey. As an active member in the progressive movement during the nineteenth century, Dewey believed in discovering knowledge and human progress. With Dewey’s commitment to discovery and progress laid out, Deneen brought in Alexis de Tocqueville as Dewey’s interlocutor. Contrasting Dewey, Tocqueville urged for a remembrance of the past through the embracing of aristocratic values rather than the present ideology of progress. Tocqueville believed that the idea of progress caused people to strive to perfect their current life

continued on page 20

faculty & staff news



Hamza Hallal

Minors and Programs: Office of Undergraduate Research *Continued*

Undergraduate Research Days

This year's entire SURF class joined dozens of other student researchers to present posters at Undergraduate Research Day on October 13. The event is typically held in the Rockwell Pavilion at the M.D. Anderson Library, but with more than 100 presenters, this year students spread into the library's study area and to the Honors College.

Undergraduate Research Day 2011 was such a success that there are plans

to host a Spring Undergraduate Research Day on April 12. "We wanted to offer a venue for thesis students to present papers and for our semester researchers' to present on their research projects," said **Karen Weber**, director of the Office of Undergraduate Research. "Many of our student researchers were unable to present in the fall since they were just beginning their projects, and this spring event will enable them to share their work with the campus community."

More Online Features

These articles are some you may have missed on our website. Read more at TheHonorsCollege.com/features.

Honors professor **Dr. Sue Collins**, director of the *Phronesis* minor in politics and ethics, speaks about her new translation of *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* and why she believes part of her job is to "bring students into the worlds that these books open up and guide them" at TheHonorsCollege.com/features/Collins.

Hamza Hallal's undergraduate research on visual processing and object-based attention, with engineering professor **Dr. Haluk Ogmen**, contributes to one of the National Academy of Engineering's Grand Challenges for the field—reverse engineering the human brain. Read Hamza's Honors story at TheHonorsCollege.com/features/hamza.

Honors College professor **Dr. Dan Price** and his team have been awarded one of this year's 32 NEH Digital Humanities Start-up Grants to support their Visual Web Interface for Researchers, or Vwire, project. Read more at TheHonorsCollege.com/features/vwire.

Minors and Programs: *Phronesis* Continued

without regard for the past or the future.

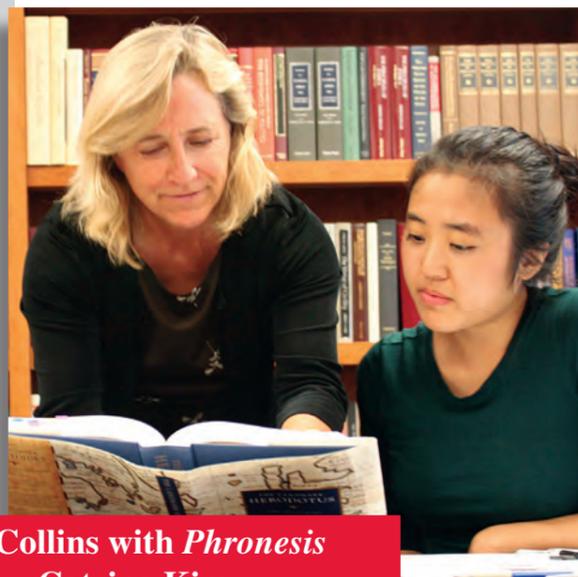
According to Deneen, the more pervasive the idea of progress becomes, the weaker the presence of the past and diversity becomes; and by diversity, Deneen means intellectual diversity, not ethnic diversity. Diversity has come to be equated with ethnic diversity and has itself become a kind of propaganda. When diversity is thoughtlessly accepted as good, there is a kind of piety involved that remains unexplained. For this reason, he said, there needs to be an intellectual diversity in order for people, and most importantly students, to be able to think for themselves.

Dr. Sue Collins, director of the *Phronesis* program, acknowledged the weight of Deneen's view. She observed, "The purpose of higher education is to

supply students the tools to think on their own." However, Professor Collins also asserted, "Different ethnic groups and different genders do have different experiences—and higher education needs to be able to engage them." Thus, while Professor Collins agrees with Deneen about the need to focus on intellectual diversity, she also believes that higher education should teach in a way that will bring everyone into the great conversation.

by **Sydney Nguyen**, *political science and Phronesis senior*

For more about the upcoming Galston lecture on Thursday, February 9, and the complete text of the response pieces, go to TheHonorsCollege.com/conservatismandprogressivism.



