The students of the Reaud Honors College would like to extend their gratitude to Mr. Wayne Reaud. Thanks to Mr. Reaud’s generosity, the Honors College has the support it needs to develop its future projects and plans. His donation has provided students with significant educational opportunities, enabling the Reaud Honors College to make an even greater impact on students’ lives. Thank you for choosing to help provide a quality education and college experience to hundreds of students every year.

A Message From Dr. Dodson
This past year has been an exciting and eventful one for the Reaud Honors College. We started the Fall semester by moving into our new state-of-the-art facilities in the Wayne A. Reaud Administration Building, where we have two new classrooms, a conference room, student lounge, study space, and office suite for the staff. We ended the Spring semester with our first annual Honors Faculty Retreat. In between, we offered our first Honors study abroad course, initiated our new civic leadership program Stepping Up, saw record Honors participation in high impact practices, and hosted a major regional Honors conference. You can read about a number of these in this issue of Cadenza, which has been newly redesigned by one of our own students. All in all, the future is very bright for the Reaud Honors College at Lamar University, and we plan to tell you all about it in our future issues.

Exploration through Honors
The RHC plays host to the 2017 Conference of the Great Plains Honors Council, highlighting undergraduate research and SETX

Student Profile
A spotlight on the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship recipient: Christopher York

Minister of Cinema
An alumni spotlight on Star Wars enthusiast and film maker: Bradley Weatherholt

Sustaining the Tropics
Honors students travel to Belize and learn about helping the environment

Phi Beta Delta & Phi Kappa Phi
Honors societies of Lamar University

Honors Briefs
A brief report on clubs, awards, and events of the Spring semester

Honors Student Association Officers
From the 2016-2017 school year and those elected for the 2017-2018 school year

Honors College Graduates
Presenting graduates from Fall 2016 and Spring 2017

Cadenza layout and design by Reaud Honors College students, Ms. Patricia Correa and Ms. Deanna Pina.
The Conference was organized around the theme of “Exploration through Honors” and featured a rich sampling of the cuisine, history, culture and biodiversity of Southeast Texas. Two keynote addresses at the Conference’s banquets framed the proceedings. On the opening evening, participants were treated to an introduction to the area’s central role in Texas oil exploration and timber industry in a joint effort from Dean Dodson and Ms. Jo Ann Stiles, retired Associate Professor of History from Lamar University and co-author of two significant works on the region’s development. The second evening offered a glimpse into the future of space exploration by Dr. Paul Spudis of the Lunar and Planetary Institute in Houston.

The student presentations are the focal points of every Great Plains Honors Council Conference, and as usual, those presentations ranged across all academic disciplines. Student posters were featured on Friday afternoon, followed by student oral presentations on Saturday morning. “There was an awesome diversity of majors that let us connect with each other and still be able to learn a little bit about everything,” said Thanh Tsan, a junior mechanical engineering major from Orange. “I enjoyed moderating the oral presentations,” said Tsan. “I had the chance to listen to presentations that gave me insight on areas that I never thought about.”

The Conference’s oral presentations were staged at the College’s new state-of-the-art facilities in the Wayne A. Reaud Administration Building as well as those of the new Center for Innovation, Commercialization, and Entrepreneurship. “This was a great opportunity to show our community that we’ve arrived on the scene as a major institution in Honors education,” said Dean Dodson. According to Dr. Dodson, “as the host institution, we were able to showcase the activities and new facilities of the Reaud Honors College, as well as Lamar University and Southeast Texas.”

After their presentations, participants were treated to lunch with a fish fry at Spindletop-Gladys City Boomtown Museum, including reenactments and a blowing of the museum’s gusher. In keeping with the Conference theme of exploration, excursions on Saturday afternoon featured the local destinations of Shangri La, the W. H. Stark House and Stark Museum of Art, the Museum of the Gulf Coast, the McFaddin-Ward and Chambers Houses, Cattail Marsh, downtown Beaumont with a tour of the Jefferson County Courthouse, the Art Museum of Southeast Texas and the Texas Energy Museum, and a tour with Neches River Adventures. According to Ms. Rebekah Maxwell, Coordinator of the Reaud Honors College, “it was great for our area with so many people coming from outside of Texas. We got to show off our local treasures of Lamar University and the fabulous museums, nature areas, and local architecture.” The final night wrapped up with a show by local blues guitarist Silas Feemster followed by a student party.

continued on the following page
“Having been a part of GPHC for approximately two decades, I can assure you this year’s conference was the finest I have attended,” wrote Eddie Weller, Distinguished Professor of History at San Jacinto College and District Honors Program Director in a letter after the conference. Maxwell said that “it’s exciting because the participation at this conference has continued to grow over the last few years. Our Lamar students were a huge part of this year’s conference by helping to plan and serving as volunteers at the conference.”

