

CADENZA

Newsletter of the Lamar  University Honors Program
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New Space, New Director

HONORS ON THE MOVE!

Before the close of fall 2007, the Lamar University Honors Program will move into its new home at 1060 East Virginia. Before the start of fall 2008, Honors will also welcome a new director.

"This is a year of important changes for the University Honors Program," said current director, Dr. Donna Birdwell. "As I prepare for retirement, it is tempting to look to the past and all that the Honors Program has achieved over the past decade. But I encourage students and their parents to look to the future and all the continuing achievements that will be realized in Honors' new home under its new director."

The Honors Program has been housed in the ROTC Building just south of the Mary and John Gray Library since the summer of 1999, when Dr. Birdwell took over as Director. In that building, Honors



claimed two offices and two additional rooms that were outfitted as student lounge and study space.

In the new 3,000-square-foot quarters on East Virginia – formerly occupied by the Center for General Studies and the McNair Scholars Program – Honors will have a larger student space with its own kitchen, comfortable sofas and chairs, bistro-style tables, and more computers. The Honors Student Association will have its own office.

The building will also have a conference/seminar room. "We hope to meet most of our Honors Seminars (HNRS 3161 and 2160) in our own building," Dr. Birdwell noted. She added that some of the discussion sections for the freshman Philosophy of Knowledge class (PHIL 1360) may also meet there. When the seminar room is not in use, it will serve as quiet study space apart from the more social space in the student use area. Honors Program Assistant Director Dr. Kevin Dodson will have his own office in the Honors building.

Parking space comes with the new building and Dr. Birdwell has indicated that at least a few parking spots will be reserved for Honors students. "We intend to hold a lottery at each month's Honors

Student Association meeting for a one-month parking pass," she said.

In September, Dr. Birdwell formally announced her intention to retire at the end of spring semester 2008. She writes about this decision in her "Director's Notes" in this issue of CADENZA (see page 4). A search committee has been appointed by the Provost and will be chaired by interim Dean of Graduate Studies Dr. Oney Fitzpatrick. The new director will be on board for Fall 2008.

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CADENZA is the official newsletter of the Lamar University Honors Program.

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New Beck Fellowship Encourages Excellence

By Lauren Wigley

With dozens of opportunities for students to succeed at Lamar University, the David J. Beck Fellowship will provide yet another. Through a \$1 million dollar donation to the Lamar University Foundation, David J. Beck has created a fellowship open to all undergraduate students exhibiting financial need and who display the highest level of academic accomplishment.

Beck, who graduated from Lamar in 1961, is a litigator at Beck, Redden & Secrest L.L.P. and serves as president of the American College of Trial Lawyers, open only to the top 1 percent of trial lawyers in the country.

Available to students of any discipline, at the outset, the David J. Beck Fellowship will support two fellows a year with approximately \$15,000 each - to be used on tuition, books, fees, and university room and board. An additional \$10,000 will be granted to each student to fund a summer project. The first competition for the award will be in fall of 2008.

Applicants will be asked to submit proposals stating their personal and professional goals and explaining how the full academic scholarships and summer funding would help them to achieve the goals they have set forth. Students will be questioned on how the David J. Beck Fellowship opportunity will aid them in contributing to society.

"The key feature of the Beck Fellowship is the summer experience," senior associate provost Kevin Smith said. "Candidates will tell us what they have in mind. Whether it be international studies, study abroad, internships with an elected official, lab research - the opportunities are endless."

A committee comprised of faculty members appointed by the provost will review the applications and interview candidates. The committee will then make recommendations to the provost. Final selection, however, will be made by the president.

Smith said the committee is hard at work developing specific selection criteria to go along with the requirements already set forth by Beck. Current specifications state that students must be registered full-time, maintain a 3.5 GPA, and demonstrate financial need, he said.

The fellowship will be awarded competitively and cover one full year of studies. Students will have the opportunity to reapply for a second year.



"Mr. Beck, in his generosity, has provided a very rich opportunity. It is his intention that this be the crown jewel for Lamar students," Smith said.

Honors Program students will be provided with updated information on the Beck Fellowship application process as it becomes available, but Director Dr. Donna Birdwell advises that students should begin looking at possible programs and projects now. "I would be happy to consult with individual students as they begin to sort through their options," she said.

