Shine and Rise

An Annual Report

University of Houston | The Honors College
Greetings Honors College Students, Alumni and Friends,

My final semester has recently prompted a flurry of thoughts and reflections. In many ways, I feel eminently prepared to navigate the challenges and opportunities that await the recent college graduate. At the same time, though, I can’t help but look around the Honors College and the UH campus wistfully, searching for some excuse to take just one more course, to join just one more student organization, and simply to prolong my undergraduate tenure, because of all the excitement and transformations that are afoot.

This past year in the Honors College has been full of change and advancement, both figuratively and physically. I have been able to experience many of these events firsthand, such as listening to Sabita Soneji introduce Founding Dean Estess at Convocation, spending the night reading Camus at the Dean’s Marathon Reading, celebrating Halloween with SGB, and enjoying the lecturers who have spoken in the Human Rights and Social Justice Speaker Series. Meanwhile, the Honors College Gardens have been christened and students have moved into the new Cougar Place complex as Honors continues to expand across campus. Looking ahead to this spring semester, I am also eager to return to Washington, DC to continue our success at the Model Arab League and to reflect on my undergraduate career at the graduation banquet.

I must admit that my excitement for what is to come in 2014 is tinged with a healthy dash of envy for all that Honors has in store. With all of the new construction across campus, including new Honors housing and facilities, it is clear that even more exciting prospects await our community. With the introduction of new programs and minors housed within Honors, and the ever-increasing collaboration between the college and the city of Houston as a whole, there will be even more reasons for students across the country, such as my sister, to keep choosing the Honors College.

I hope you'll enjoy flipping through the following pages and finding out more about this past year in Honors.

Go Coogs!
Nicholas Heisig '14
LENCE MASTER TEACHER RESIDENCY

Dr. Bill Allen knew Ross Lence as both a friend and colleague, and they share an astonishing ability to bring students into the depths of the text. Xenophon beat Hemingway at iceberg-writing by 2,400 years, so Bill Allen leading us through Xenophon showed how much profundity could be packed into even a short, “simple” sentence.

— Andy Little, Honors College instructor and former Lence student

The goal of the program was two-fold: to help high school students from underserved communities engage with and find meaning in an ancient text and to give them certain skills that they can carry with them into their university studies, and to allow our Honors College students a way to serve their community by putting into practice some of what they have learned in Human Situation.

—Dr. Kim Meyer, Coordinator
I didn’t go to Ukraine as a tourist or a student. I worked. I met a community need. Because I dedicated time and energy to that community, I was able to learn, both about Ukraine’s culture and how to approach life differently. Learning is a process of transforming the unfamiliar—what we don’t know or haven’t experienced—into the familiar. We engage most effectively in this process through output. We won’t learn much about our massive and mostly unfamiliar world by input, absorbing facts from books or even observing firsthand. We must learn through invested immersion.

—Chris Powell, ’13, from his talk “Bigworldedness: Redefining Foreign”

The Great Conversation is no ordinary fundraiser, so for the past 21 years, the Honors College has steered away from traditional floral centerpieces for the tables. Instead, a team of Honors students is responsible for creating unique designs to correspond with each conversation topic. Last year’s team crafted thematically linked centerpieces for 35 tables, using found objects, art supplies, and various “treasures” the College has accumulated over the years. One student, Minette Vasquez (‘15), actually built a miniature television set for Steve Smith’s table on “Liars, Hackers, Swindlers... and Those Are Just the Journalists.” As a thank you for their hard work, all students on the decorations committee were invited to attend the event.

—Mallory Chesser, ’08

It’s always a treat to go to the Wortham House. The Underwriters’ Reception is a great way to recognize people who are supporting The Great Conversation, and it’s a great way for alumni to stay connected to the Honors College.

—Trey Wilkinson, Honors College Advisory Board member
The town and gown together again for the 21st Great Conversation

My wife, Janna, and I have had the pleasure of attending many black-tie galas and fundraising events through the years. While we always enjoy them, one tends to look like another, and another and so on. In 2011, we were invited to attend our first Great Conversation, and we have not missed one since. What a breath of fresh air! There is no other event like it! From topics as varied as foreign policy of the George W. Bush presidency, to art pieces and their authenticity, to [in 2013] the 1960s in America, the discussions at our table have been both stimulating and enlightening. We genuinely look forward to the next Great Conversation.

