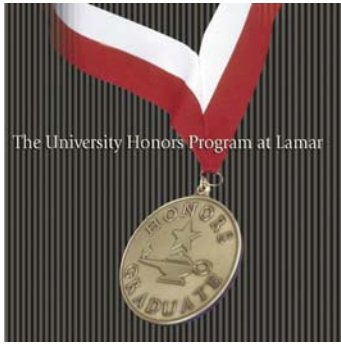


CADENZA

Newsletter of the Lamar  University Honors Program
Volume 1. Number 1. spring 2006



May Honors Program Grads Form Largest Group Ever

Lamar University will see its largest group of Honors Program Graduates ever on May 13. Eighteen students from four academic colleges are completing the requirements for Honors Program Graduation. They will be the first class to receive diplomas with "Honors Program Graduate" inscribed along with their respective Cum Laude statuses. (See page 4 for list of May 2006 Honors Program Graduates.)

Honors Catches Summer Reading Fever

by Crystal Frost

Dozens of college campuses across the nation have established summer reading programs for incoming freshmen, and the Lamar University Honors Program is one of the latest recruits of this rapidly spreading trend.

Incoming honors students read the assigned book during the summer and should be prepared to discuss it during honors orientation, the week before the first class day.

Assistant Honors Director, Dr. Kevin Dodson, said that discussion is a good opportunity for new honors students to get to know each other. The purpose of the new program is to break the ice between students and to stimulate intellectual conversation.

The assigned book is then integrated into first year honors courses for the entire academic year. Those classes include Philosophy of Knowledge, Public Speaking, Rhetoric and Composition, and British/World Literature.

"It has been an exciting challenge to incorporate the book into the class," Dr. Dodson said about his Philosophy class.

Honors faculty and students both participate in the process of choosing the book. Faculty members nominate a book they think would fit well into the program,

and during the fall semester Dr. Dodson holds a class in which students narrow down the choices and voice their opinions on which book should be chosen for the next academic year. Director Dr. Donna Birdwell and Dr. Dodson make the ultimate decision.

"I really enjoyed being able to play an active role in choosing next year's book," said senior English major Amber Placette.

The book that kicked off the reading program in summer 2005 was *Ornament of the World*, by Maria Rosa Menocal. Books were purchased for distribution to students by Exxon-Mobil, in recognition of Honors Program students' partnering with the corporation in providing tutoring to students at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School in Beaumont.

The summer 2006 selection is Richard Rubenstein's best-seller *Aristotle's Children*. "This was definitely the best choice for our courses," Dr. Dodson said. "We are considering adding a film series based on the book."

Whether students are discussing the reading at orientation, writing about it in class, watching a film about it, or debating which book should be next, this new program is creating one more channel for student involvement and participation.

Honors Welcomes Mirabeau Scholars

Lamar University announces a new scholarship program available for the first time to students entering the class of fall 2006. "Mirabeau Scholars" will receive full scholarships for their four years at Lamar University, worth a total of \$60,000. All Mirabeau Scholars will enter Lamar University as Honors Program participants.

Deans of the five colleges and the director of General Studies will nominate candidates for the Mirabeau Scholarships. Selection is competitive and includes evaluations or interviews by the deans. To be eligible, a student must have achieved an SAT score of 1250 or greater on the combined critical reading and math portions of the test or a composite ACT score of 28 or above, in addition to demonstrating excellence in prior academic work.

Scholars are expected to be active in student leadership (e.g., Leadership Lamar, Peer Advisors, Student Government, Lamar Ambassadors) or college or departmental undergraduate academic research or special programs. They will reside in Cardinal Village in community with other members of the Lamar University Honors Program.

Honors Program Director Dr. Donna Birdwell lauded the new scholarships. "It is so important for our top students to be able to focus fully on their education and the unique opportunities offered by the college years," she said. "The Mirabeau Scholars program will permit them to be 100 per cent LU students."



Lindsey Cauthen (center) spent most of summer 2005 working with Dr. Andrew Davidoff (far right) at St. Jude Hospital in Memphis, TN. She returns for a second internship in 2006.

Cauthen Returns for Second St. Jude's Medical Internship

by Lauren Wigley

Former Honors Student Association president and pre-med student Lindsey Cauthen knows that summer classes at Lamar are not the only option for students looking to expand their horizons. Cauthen will return to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, TN this summer to continue the clinical research she began last year. A double major in biology and music (with a minor in chemistry) Cauthen received word last spring that she was one of 46 accepted out of 450 seeking admission to the St. Jude program.

As part of the Pediatric Oncology Educational Program in summer of 2005, Cauthen worked alongside her chosen mentor, Chief of Pediatric Surgery, Dr. Andrew M. Davidoff. Although initially intimidated by the huge facility and genius surrounding her, Cauthen soon discovered she had something to offer as well.

"I realized I had the foundation of what Lamar has given me. The people at St. Jude were there to teach me something beyond that."

While Cauthen was involved in several research projects during her stay, her most notable research involved the effects of specific drugs on neuroblastoma.