Sue Collins with *Phronesis* Fellow Catrina Kim

Faculty News

Dr. Richard Armstrong has been appointed a visiting scholar at the Institute for the Medical Humanities at The University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston. Armstrong will be at UTMB while on leave in fall 2012, working to complete his next book, *Theory and Theatricality: Classical Drama and Early Psychoanalysis*.

Dr. Cynthia Freeland has just returned from a trip to Australia where she delivered the annual lecture at the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra. As publicity for the lecture, Freeland did interviews for ABC radio in Sydney on the hour-long, nationally-syndicated Margaret Throsby show, for ABC's local station in Canberra, and for the Canberra Times newspaper. She also gave a talk at Sydney University to SHAPE, a faculty group dedicated to philosophy of Society, History, Aesthetics, Politics, and the Environment. While in Australia, Freeland also took the opportunity to visit Ayers Rock in the outback, where she especially enjoyed a sunset camel tour.

Dr. Gabriela Maya's play, *Unendurable Story*, has been chosen for the Mildred's Umbrella Museum of Dysfunction festival of short plays.

Dr. Kimberly Meyer was awarded a one-month fellowship at the Vermont Studio Center, where she will work uninterrupted on her writing projects for the summer of 2012. Founded by artists in 1984, the Vermont Studio Center is the largest international artists' and writers' residency program in the United States, hosting 50 writers and visual artists each month from across the country and around the world.

Dr. David Mikics was named a John and Rebecca Moores Distinguished Professor this year. *The Art of the Sonnet* (written with **Stephen**



Cynthia Freeland enjoying a sunset camel tour in Ayers Rock, Australia

Burt) came out in paperback from Harvard/Belknap, and *The Annotated Emerson*, a book edited by Mikics, is forthcoming. *The Annotated Emerson* is a richly illustrated reader's edition of Emerson's selected writings, designed for both the scholar and the beginning reader of Emerson. "David Mikics's *Annotated Emerson* is the best possible introduction to Emerson's prose and poetry," wrote **Harold Bloom**.

Dr. Tamler Sommers, professor of philosophy, will be releasing *Relative Justice: Cultural Diversity, Free Will, and Moral Responsibility* with Princeton University Press in 2012. Wrote **Shaun Nichols** of the University of Arizona, "Many philosophers and social scientists have powerful, provocative ideas, and many are captivating writers. Few have both talents. Tamler Sommers is one of the few. This book is brash, fascinating, and a delight to devour." In November, Sommers also presented

a TEDx talk in Utrecht, Holland, on moral persuasion. You may view it at TheHonorsCollege.com/news.

Dr. Jonathan Zecher, who joined the Human Situation faculty in fall 2011, is newly relocated to Houston from Durham, England, where he just completed his Ph.D. in historical theology.

Staff News

The Honors College bids a fond farewell to **Laurie Cedilnik** and **Shannon Parrish Singleterry**. Laurie is working on a Ph.D. in creative writing in Michigan, while Shannon relocated to Austin with her husband Dana.

Honors also welcomes **Lucy M. Bonner** as **Dean Bill Monroe's** executive assistant. Lucy returns to the Houston area with degrees from The University of Texas and the University of York.

alumni news

Ed Burleson ('92, *Mathematics*) has been in Tokyo, Japan, since last summer. As part of the Consular Section, Ed helped find Americans living in Japan after the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear crisis. He authored an entry describing his experiences for the American Deputy Chief of Mission's blog at <http://tinyurl.com/japaneseembassy>.

Ernest Capraro ('98, *Chemistry*) started teaching AP Chemistry at Sidney High School in Ohio this year. "This school's got great kids and a fantastic laboratory layout. My AP students even sacrificed four hours of their time [Saturday] to come in for a more involved lab than we can do in class. It's fantastic!" Ernest has transitioned into teaching from his work as a lab chemist in the pharmaceuticals industry.

ernest_capraro@yahoo.com

Patricia Castillo ('07, *Finance and Accounting*) writes about her great career for the past three years with Shell Oil Company. She lived in Poland for a year and just returned from a research project in Brazil's Atlantic Rainforest. patricia.castillo@shell.com

Aris Economon ('89, *Economics*) writes to tell us that his wife, **Hanneke Faber-Economon** ('90, *Journalism*), is now the Global VP and Brand Franchise Leader for the Pantene and Head & Shoulders brands at Procter & Gamble. The addition of Head & Shoulders brings the total sales of her two brands to more than \$6 billion annually. The family is still based in Cincinnati, Ohio. economon@bluewin.ch