—Chuck Gremillion, Honors Advisory Board member

One purpose of the trip is for students to witness, first hand, the connection between the individual and the environmental. I now realize there’s hardly a place on earth better representative of this than Flannery O’Connor’s Milledgeville, GA. In her bedroom, for instance, a crucifix presides on the wall above her typewriter. Few artists are as married to their ‘true country’ as those of the American South, who cannot and dare not escape it even at work.

—Sawyer Estes, ’14

ARTISTS & THEIR REGIONS: CLASS & STUDY AWAY

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MODEL ARAB LEAGUE

Last year, 21 Honors students participated in MAL. Of those students, thirteen were participating for the first time. With more than half of the team comprised of rookies, it came as a tremendous surprise that our team representing Saudi Arabia—we also had a team representing Morocco—was awarded Outstanding Delegation for their participation in the regional model. Both teams also earned numerous individual awards. The team’s success continued when they traveled to D.C. for the National Conference, where Sidoney Sturrock and Peter Zachry were named Honorable Mention for representing Morocco in the Council of Social Affairs Ministers. Markley Rodgers and I were awarded Outstanding Delegate for our representation of Morocco in the Special Committee on Arab League Reform. I then was named the Assistant Secretary General for the National Model, making me the second highest officer for the organization nationally. Now with a roster full of returning veterans, the whole team is hard at work preparing for future successes.

—Tyler Swensen, ’15

DIONSYA 2013: ILIUM
A DRAMATIC INTERPRETATION OF HOMER’S Iliad

Attempting to capture these stories and memories, submitted by our own staff and faculty members as well as students, solidified my personal sense of the grief of war. The authors and individuals who shared these stories were compelled to relay the memories of their fathers and mothers and of their grandfathers and grandmothers. The destruction of war has leaked through generations of families. I came to understand the importance and the necessity of story telling as a way to heal not only nations but also the people in them. Being a part of Ilium humbled me in the deepest way. War is something that takes place not only on the actual battlefield, but also in the homes and hearts of those who live it.

—Erika Lai, ’15
The Honors College welcomes the newest Honors alumni at the 2013 graduation banquet.

What made this ceremony special was the personalized recognition given to students. Each announcement of achievements, awards, and honors told an individual story of success.

—Keri Myrick, ’13

The Honors College stands for many things, but none more important than the highest quality teaching and learning in the core, that part of a college education that examines the recurrent problems, challenges, ideas, and data points that are part of the human situation, which is, not coincidentally, the title of our signature course.

What is at the core of the American university system is a belief that in a democracy, every student should be liberally educated; should know something about history, philosophy, and literature; should be trained in mathematics and science; and should be able to tell the difference between logic and logical fallacy, between insight and hype, between beauty and adornment.

—Dean Bill Monroe, Honors Graduation Banquet speech
On our last day in London, Erika Lai and I were standing on London Bridge, looking out over the water towards Tower Bridge. We spent at least half an hour standing out there, in the cold, lamenting over the fact that we had to leave this wonderful place the next day. There is just an atmosphere and an attitude about London, Bath, Galway, and all the places that we had the opportunity to visit that you can’t find anywhere else. Going on this trip was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.

— Katie Jewett, ’14

**PHI BETA KAPPA HONORS ACADEMY**

“[The Engaged Education presentation] was interactive, interesting, and Dr. Hamilton was a great speaker.”

“[The] essay workshop was very helpful.”

“This Honors Academy made me consider going to UH.”

— Reactions from high school student participants, all nominated by counselors for their academic achievements

**COMMON GROUND TEACHERS INSTITUTE**

“This was my first experience with Common Ground, and it is the best professional development I’ve ever taken. I feel valued and loved as an educator.”

“The small-group seminar made difficult literature more accessible.”

“Only in Common Ground can I gain a deeper understanding of local and regional writers and the unique challenges they face.”

“Common Ground is a unique opportunity for Houston teachers to relax and intellectually rejuvenate.”

— Institute Fellows, Houston-area high school teachers

**HONORS TRAVELS TO GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND**

**STUDY ABROAD TO GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND**

**WORKSHOP HOUSTON**

**JUNE**

**PBK HONORS ACADEMY**

**COMMON GROUND TEACHERS INSTITUTE**
This experience has allowed us to work with engineers out in the field to solve actual engineering problems and to apply what we learn in class to real-world situations. We are extremely appreciative to the Honors College/Honors Engineering Program, the entire UH faculty and staff ... and NASA’s Microgravity Undergraduate Research Education Program for giving us this amazing opportunity.