Cauthen was not limited to the lab. She also shadowed her mentor during several of his surgeries where she gained valuable operating room experience. She also volunteered much of her time working with the hospital's children. One of the things Cauthen loves most about St. Jude is the hospital's attitude toward its patients.

"Everyone down to the janitor is about the kids!" Cauthen said. It was so great just to have fun with them!"

The entire experience has left a lasting impression on Cauthen. She encourages fellow pre-med students at Lamar to look into the programs at St. Jude. After graduation, Cauthen hopes to work in pediatric surgery and medical mission work.

"This whole experience grew me out of my comfort zone academically and emotionally. I came away with so much more than I ever expected," Cauthen concludes.



Director's Notes

Dear Alums and Friends of Honors,

Welcome to Volume One, Issue One of the new Lamar University Honors Program newsletter.

We selected our title with great care. As most of you know, Lamar University produces an award winning magazine called *Cardinal Cadence*. The Honors Program has selected what we consider to be a harmonious title for our new publication – *CADENZA*. Whereas "cadence" refers to the measure or beat of an overall work, a "cadenza" is a virtuosic passage, often performed by gifted soloists.

Cadenza is our opportunity to share news about the Lamar University Honors Program and its "virtuosic" students with our alumni and parents as well as our Lamar University community. We hope you enjoy it and we hope that you will let us know what you would like to see in future issues of *Cadenza*.

Sincerely,

Donna B. Birdwell



Honors Program students volunteered with LU Rotaract Club in December 2005 to transfer 1,100 boxes of books into a shipping container bound for South Africa. Shown above are Tony Sarda (Business), James Dupre (Engineering and Pre-Med), Zach Hansel ((Physics) and Nathan Toutloff (Engineering).



December 2006 Honors Program Graduates Zhi Chen and Gina Wilson celebrated at Katherine and Co. prior to Commencement.

HONORS Graduates: Encore!

Jenny Achilles (2003) began her Rotary International Ambassadorial Scholarship year in El Salvador in February 2006. She is taking a break from her Master's work in Journalism at the University of Texas in Austin.

Alisa Hicklin (2002) assumes duties as an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Oklahoma in fall 2006. Her dissertation is entitled "The Politics of Diversity: Increasing Minority Student Enrollments at American Public Universities." Hicklin expects to receive her Ph.D. from Texas A&M in August.

Daniel Chand (2002) and his wife Carol are currently serving with the Peace Corps in Africa.

Pamela Lippold (2005) is pursuing her Ph.D. in History at the University of Kentucky in Lexington.

Mahdi Mekic (2003), his wife Edina Cokic (2003) and daughter Zara have returned to their homeland of Bosnia and are living in Sarajevo. They are expecting a second child soon.

Eric Beier (2004) is completing his Ph.D. in Industrial Engineering at Texas A&M University.

Let us know what YOU are doing so we can include you in our next issue!

Honors Program Graduates

May 2006

Jennifer Albrecht, Chemical Engineering

Christopher Alexander, Mechanical Engineering

Ashley Alleman, Chemical Engineering

Amanda Cherry, Chemical Engineering

Cody Cook, Computer Science

Janay Flitcraft, Psychology

Alicia Girard, Psychology

Kelly Glaze, Chemistry

Jennifer Gonzales, History

Joseph Hunt, Physics and Mathematics

Devin Jones, Civil Engineering

Jessica Makdsi, Management

Emily Nero, English

Laura Nicholson, Pre-Pharmacy

Brandan Still, Finance

Divya Verma, Economics

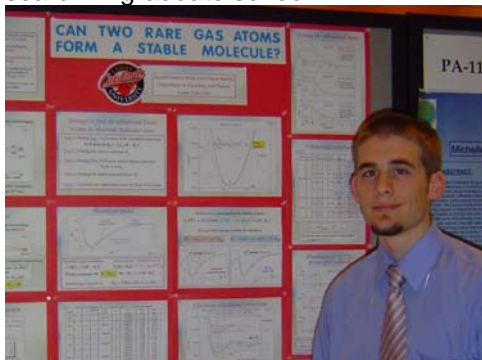
Jena Verrill, Communication Disorders

Michael Williams, Electrical Engineering

Helium/Neon Research Lifts Joseph Hunt to Bright Future

by Felicia Farmer

When Joseph Hunt approached Christian Bahrim, professor of Physics, concerning research opportunities in fall 2004, he could not have known all the successes the assignment would bring him. Now, after a year and a half of researching theoretical collisions between helium and neon atoms, Hunt has earned national recognition for his work and is looking forward to continuing research in graduate school.



Joseph Hunt presented research in theoretical physics at 2005 Sigma Xi national conference.

The idea behind Hunt's innovative thesis is that two rare gas atoms, specifically helium and neon, which typically cannot form a stable gas molecule in their ground states, may have the ability to combine temporarily. Classically, collisions between the two atoms would be unheard of, but Hunt and Bahrim looked into the effects of using neon in its excited state, and found that there was potential for the formation of a molecule.