Barrett Estess ('05, *Psychology*) and **Briana Bassler** ('04, *Political Science*) welcomed their daughter, **Himma Lynn Estess**, into the world at 3:22 a.m. on Wednesday, October 5, 2011. This beautiful baby girl is the only person in the world who can rightfully call **Ted Estess** "grandpa." barrettestess@gmail.com

Fermeen Fazal ('96, *Biology and '97, English*) recently joined the University of Houston Alumni Association's Board of Directors. ffazal@gibbsbruns.com

Mariana Guerrero Forgie ('09, *Biology and French*) received the Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship to study abroad in France for a year after graduation. She married **Rhys Forgie** ('10, *Chemical Engineering*) on February 14, 2010, while studying for her Masters in Public Health at the Université Paris Sud. As a Rotary Scholar, she also served as a goodwill ambassador for Rotary and took part in multiple service projects during her time abroad. Mariana and Rhys now live in New York City, where Mariana is studying at Weill Cornell Medical College for an M.D. specializing in Infectious Diseases and Rhys works as a chemical and energy analyst. drforgie@yahoo.com

Billy Frey ('04, *Sociology*) and **Amanda Frey** ('06, *Psychology*) proudly announce the birth of their son and future Cougar, **Thomas Marshall Frey**, in September 2010. Billy is currently an associate attorney practicing maritime law at Legge, Farrow, Kimmitt, McGrath & Brown, LLP, in Houston, Texas. billyfrey@msn.com

Kelly Green ('06, *Psychology*) received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Houston in May 2011, and has moved to Philadelphia for a postdoctoral research fellowship with **Dr. Aaron Beck**. She is focusing on suicide prevention and intervention at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. kellylynn.green@gmail.com

Kelly Hales ('96, *Economics*) is now a Principal with Ernst & Young in Houston, Texas, in the International Tax practice. kimhales@yahoo.com, kelly.hales@gmail.com

M. Dilshad Kasmani ('99, *Economics and Political Science*) is currently mobilized to active duty from the U.S. Navy Reserves for a 7-month tour in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. He is serving as the Deputy Director of Public Affairs for Combined Joint Interagency Task Force 435 at Camp Phoenix in Kabul, Afghanistan. Upon completion of his tour, Dilshad will return to the Houston office of Andrews Kurth, LLP, where he is an associate in the Corporate Securities department. mohammed.d.kasmani@afghan.swa.army.mil

Kara Stauffer Philbin ('96, *Education*) and husband **Dax** welcomed a new addition to the family, **Caelan Knox**, born on March 9, 2011. He joins big brother **Hudson**. Kara recently joined Fernelius Alvarez to work with several ex-Fulbright colleagues in a boutique law office setting. kphilbin@fa-lawfirm.com

Jesse Rainbow ('99, *History*) is currently a Graduate Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, where he is completing his Ph.D. dissertation in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. He plans to graduate from Harvard University next year. jesserainbow@gmail.com

Natalie Merritt Sumrow ('92, *Chemical Engineering*) married **Chris Sumrow**, a UH MBA alumnus, in January 2010, in Dallas, Texas. nsumrow@bauer.uh.edu

Trey Wilkinson ('92, *Marketing*) recently founded his own business, the Trinity Legacy Partners, LLC, a Registered Investment Advisor (RIA) in Houston. He manages investment accounts for individuals, foundations, and endowments. Trey also serves on the Honors College Advisory Board. trey.wilkinson@trinitylegacy.com

Keep us in the loop—send your alumni notes to Libby Ingrassia at lingrassia@uh.edu for inclusion in the next issue of Areté.

alumni pictures



from left to right: (1) Natalie and Chris Sumrow (2) Dr. Robert W. Berry ('93, *Mathematics and Chemistry*) and Dr. Stacey Allen Berry ('94, *Biology and Chemistry*) join Jodie Köszegi at an alumni dinner in Phoenix. (3) Barrett Estess cuddling with daughter Himma Lynn. (4) Dilshad Kasmani appears while on active duty in Afghanistan.

The Honors College celebrated Homecoming 2011 with an Academic Tailgate on Oct. 22. (5) Zimuzo Agim ('06, *Economics and Finance*) visited from New York. (6) Mugging for the camera are alumni Kristin Laymon ('11, *Spanish and English*) and Aly Capetillo ('08, *Economics*). (7) Also at the Tailgate, alumni Julie ('02, *History*) and Joel ('98, *Political Science*, not pictured) Westra with their lil' Coog Jude, attending from Michigan.