About 50 Lamar University honors students volunteered their time by directing students and staff, leading excursions throughout the region, moderating oral presentations and ensuring that attendees were engaged. Great Plains Honors Council Student Representative and Reaud Honors College student Ryan Nunez credited the success of the event to the outpouring of support from Lamar’s Honors Student Association, “we had so many people volunteering from the Honors College all weekend. Everyone was incredibly invested in this event and committed to making it an amazing and memorable experience for the people attending. I’m so proud that I was able to be a part of it.” Dean Dodson echoed that sentiment, “our honors students stepped up and showed their skills as leaders by putting on a program of this magnitude. They did an outstanding job, and we’ve received a lot of compliments on how they handled their roles.”

Dr. Gary Wyatt, Vice President of the Council and Professor at Emporia State University in Kansas said that the Conference was “a truly wonderful event. My students had a wonderful experience at Lamar and they have all spoken repeatedly about how glad they are that they attended.” According to Alexandra Ewy, one of the students from Emporia State, “it was incredible to be at Lamar and meet so many students from various universities.” Ewy said that she thought that “the conference was extremely well organized. The presentations were very cohesive and meshed well together. I really enjoyed all of the presentations. One other thing I noticed through the conference is how ‘western’ Beaumont is, but also how the area boasts a lot of Cajun culture. “I think the attendees left with a new perspective on this area,” Thanh Tran said.

As GPHC President Eddie Weller summed it up, “The students were amazed at everything to do and see in the area. And of course the Reaud Honors College was the star of the show!”

Christopher York
A Student of Golden Caliber
by Laura Fiedler

Chris York, a sophomore double major in mathematics and computer science at Lamar University, has been selected to receive the distinguished Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, one of only eight in the state of Texas. The Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Program confers the most prestigious undergraduate award given in the sciences. The United States Congress established the scholarship in 1986 in honor of former United States Senator and 1964 presidential candidate Barry Goldwater.

“I was very surprised that I got the Goldwater. Not only was this a pleasant surprise, but the Goldwater will help me tremendously with graduate school applications. It should help me get into high-ranking institutions because it’s very prestigious,” York said.

The scholarship is awarded to about 300 college sophomores and juniors nationwide based on merit, and the funding is up to $7,500, based on financial need. The goal is to provide a continual source of highly qualified scientists, mathematicians and engineers by awarding financial support to college students interested in careers in these fields.

“In my application, I explained how I chose a problem and I stuck with it for three years before I finally got it solved. Being a mathematician involves a lot of frustration and I think they realized my persistence to see results,” he said.

York’s unique research opportunities have inspired him to pursue a career in math. After only two full years of college, he has already conducted 3 consequent research projects through the aid of the McNair Scholars Program and twice through the Office of Undergraduate Research under his mentor Valentin Andreev, professor of mathematics.

“Dr. Andreev wanted me to apply for this scholarship for a long time, but I decided not to. This year after finishing my McNair project, I finally applied. I felt this time I would stand a better chance because I finally completed my research,” he said.

Thanks to his participation in the Texas Academy of Leadership in the Humanities, a residential honors program for gifted and talented high school-aged students, York got a head start on his bachelor’s degree. Now a Mirabeau Scholar and Reaud Honor College student in his sophomore year, he has completed most undergraduate math courses offered.

Provost James Marquart called the news “a testament to the quality of our students and the mentoring they receive from our faculty.”

Dr. Andreev has provided Chris with unconditional mentoring regardless of the time, day, or circumstance. I am elated for Chris and deeply appreciative of Dr. Andreev’s efforts on his behalf,” said Joe Nordgren, interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. York plans to earn his doctorate in mathematics and specialize in functional analysis and operator theory, then teach at a reputable university. Because physics makes heavy use of operator theory, he will also complete a minor in physics. His planned graduation is May 2018.

York recently completed an algebraic combinatorics project, and currently has a solely authored paper accepted by the Journal of Combinatorial Mathematics and Combinatorial Computing (JCMCC). He has presented at numerous state mathematics conferences and intends to attend a complex variables conference at Brown University with Dr. Andreev in June.