—Steven Hong, ’16, part of the Cougaronauts Microgravity Team

THE GREAT BANQUET

The course ended with a performance at one of Houston’s premiere art galleries, DiverseWorks, where we prepared and served a five-course meal and told stories connecting food to transformative moments in our lives.

—Dr. John Harvey, Director, Center for Creative Work

SUMMER UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

In the SURF program, every day was an exciting challenge to earn a small piece of understanding in the broader research project. Although the research process was difficult and the rewards were only reaped little by little, I enjoyed every second. And the presentation at the end made me collect all the different pieces of work into a whole that I could appreciate as a monumental personal accomplishment.

—Gerry Espinal, ’14

As more and more teachers hear about this program, and recommend it to their most gifted students, we can offer more to the participants. This year, the students read a Sherlock Holmes mystery, as they have done in the past, but they went a step further and wrote their own mystery, using the elements of mystery writing taught by Honors College professors Robert Cremins and Jonathan Zecher. And that is part of the college experience that we want the Cougar Junior Scholars to take away with them. As college students, you are not just consumers of ideas, but creators of ideas.

—Dr. Christine LeVeaux-Haley, Director, Cougar Junior Scholars

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With the launch of its Bonner Leaders Program this year, the Honors College joins more than 80 schools nationwide in offering developmental and educationally meaningful service opportunities for students. Bonners dedicate at least ten hours each week and 270 hours in each of their four years to direct service in partnership with community organizations. The program is a structured way for students to learn and lead by working on projects that are bigger than a semester or academic year and that require teams.

The inaugural cohort is off to a running start. In addition to logging hundreds of service hours with partners like Habitat for Humanity, Urban Harvest, and METRO in the fall semester, they have also made significant progress on several of their own Big Ideas. These include working with others to plan and plant a community garden on campus that will provide fresh food for our neighbors in the Third Ward, a large-scale recycling project in Cougar Village I, the design of a new set of educational field trip experiences for middle schoolers, and planning for a university-wide annual day of service.

The program, which admitted the largest first-year class in Bonner history, will add 30 more students next year. It will soon be the largest Bonner program in the country.

—Andrew Hamilton, Associate Dean for Student Success and Director, Bonner Leader Program

This year’s event was one of the largest we’ve ever had, and with that size, we had a large group of talented students audition. We included some faculty members to really emphasize that retreat, especially follies, is a great way for people to get to see our honors community outside of academia. I think that goal was accomplished since our students and our faculty really showed some unique talents and gave us memories that will stay with us for a long time.

—Nam-my Le, ‘14

It always felt like storytelling was the foundation upon which Ted Estess built this college. For me, this place felt like a community—full of these incredibly bright students from around the country, finding their way and helping others find theirs, a place in which Dr. Estess and the rest of the incredible Honors College faculty are slowly and gently inviting you to see the stories everywhere.

—Sabita Soneji, ’97, Georgetown Law School ’02, from her introduction of Founding Dean Ted Estess.
The purpose of the dinner is to provide new honors students with a chance to meet their professors in an informal setting. The Mentorship Program wants to bring students into an involved learning community, so they can succeed in their college career.”

—Franco Martinez, ’10
Honors Mentorship Program Coordinator

THE HONORS MENTORS & DINNER WITH THE PROFS

It is great when a student then takes advantage of [the] newly developed rapport to ask a professor for an internship or research opportunity, a recommendation, or simply to ask for additional help outside of class. However, we primarily want incoming students to be fully integrated and engaged in the honors community since research indicates that integrated students will persist and be retained at higher rates.

—David Zinsitz, ’14, Honors Mentorship Program Student Coordinator

WRITING CRAFT TALKS

They really laid out what professors are looking for in an essay... how to get there and how to write a great paper.

—Kelsey Braxton, ’17

DEAN’S MARATHON READING: CAMUS’ THE STRANGER

Experiencing the Camus Reading was like a study abroad trip that never physically left the Honors Commons. I experienced a foreign land with foreign customs and ideals, and met people who shared my dream for a better future.