Thank you



Senior Joehan Garcia writes in appreciation for her scholarship.

My name is Joehan Garcia and I am a recipient of the Monsanto Scholarship Endowment. I am a Senior pursuing an English literature BA with minors in accounting & Spanish. This scholarship is helping me become the first college graduate in my family. I will be that graduate in May 2012 & then will begin my teacher certification program. Thank you for taking an interest in my studies & supporting me in my achievements.

Sincerely,
Joehan Garcia

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Honors in Action

from left to right: (1) Former FBI agent Robert Wittman visited Honors on Sept. 8 and lectured on the exciting world of art recovery and security. (2) Eman Arabi-Katbi and Bilal Siddiqui were honored at the Honors College Graduation Banquet at the Houstonian Hotel on May 11. (3) Daniel Henley, Andrew Thomas ('10, English), and Michael Newman participated in the Honors Study Abroad trip to Dublin and Galway in early June. For more pictures, video, and stories about the 2011 Honors trips to Ireland and Greece and to see where 2012 takes the Honors travelers, visit TheHonorsCollege.com/studyabroad. (4) Megan Harrington takes time to reflect at Lake Pontchartrain during the Artists and Their Regions trip to Louisiana. In spring 2011, the class studied the living and the dead from Houston, Texas, to New Orleans, Louisiana. (5) Jon Ander Elizalde, Isaac Norris, and Chris Powell pose at the Honors Convocation on Sept. 2. (6) Alumni, faculty, and students demonstrate their Cougar spirit by singing the alma mater at the Honors Academic Tailgate on Oct. 22. (7) Diego Lopez and his mentees frolic at Ren Fest on Nov. 5. (8) Linda Tran, Kathleen Murrill, and Emily Zinsitz welcomed prospective students to an Honors College Open House on Nov. 4. (9) Professor Bob Brier (a.k.a. "Mr. Mummy") from Long Island University led a lecture about King Tut's mummy on Oct. 28. (10) Students from the Honors Engineering Program (HEP) participated in a Habitat for Humanity build project in northeast Houston on Nov. 18.



Honors in Action

(11) Incoming students with counselors, faculty, and staff pose for a picture at the Honors retreat at Camp Allen on August 19. (12) The 2011 Dionysia presented Agamemnon last spring at the Wortham Theatre from April 8-9 and again at Khon's Bar on April 11. Pictured in the production is Misha Penton, with students Blythe Nguyen, Isiah Gentry, Alyssa Weathersby, Whitmire Vo, Elizabeth Jordan, K.C. Schuette, Katie Teeters, David Kronenberger, Eb Novak, and Chelsea Cooper. (photograph by Dave Nickerson) (13) Bleacher Creatures Jasmine Patel, Jon Ander Elizalde, and Gabbi Hauser sporting their Cougar pride. (14) At the Honors College Fall Convocation on Sept. 1, Dean Bill Monroe appears with presenters Judge Reece Rondon ('92, BBA) and The Honorable Keith P. Ellison, U.S. District Court, Southern District of Texas. (15) Having fun on Halloween are Franco Martinez, Brenda Rhoden, Lucy M. Bonner, Sarah Bhojani, Tyler Swensen, and Katie Jewett. (16) On Aug. 26, Dean Bill Monroe hosted an all-night reading of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Pictured are Amanda Good, Kat Berry, Ashley Vilardi, Lucy M. Bonner, Adrienne Meyers, and Mallory Chesser. Of course, no reading would be complete without Prof. Stuart Long's 6'8", 125-pound Blue Great Dane, Grayson. (17) At Career Friday on Nov. 4, Houston alums Irma Carvajal ('97, BBA) and Troy Ahrens ('94, BBA) from Chase Bank chat with students Kaala Jacobs, Larry Walker, and Jonathan Sanford.



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Honors College Spring 2012 Calendar

- January 12 Alumni Social at The Den
- February 9 *Conservatism and Progressivism in America* Lecture Series
presents **William Galston** (*please note the date change*)
- March 24 Join Honors at Frontier Fiesta
- March 28 Twentieth Year: *The Great Conversation*
- April 11-13 Ross M. Lence Master Teacher Residency presents **Robert C. Bartlett**
- April 12 Spring Undergraduate Research Day
- April 26-30 *Dionysia* 2012 presents Aristophanes' *The Frogs*
- May 10 Graduation Banquet

See our online calendar at TheHonorsCollege.com/calendar.