"In interactions," Hunt said, "we've found several potential wells in bonding and anti-bonding states, which means that sometimes systems seem to have molecular behavior."

Hunt and his mentor focused on predicting characteristics of atoms in order to show that they may actually have the structures necessary to combine. This is done by identification of modes of vibration and application of "a simple quantum mechanical model based on a parabolic approximation for the nuclear motion," their abstract states. "To the best of our knowledge, this is the first attempt to predict modes of vibration within a temporary

molecule formed by two rare gas atoms in collision."

Hunt initially presented his work at the Lamar Student Research Conference and a McNair Scholars conference. In November of 2005, he made his way to the Sigma Xi Annual Research Conference in Seattle, Washington, to exhibit his findings. Two other presentations are on tap: Texas Academy of Science and a conference at the University of Maryland.

"The experience has been very valuable," Hunt said, "Dr. Bahrim has taught me a lot about the process of conducting research and preparing it for presentation and publication." He also noted that the findings could contribute to development of commercial lasers in the future.

Hunt's research has been published in the *International Journal of Scholarly Academic Intellectual Diversity*, and also has been submitted to the *Canadian Journal of Physics*. He is preparing a paper for the *Journal of Chemical Physics*

Through Lamar's McNair Scholars Program, Hunt was able to devote an entire summer to his research. "The Honors Program financed my trip to Sigma Xi and has provided encouragement throughout my research." Hunt said, "Dr. Birdwell encouraged me to do the research and to write a thesis."

Hunt will graduate in May 2006 as an Honors Program Graduate with a double major in Physics and Mathematics and may continue to conduct research on this topic as he pursues graduate degrees.



Graphic design major **Nicholas Vikos** won the annual logo competition for the National Collegiate Honors Council. His design (shown above) will appear on all promotional materials for the NCHC annual meeting in Philadelphia in October of 2006.

From Sri Lanka to Abu Dhabi, Pair Pursues Far Horizons

by T J Geiger

In summer 2005, Ali Girard and Stephanie Kelsey studied and volunteered abroad in Sri Lanka, one of the countries ravaged by the tsunami of December 2004. The two Honors students – friends who had shared the task of chairing the Honors Student Association's Service Committee – took part in a three-week program sponsored by Global Crossroad to help survivors of the environmental disaster. Their volunteer work included rebuilding homes and teaching English to children.

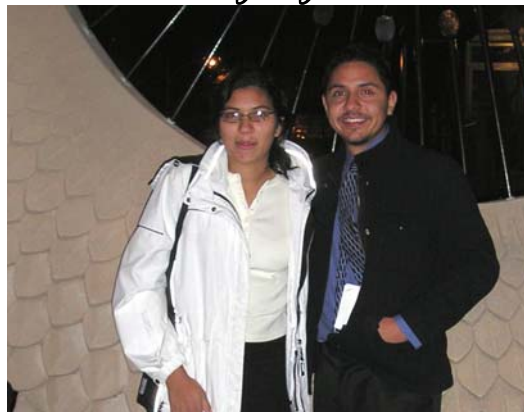
Through an Honors Seminar called "Encountering the Other," Kelsey and Girard had developed a yearning to learn and serve through travel. The Honors Program also helped them earn course credit for their time abroad – Kelsey through an Honors Contract on a nursing class and Girard through and Independent Study in medical anthropology. Both did preparatory reading on Sri Lankan culture before leaving and kept rigorous journals while doing independent research during their sojourn in the Galle district. Papers were prepared and submitted after their return.

In addition to their respective class papers, Kelsey and Girard produced a joint paper focusing on women and leadership, which was accepted for the program of the "Women as Global Leaders Conference" to be held in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. in March 2006. Kelsey, now Honors Student Association president, and Girard, former HSA vice president, will be accompanied on their journey by Honors faculty member Dr. Nicki Michalski, who also serves on Lamar's Honors Council. Kelsey and Girard's paper focuses on their efforts to inspire hope among the people they served and how they attempted to increase women's visibility as leaders in Sri Lankan communities.

With no rest in sight, they also intend to turn their presentation into a paper proposal for the National Collegiate Honors Council meeting for 2006.

Girard, Honors Program Graduate in May 2006, will be attending University of Texas Medical Branch in Houston in the fall. Kelsey is completing an Honors Thesis in nursing and will become an Honors Program Graduate in December.

Student Highlights



Honors Student Association President Divya Verma and Oscar Villanueva, pictured above, attended the fall 2005 conference of the National Collegiate Honors Council in St. Louis, MO. Villanueva was subsequently elected to a two-year term on the NCHC executive board. Verma will graduate in May 2006 in economics and anthropology and plans to begin graduate school in the fall. Villanueva is an English major planning to attend law school.



Erica Williams was nominated by Lamar as a candidate for the prestigious Truman Fellowship. Erica is a political science major and participated in the summer 2005 Ralph Bunche Institute at Duke University.

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