LU Makes Quick Recovery After Hurricane Humberto

An anticipated tropical storm blossomed into a hurricane overnight, leading Lamar University officials to cancel classes September 13 and 14. Hurricane Humberto came in at category one strength, causing minor damage, but leaving the campus without power for more than 12 hours.

Classes resumed the following Monday, September 17 with a minimal amount of evidence from the storm. Make-up classes took place on two successive Saturdays – October 6 and 13.

Students who remained on campus for this event had mixed feelings about the event. "It was unfortunate to miss classes, because I didn't want to make them up on Saturdays," noted Honors Cardinal Village resident Joel Toutloff, adding that, furthermore, "there was nothing to do without power!"



Lamar's main campus suffered from uprooted trees among other small damages.

A tree across the street from Cardinal Village Phase IV was split in half from the winds of Humberto.





Acosta Recounts Adventures at Bryce Canyon National Park

(Ritchie received a McMaster Grant to participate in the inaugural program of National Collegiate Honors Council's "Partners in the Parks" at Bryce Canyon, Utah. Honors LU will host an event in the Big Thicket during in March 2008.)

Ritchie Acosta Writes:

Bryce Canyon was not only the highlight of my freshman year in college, but perhaps the highlight of the past four years in which I have lived in the United States. A six hour delay in Vegas motivated me to mingle with people around the waiting area and realize that twenty of my fellow passengers were also members of the Partners in the Parks with whom I would be sharing tents for the next week. Southern Utah University welcomed us to Cedar City (which is actually surrounded by juniper trees) with a well thought out program. Upon arrival at the park, we all succumbed to the new environment, without light poles, without internet connection, with poor phone signals, and an unimaginable silence that allowed us to sleep without being disturbed except, perchance, by hungry deer or annoying woodpeckers in the morning. The food was without a doubt one of my favorite parts of the trip. Who would have thought for it to be possible to make brownies in the middle of the woods? Or that any of the girls in our cooking groups would hand the pots and spatulas to the men for us to be responsible for a complete day's meal? One of my richest memories was the famous Partners in the Parks "hobo" dinner. I am not quite familiar with "hobo" life, but if that's how they eat every day, then "hobo" life might not be that bad after all. As a part of the learning experience, we had a series of daily activities and seminars to keep our brains working; after all we were all honor students. With the collaboration of park rangers, lecturers and scientists, we had first hand exposure to the history, geology, park conservation, natural life, and everything there was to learn about

Bryce Canyon. It is possible to learn about a natural park through the internet and videos, but making the park's natural amphitheaters our daily classrooms definitely created images in our minds for us to remember what a hoodoo is, or the different layers of rock, or the smell of the ponderosa pine tree, than simply reading it from a book. We all had to leave our comfort zones, but in the end no one wanted to leave Bryce Canyon! Sure enough, it felt great coming back home and showering for the first time after 8 days, but I would absolutely do it again. I strongly recommend to everyone to attend one of the future Partners in the Parks since there is no better way to learn about a national park than actually being there.

HSA Tops Fundraising at 2007 LU Relay for Life

The 2007 Lamar University Relay for Life was a resounding success for the Honors Student Association, despite weather issues that moved the event indoors at the Setzer Student Center. Teams raised more than \$28,000 for the American Cancer Society. At the end of the event, the Honors Student Association team raised almost \$3,000 and was named the top fundraising team.



Team Captain, Christi Grudier (right), and teammate, Meghan Greer (left), proudly show off their 2007 RFL Top Fundraising Team award.

Recent Honors Theses

Lacy Benoit – Psychology (May 2007)
"Does Language Affect Self-Referent Cognition?"
with Dr. Edythe Kirk

Emily Lockard – Dance (May 2007)
"Interpreting and Liberating the Spirits of the Butterflies: Dance and Terezin"
with Dr. Andrea Karlin

Conrad Nguyen – Chemical Engineering (Aug 2007)
"Droplet Contact Angle and Scientific Instruments"
with Dr. Rafael Tadmor



Director's Notes

Dear Honors Friends and Colleagues,

Lamar's Honors Program continues to set new benchmarks for itself. Our fall 2007 enrollment of 238 is a new record and we have finally surpassed our goal of enrolling 2.5% of all LU undergraduates in Honors, reaching 2.7% this term. Our numbers of Honors Program Graduates continue to increase as well.