—Nathaniel Stich ’14

POLICY DEBATE TEAM

This year, the Policy Debate team began its academic season at the Georgia State University Debate Tournament. Eight preliminary debate rounds took place back-to-back over the course of two days with one of our teams reaching the elimination rounds. It was exhausting, to say the least, but very rewarding as well. In the Honors College, I have found a new home, and in the Honors College Policy Debate team, I have found a new family. I am very proud of all that we have accomplished over the past two years, and I am hopeful for the future.

—Tanweer Rajwani, ’16

COFFEEHOUSE

Coffeehouse is a talent show held once a semester in which Honors students get to show off their hidden talents. Students come to relax from their extensive studies, sip free coffee, and enjoy the artistic side of their fellow classmates. It is a chance to amaze and be amazed. This is one of the traditions of the Honors College that shows our diversity beyond academics.

—Whitmire Vo, ’14

CLUB THEATER AUDITIONS

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CLUB THEATER AUDITIONS
Pre-med prepares you for obtaining your medical license, but the humanities teaching in Honors lets you be the kind of doctor you want to be once you’ve passed all the hurdles.

—Dr. Ricardo Nuila, physician, writer, and Honors instructor
It was one of the most intellectually stimulating experiences I’ve had in a long time. The students were focused, curious and engaged in the discussions. It was a long Friday afternoon. I only saw one person check the iPhone.

— Jason Berry, acclaimed author, investigative reporter, and documentary filmmaker
DECEMBER CAREER DISCUSSIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE HONORING JODIE KÖSZEGI

You were a guiding force in my college experience. When I didn’t believe in myself, you believed in me. When I didn’t think that I could do what I set out to do, you reminded me that I was capable. And your belief in me—and all the students you encounter—has always been unwavering.
— Krystafer Redden, ‘13

THE NEW HONORS COLLEGE GARDENS

The Honors College, as the campus’s hub for liberal learning, serves the entire University of Houston. For that reason, we can’t think of a better problem to have than outgrowing our beautiful space in the MD Anderson Library. We’re happy to expand the College into repurposed space—to be used for both curricular and co-curricular activities—in the campus’s residential district. The presence of our students, faculty, and staff in the Honors College Gardens will naturally animate and revitalize the space as we look forward to expanding our Honors College programming.
— Dr. Andrew Davis, Associate Dean

HUMAN RIGHTS & SOCIAL JUSTICE SPEAKER SERIES

One speaker was Professor Jody Williams, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for her remarkable efforts to ban the use of landmines. She spoke less about the work for which she was awarded the peace prize and far more about the fact that ordinary citizens, like her and the students she was speaking to, can accomplish extraordinary things to benefit the human community if fueled by “righteous indignation.” Professor Williams urged students to begin actively responding to injustices, however small they might appear. Her talk electrified and engaged everyone who heard it, so much so that despite the semester’s end, students have organized a twice-monthly “conversation” to discuss where and how best to direct their efforts to make this world—locally, nationally, and globally—a better, kinder place.
— Dr. Irene Guenther, co-organizer with Dr. Shasta Jones of the speaker series
Dear Colleagues, Alumni, and Friends,

What you “hear” in the preceding pages is just one register of the polyphonic story that is the Honors College. In developing this inaugural issue of *Shine and Rise*, we wanted to convey what Founding Dean Ted Estess calls “margins of excellence”: those projects, activities, and experiences that foster deep learning and transform good to great. Rather than attempt to be exhaustive, we are consciously presenting a picaresque tale, showcasing but a few of the exemplary moments of 2013.

Many of the stories captured in this annual report are made possible by the generosity of our donors. The following pages listing their names are important, but the photographs, timeline, and testimonials reveal the true value of their contributions. The Lence Master Teacher Residency, the Artists and Their Regions study away course, the Common Ground Teachers Institute, and of course the many scholarships awarded to Honors College students—all are made possible by supporters of Honors education at the University of Houston.

As you can see, 2013 was busy and fun, a time of growth and opportunity. *Shine and Rise* complements our award-winning magazine, *areté*, as well as the Honors Coursebook and our always-changing website, TheHonorsCollege.com. We hope that you enjoy the report, take away some lasting impressions, and make plans to be a part of these margins of excellence in the coming year.

Warm regards,

William Monroe
Dean
THE HONORS COLLEGE
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Karen Webster
Trey Wilkinson
Amber Winsor
Shine and rise, gentlemen and ladies! Smell of tombs.

Earn and live natu.

Truth, the whole truth, for all once.