The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program was established by the U.S. Department of Education and named for astronaut and Challenger space shuttle crewmember Ronald E. McNair. It encourages talented college juniors and seniors who are from a group underrepresented at the doctoral level to pursue graduate studies by aiding research, skill development, and formation of relationships critical to success at the doctoral level.

The Office of Undergraduate Research provides opportunities for students of all undergraduate colleges and programs interested in conducting undergraduate research. The office allows undergrads to form strong mentor relationships with faculty members and make a difference in their fields.

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When asked about how Lamar prepared him for the industry and making his own films, Weatherholt responded, “I was given the opportunity to network with a lot of professors and talented students. That’s what going to university is—networking. On the documentary our graphic designer, director of photography, producer, a lot of people on the team were Lamar students. Lamar is great for that sort of thing, a great factory for your labor so to speak.” He credits a number of Lamar professors, including Steve Zani in English, Kevin Dodson of the Honors College, and O’Brien Stanley and Gordon Williams of the Communications Department, with playing an important role in his intellectual development. It was during his undergraduate years at Lamar that he started the production company Ministry of Cinema. “We started Ministry of Cinema at Lamar, doing shorts and educational videos over film theory and cinema history. We bought a RED camera and that helped us to have a good production value.” After his undergraduate degree was completed, he earned an MBA at Lamar; “the masters in business was a bit of a safety net.” Upon graduating from the master’s program, Weatherholt took a job in finance, but when the time came to make the film Weatherholt declares that “I go as quick as I could and made the movie.”

According to Weatherholt, “it really all began when I first saw the Lord of the Rings movies when I was 10. That is when I knew that I wanted to make movies.” He entered Lamar knowing what he wanted to do with his life, though the route he took to reach that goal was a bit unconventional compared to the usual aspiring indie filmmaker. “I was a general studies major taking courses mostly in business, philosophy, and of course film, because I already knew that I wanted to be a filmmaker.”

Bradley Lamar, the process of making the film, and ran down to Houston to catch him. At the screening to talk about his time at Lamar, doing shorts and educational videos over film theory and cinema history. We bought a RED camera and that helped us to have a good production value. “After graduation from the master’s program, I started Ministry of Cinema at Lamar, doing shorts and educational videos over film theory and cinema history. We bought a RED camera and that helped us to have a good production value.” After his undergraduate degree was completed, he earned an MBA at Lamar; “the masters in business was a bit of a safety net.”

Weatherholt knew how to work on a tight budget, which gave him an edge. “Making shorts teaches you how to stretch your budget. So we could make our budget of $25,000 look like $250,000. Our production quality was incredibly high.” Of course, doing something such as quitting your job to focus on producing a film does not come without its own set of challenges. “Well we began making the film cold turkey, it was my wife who actually said that I should do it. I was so hesitant because it meant going 8 months with a mortgage and raising a son with no paycheck, just savings. You can find a lot of reasons not to do something, but if you want to succeed you need to seize the opportunity when it arises.”

Over the course of making the documentary, Weatherholt and his team scoured the country for interviewees. “Our interview process was very guerrilla. We had two trips around the U.S., Florida to Toronto and a West Coast trip.” His interviews spanned a wide-ranging group of individuals, including filmmaker Kevin Smith, director of cult classics such as Clerks, Chasing Aymy, and Dogma, also a well-known defender of the prequels. “The Kevin Smith interview is a fun story. We had interviewed a guy named J.C. Reifenburg, a bit of a Star Wars expert who worked with Kevin Smith. He told us that Kevin might be interested in being interviewed, and we heard he was going to be in Houston. So after driving 24 hours back to Austin we checked the equipment out again and ran down to Houston to catch him. At this point it is like 72 hours without sleep, we asked for a small interview and he says ‘no’. We are just devastated, so we wait and then I ask again and he accepts, but we get 5 minutes. I had the mind-set of, ‘I am not going to get this interview.’

Overall, the film took about a year to make, working straight through with no time to slow down. “We basically worked steadily through the whole year. Eventually we had to get a publicist to keep the momentum going with the press and blogs and getting the word out.” Because he was operating solely on savings, Weatherholt and his crew had no time to waste in the production of the film. “We basically had it mapped out; we had a complete outline and plan and knew exactly what we wanted and what we needed to film, which is something that is necessary with such a small budget. We knew when it was going to be done.”