The front page of CADENZA highlights our move to new Honors quarters by the end of 2007. We are also well into the process of searching for a new Honors Program Director, who will take charge fall of 2008 after my retirement in summer of '08.

Being Director of Honors for the past eight years (since summer of 1999) has truly been the peak experience of my 23-year sojourn at Lamar University. Working with Lamar's "best and brightest" has been both a delight and a challenge. I have always maintained that the success of our Honors Program can only be measured by the success of our students – and their success continually amazes me! All I can say to my students is "Thank you!" for letting me play a role in your Lamar University experience. I know Honors at Lamar will continue to achieve bigger and better things, far into the future.

Sincerely,
Donna B. Birdwell

Honors Students Contend For Campaign '08 Scholarships

By Christi Grudier

This fall, Honors Program students applied for the opportunity to attend the 2008 national political conventions as participants in The Washington Center's academic seminars. Two students will be selected to receive McMaster Scholarships to attend one of the conventions – either the Democratic National Convention August 17-29 in Denver, CO, or the Republican National Convention August 24-September 5 in Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN.

During the week prior to the conventions, students attend seminars, lectures, workshops, and discussions designed to enhance their knowledge of governmental and political processes.

The second week focuses on the issues of the parties and the campaign itself. Each student is given a field placement according to their interests, permitting them to conduct interviews, attend events, meet political figures, and be in the midst of the action.

Dr. Alisa Hicklin, now Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Oklahoma, recalls

her experience as a Lamar Honors student at the 2000 Democratic National Convention where she saw Al Gore nominated for president and Joe Lieberman tapped as the vice presidential candidate.

"It gave me a great 'behind the scenes' view of a very unique part of our political process," Dr. Hicklin said. "I often talk about this experience in my classes to encourage my students to seek out these opportunities."

"Some of my favorite memories were being on the floor when Lieberman accepted the VP nomination and watching from the skybox when Gore accepted the nomination and then gave Tipper the infamous kiss," Hicklin stated.

Hicklin met celebrities at the governor's party and recalls being on the dance floor with Representative Shelia Jackson Lee.

She offered this advice for future students attending these conventions: "Sleep as much as you can before you go! You'll be going 90 miles an hour nonstop for two weeks!" She also pointed out that "a good part of the experience comes from seeking out and taking advantage of the other opportunities around."

The two Honors students who will attend the 2008 conventions will be selected before the fall semester ends. A third student will also be selected at-large to be supported by a scholarship from the Provost's office.

Student Highlights



Honors senior **Lauren Wigley** has taken over duties as Editor of the *University Press*, Lamar's student newspaper. Lauren has previously worked as a staff writer for the UP as well as for CADENZA. She is majoring in communication.

Bucklew and Rotaract Fund Belize Scholarships



Josh Bucklew, Honors engineering and math student, has led the LU Rotaract Club's scholarships for Belize project. With the help of Rotary Clubs in District 5910, LU Rotaract is sponsoring seven students in Chunox Village, Belize, Central America to attend high school in their community. Each student is

receiving full tuition and books for four years, contingent on grades, conduct, and attendance.

LU Rotaract was named the Student Service Organization of the Year for 2005 through 2007. The club originally ventured into Belize in 2005 and quickly saw the need for more access to high school. Bucklew focused efforts on raising money for scholarships for high school students. The club's international service committee is now pursuing other avenues for service in Belize that will help build goodwill and better friendships between Lamar's Rotaract Club and Chunox, Belize.

Rotaract president for 2007-08 is Honors Program student Josmery Ramirez.

Honors Spring Awards Reception Celebrates Achievements

The 2007 Spring Honors Reception presented many awards to both students and professors. During this year's event, held on the refurbished eighth floor of the Library, 18 Mirabeau Scholarships, 12 McMaster Scholarships, and 12 special merit awards and certificates were bestowed. The new Honors Student Association officers were announced along with the Honors Professor of the Year for 2007.

