A Note from the Director

Haunted Hume

“Don’t ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”
— Howard Thurman

Honors Without Borders

Honors Without Borders is a new Honors organization designed to provide students with the opportunity to use their skills, talents, and ambitions and apply them towards humanitarian work locally in Gainesville and abroad. The organization began when Melissa Johnson, assistant director of the Honors Program, noticed five honors students who had a similar passion for making a difference. They came together, shared ideas, and from there the organization took off!

This past fall, our first semester as an official student organization, we worked with the Spread the Love Cause, founded by UF faculty member Liz Kazungu. We raised over $300 to put towards books for a library in the Gandini Primary School in Gotani, Kenya. We also wrote letters to the children at the school encouraging them to continue with their education. HWB has tried to make a difference in the local community as well by volunteering at the Ronald McDonald House, where we made breakfast for the residents there. We also had a drive for items that we donated to Rawlings Elementary School in Gainesville. In addition, we recently had a peanut butter and jelly-a-thon in which members made over 175 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches that we delivered to the St. Francis House downtown.

We have a lot of exciting ideas for spring 2012, and we hope that more honors students will join us in our mission to make a difference. If you are interested in HWB, would like to become a member, or would like to find out more about us, you can visit our website at www.ufl.edu/honors/hwb or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/hwb.ufl. We would love to hear any ideas and suggestions, and we hope that HWB can be a way for honors students to put their thoughts and ambitions into action. After all, who we are is what we do.

Olivia Munizza, HWB President
A Note from the Director

Academic administration is much like any number of similar careers—putting out daily fires, managing short-term projects, and processing long-term initiatives in the background. The former takes most of our time, but it’s the long-term, large items that are the most interesting (and often the most frustrating). I sometimes think glaciers melt faster than it takes to bring some projects to fruition.

I’m happy to report that one of the Honors Program’s glaciers is nearing its demise. In the Spring 2012 semester we will launch a pilot of our new common course, Great Political and Social Thought. Professor Eric Kligerman of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures has put together a compelling syllabus built around the concept of justice. Students will read classical texts such as Antigone, The Apology, The Melian Dialogues, The Book of Job, The Trial, and Crime and Punishment, all of which present ideas about the law, justice (human and divine), and state power. The course will hone students’ critical thinking and writing skills and engage students in discussion about the ethical, political, scientific, and practical consequences these texts imply.

I am especially excited about the delivery method for this class, which represents a new model for Honors courses. Professor Kligerman will lecture one day per week; the class will be recorded and made available online for download. The other one-hour course meeting will consist of discussion sections led by upper-division undergraduate Honors student peer leaders. We have spent the fall term meeting with our 20 peer leaders, reviewing the texts and training them to lead discussions. This is a tremendous leadership opportunity for our more senior students. Moreover, we are optimistic that the student-led discussions will be less formal and encourage active participation among the students.

Over 140 students have registered for the pilot. My goal is for this course to be required for all first-year students in the Honors Program beginning with the freshman class entering in Fall 2012. I anticipate receiving administrative approval for that in the coming months. This will give all students in the program a common intellectual experience and join them together as a community of scholars.

So it looks like I have some reading to do (it’s been a few years since I read any Dostoyevsky). In the meantime, I hope you and your family have a safe and happy holiday season.

Dr. Kevin Knudson
Director and Professor of Mathematics

Fulbright Bloggers

The Honors Program office is responsible for campus-wide coordination of student applications for the Fulbright Program (http://us.fulbrightonline.org/home.html). Associate director John Denny recruits UF faculty to interview applicants and organizes their comments into recommendations. In each of the last several years over 50 students have submitted applications and UF is consistently rated as a top producer of Fulbright Scholars.

Scholars are in engaged in research projects or teach English as a second language in their host countries, and they also serve as unofficial ambassadors. We enjoy hearing from them and reading their blogs; check these examples out.

Wells Weymouth, New Zealand: http://thedailyexpeditioner.blogspot.com
Sarah Kaiser-Cross, Turkey: http://sarahkaisercross.blogspot.com
Haunted Hume

Every year in late October, Hume Hall transforms into a den of terror (well, den of slightly scary). Each floor decides on a theme and constructs a haunted house in which visitors find themselves startled, frightened, and sometimes amused. Sponsored by the Student Honors Organization, Haunted Hume is more than just a good time; it is also a community service event. Local children are invited to visit the house and join the fun. After touring a less-frightening version of the haunted halls, they are treated to Halloween candy. Later in the evening, though, the gloves come off and the scare-o-meter gets cranked up for UF students. A party in Hume Commons concludes the evening’s festivities.

A distinguished panel of judges grades the halls and awards prizes for creativity, scariness, and best overall. This year’s winning entry had an Alice in Wonderland theme that really impressed the judges. The photos on this page (courtesy of Honors Program photo intern Josh McLawhorn) give a sense of the seriousness with which Hume residents approach this event.

Top: Honors students know how to make a costume. Middle-left: A Hume resident dances with a visitor. Middle-right: They’re coming to get you! Bottom: Winners of best overall, the haunted Alice in Wonderland.
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