The film constructs its defense from many different sources: everything from cinema history, forgotten filmmaking techniques that may have influenced the prequels, Jungian psychoanalysis, and “ring theory”, an inverse of ancient storytelling techniques that can help make sense of this collection of films that have baffled movie goers to make sense of this collection of films that have baffled movie goers since they premiered. When the documentary turns its focus onto George Lucas, we are given a portrait of a man who just wanted to make an exciting adventure story, one that he would have watched and enjoyed as a kid, but whose efforts have been vilified by the fan base for which he made the films. “In the making of this I loved learning about Lucas. He gave so much to a community that shunned him. “Through it all, a poignant narrative scene, Weatherholt inserts a shot of his son watching the Star Wars films, eyes glued to the screen, completely invested in the fantasy world of George Lucas. All in all, The Prequels Strike Back is a heartfelt tribute to a misunderstood trilogy of films, and although it may not redeem the prequels in the eyes of many naysayers, it is hard to deny that Weatherholt and his crew have found some solid arguments and their passion and dedication is undeniable. Beyond that, it is an entertaining feature for film buffs and casual fans alike and might even make you fall in love with Star Wars all over again.

“But what is next for the Ministry of Cinema?” Weatherholt did not want to give too much away, but as pressed he simply said, “Well I have always been fascinated by Kanye West.” In the meantime, you can catch The Prequels Strike Back on iTunes and Amazon. ●
Ten students of LU’s Reaud Honors College took on the spring semester with a new perspective thanks to their studies on sustainability in Belize during the winter break.

“It was really eye opening. The culture and the wildlife and the challenges that Belize faces were all so new to me, but those same issues affect a lot of people,” said Taylor Marshall, a junior biology major and Spanish minor from Saratoga.

The trip was part of a fall 2016 honors topics course offered by the Reaud Honors College titled Tropical Sustainability. The class introduced sustainability challenges in developing nations to students of diverse majors to promote systems literacy, or the ability of people from distinct disciplines to collaborate for effective global solutions.

“Now, students can assess themselves and our society from a new and more enlightened perspective. I know some were challenged by our activities, but all the students quickly learned to work well together as a team and keep high spirits,” said Dr. Matthew Hoch, associate professor of biology and instructor for the course.

The group studied tropical wildlife, sustainability issues, and creole and Mayan culture through their many activities: nature hikes; a canoe trip; snorkeling; visits to caves, rivers, waterfalls and a hydroelectric dam; exploration of ancient Mayan ruins; and a tour of a Mennonite farming community that emphasizes best practices.

Hoch, who has been teaching and researching in Belize since 1997, says that his desire to further incorporate sustainability into the university’s curriculum was his inspiration to create the new course for all majors.

“I wanted a sustainability course open to any discipline, so I approached Dr. Kevin Dodson, Reaud Honors College Dean, with the idea of an honors seminar course on tropical sustainability. The focus on the tropics, which is where most developing nations are located globally, was to expose students to societies with greater developmental challenges than our own and to understand our role in global society,” Hoch said.

“Typically study abroad programs are opportunities for students in a specific discipline to add a global dimension to their knowledge base. The Belize program was something completely different, and therefore very unique in study abroad programming,” said Dr. Jeffrey Palis, director of Global Studies and Study Abroad.

“As an institution, we are willing to think outside the box in how we provide intellectual and cultural opportunities that will prepare our students for the world today,” said Palis. “This course on Tropical Sustainability is our first step in expanding the curriculum of the Reaud Honors College by offering Honors courses with a study abroad component,” said Dodson.

The Reaud Honors College of Lamar University engages high ability students within the university and community. It facilitates honors students to reach their goals by offering enriched classes and seminars, opportunities for independent study, honors contracts and the honors thesis. Honors students enjoy smaller classes taught by some of the university’s top professors and are supported to do community service, internships, research, and study abroad.

“As an institution, we are willing to think outside the box in how we provide intellectual and cultural opportunities that will prepare our students for the world today.”

Students who complete one of two plans may become Honors College Graduates.

Belize is a small country on the eastern coast of Central America, bordering the Caribbean Sea. The Belize Barrier Reef is part of the world’s second largest barrier reef system, and the country’s biodiversity and abundance of terrestrial and marine species give it a major role in the globally significant Mesoamerican Biological Corridor. Belizean society is a blend of cultures and languages due to its historical interactions with many nations, and over half the population is multilingual. Belize is a popular location for recreation as well as study for people worldwide.