New **Mirabeau Scholars** for the College of Arts and Sciences are *Bethany Aiena*, *Joshua Autery*, *Erin Binagia*, *Joshua Davis*, *Patrick Greer*, *Jennifer Mikel*, College of Business enrolled *Carly Wright*. Joining the College of Engineering were *Aaron Barnes*, *Cameron Campbell*, *Dana Guy*, *Mathew "Luke" Ivy*, *Nathan Jordan*, *Valerie Juarez*, *Aaron Meadows*, *Mark Placette*, and *Daniel "Wesley" Woodrome*. Completing the '07 class of Mirabeau Scholars are *Brittany Ross*, College of Education and Human Development, and *Lauren James*, General Studies.

McMaster Scholarships were awarded to freshmen *Trey Babino*, *Joshua Barnes*, *Alicia Bodin*, *Chelsey Bromley*, *Lacey Clement*, *Christine Felix*, *Samantha Fuller*, *Jonathan Jeter*, *Kathryn Johnson*, *Kaitlynn Pate*, *Peter Shepherd*, and *Laura Whitmire*.

Certificates of Merit for Community Service recognized first-year student *Christi Grudier*, as well as *Josmery Ramirez* and *Josh Bucklew*. *Miriam Dark* won the Service Award for her volunteer work in India and Pakistan. Leadership Certificates went to first-year student *Ritchie Acosta* and junior *Tony Sarda*. The Leadership Award was presented to *Oscar Villanueva*, who served on the executive board of the National Collegiate Honors Council. Certificates for Academic Achievement were given to first-year student *Brittany Zenos* as well as seniors *Blake Mitchell*, *Nick Vikos* and *Emily Lockard*. The Academic Achievement Award went to *Lindsey Cauthen* for her research on neuroblastoma therapies conducted at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee.

Honors Professor of the Year for 2007 is Dr. *Steve Zani*, who regularly teaches Honors Composition and Rhetoric. Dr. Zani has also offered several Honors Topics and Honors Seminar classes. Finalists for the award included *Dr. Joe Pizzo*, Regents Professor of Physics; *Dr. Oney Fitzpatrick*, Professor of Psychology and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; and *Dr. Elena Sandovici*, Assistant Professor of Political Science.

The Honors Student Association officially transferred authority to its new officers for 2007-08. These are *Erin Tade*, president; *Kevin Stevens*, vice president; *Caitlin Kruger*, secretary; *Jeff Mitchell*, treasurer; *Christi Grudier*, reporter/historian; *Daniel Whitton*, student government representative.



The 2007 class of Mirabeau Scholars gathered at the Spring Honors Reception. Leaders of the Mirabeau group for 2007-08 will be sophomores *Matt Beaudry* and *Daniel Whitton*.



Honors Program Graduates May 2007

FRONT: Melisa Goolsby, Courtney Tomlin Gallagher, Lacy Benoit, Crystal Frost, Miriam Dark.

BACK: Janice Wilson, Nick Vikos, Lindsey Cauthen, Oscar Villanueva, Emily Lockard, Michael Moreau, Dr. Birdwell.

Not pictured: Jace Daigle and Erica Williams.



Honors Program Graduate Erica Williams is now at the University of Louisville pursuing her Ph.D. in Political Science.

Honors Program Graduate Oscar Villanueva received the Plummer Award for top grade point average from Texas State University System Chancellor Charles R. Matthews.



Whitton Volunteers Down Under

Daniel Whitton Writes:

This summer I had the awesome privilege of being able to spend a month in Australia through an organization called International Student Volunteers. The first two weeks I spent in a small tourist town on the southern coast of Victoria called Port Fairy working on conservation projects around the area with a group of eight other Americans, a girl from Ireland, and a guy from the UK. During those two weeks we planted 3,100 trees, collected seeds for reforestation, among many other activities.

For the next two weeks, we joined up with forty other students from America, Canada, and the UK and traveled up the eastern coast of Australia from Sydney to Cairns. We went snorkeling on the Great Barrier Reef, rappelling in the Blue Mountains, did a lot of sightseeing, and some of our group went skydiving. It was an amazing experience, and I encourage anyone who might be interested to visit www.isvonline.com to find out how to get involved.