Front row: Sage Granger, Victoria LaFleur, Katelin Catching, Laura Fielder, Tara Hoch
Back row: Devin Allen, Molly Ross, Dr. Matthew Hoch, Bailey Brevell, Amina Gibic, Taylor Marshall

sustaining the tropics by Laura Fiedler
The Reaud Honors College has always had a strong relationship with Lamar’s Beta Xi Chapter of Phi Beta Delta and now serves as its new home on Lamar’s campus. Phi Beta Delta is the first honor society dedicated to recognizing scholarly achievement in international education across all disciplines, seeking to recognize the efforts of international students and scholars, to advance international programming in higher education, and to establish a network of faculty, students, and staff working on international projects. Honors Coordinator Rebekah Maxwell was elected Beta Xi Chapter President this Spring, and five Reaud Honors College students – Nasim Abedelewahab, Progga Chirontoni, Sakurah Fisher, Tara Hoch, and Dillon Nicholson – were all honored for their international scholarship by being inducted into the Society. Since its founding at California State University in 1986, Phi Beta Delta has grown to over 180 chapters. Lamar University’s Beta Xi Chapter was chartered in 1981 and now boasts 37 members.

During Fall 2016, the Lamar chapter of the national honors society Phi Kappa Phi inducted fifteen honors students into its ranks. Admission is exclusively by invitation, with only the top 10 percent of seniors and the top 7.5 percent of juniors eligible for membership in this prestigious organization. Founded in 1897 at the University of Maine, Phi Kappa Phi is the nation’s oldest and largest collegiate honors society with chapters on over 300 campuses. With membership drawn from all university disciplines, its mission is “to recognize and promote academic excellence in all fields of higher education and to engage the community of scholars in service to others.” To advance these goals, Phi Kappa Phi makes a variety of awards supporting graduate study, study abroad, career development, and literacy programs. Lamar honors students have been recipients of these awards in the past.

Inductees

Travis Anderson
Kayla Clayton
Curt Clevenger
Katherine Deaton
Amina Gibic
Julia Carter Gros
Cade Johnson
Levi Morris Jr.
Ryan Nunez
Marcus Rodgers
Alexander Sholl
Victoria Taylor
Alexandria Tololo
Kay Alana-Turner
Xin Wei

After seven years as Chapter President, Reaud Honors College Dean Dr. Kevin Dodson steps down from the post at the end of June. Chapter 95 will continue to be housed in the Reaud Honors College with Honors Coordinator Rebekah Maxwell assuming the permanent position of Staff Liaison for the Chapter.
HONORS GRADUATES

Front Row: Emily Blanke, Kayla Comeaux, Katherine Arriola, Shelby Murphy, Miroslava Zendejas, Jaskee Benavides, and Lindsey Darby.
Back Row: Megan Huddleston, Michael Holly, Levi Morris, Christopher Hagner, Kevin Zabolok, and Devyn Gravely.
Not pictured: David Devers

Front row: Aaron Lavergne, Kelli Creel, Bette Paredez, Emily Nguyen, Jamie Stafford, Cori Clevenger, Manisha Patel
Middle row: Alyssa Manke, Kohdeahrah Stone, Danielle Sanders, Leela Batterson, Yasmin Hamdan, Skylar Murphy, Thomas Plwe, Kailet Wolford, Molly Ross
Back row: Lukas Moravits, Travis Miller, Jesse Wells, Devin Allen, Julia Gros, Aaron McCoy, Noah Roberson, Enrique Salazar, Cameron Henry
Not pictured: Daytona Brown, Amina Gibic, Mary Morehead, Tommy Wendling, III

HSA OFFICERS

2016-2017

Front row: Carlos Caballero, Natalie Sfeir, Kate Blatin-Catching, Yasmin Hamdan, Victor Vuong
Back row: Kender Myers, Kelli Creel, John Ellis, Skylar Murphy, Stephanie DeMeyer, Thanh Tsan

2017-2018

Front row: Bra’ish Hamdan, Emmalee Calvert, Serene Kaggal, Natalie Sfeir, Edward Down, Casey Smith
Back row: Omar Hamza, Savannah Parfait, Emily McColl, John Ellis, Naim Abdelsalshab, Victor Vuong, Thanh Tsan

OFFICERS

FALL 2016

Front Row: Emily Blanke, Kayla Comeaux, Katherine Arriola, Shelby Murphy, Miroslava Zendejas, Jaskee Benavides, and Lindsey Darby.
Back Row: Megan Huddleston, Michael Holly, Levi Morris, Christopher Hagner, Kevin Zabolok, and Devyn Gravely.
Not pictured: David Devers

SPRING 2017

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Middle row: Alyssa Manke, Kohdeahrah Stone, Danielle Sanders, Leela Batterson, Yasmin Hamdan, Skylar Murphy, Thomas Plwe, Kailet Wolford, Molly Ross
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