

THE SQUIRREL SQUIRE

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AT HOME IN THE HONORS HOUSING SECTION OF LAMMERS HALL

JAKE SEARS

It's hard to believe that only two years ago, I stood staring out my Lammers Hall dorm room window after move-in, watching my parents drive away until the last glimpse of their van vanished behind the tree line. It is one of those moments that I reflect upon often when I think back to my very first memories of university life. I had an inextinguishable feeling of excitement during the summer before heading to campus, but as my parents left, I couldn't shake a feeling of uncertainty. Where do I go from here? Little did I know that within a week, I would learn to call this new and unfamiliar place my home, that I would live in a warm and energetic hall with Honors students whom I'd quickly regard as family.

I still find it astounding that these learners, from all corners of the state and region, could come together so readily to seek out and accept anyone looking for support and friendship. Every day I am grateful for the bonds that I have forged here, the experiences to learn and to laugh, to better myself and to become a man with the knowledge, memories and unyielding support to carry him throughout his life. I regard living in the Honors Housing section of Lammers Hall as one of the greatest de-

isions I have made; I can't imagine a more loving, accepting, and frankly speaking, utterly hilarious environment in which to venture through my college years. As a third-year student who has lived in Lammers since I first enrolled at WSU, I can say that it's not the building that makes a home, but the family that dwells



Residents of the Honors Housing section transform into vampires.

within it. The family I found here, brought together by the Honors Program, is one that simply cannot be matched.

The Honors section is composed of students with shared interests and objectives; it is a place where you can fearlessly be yourself and work hard to accomplish your goals. The section has been an incredible environment in which to study, with specific study rooms sanctioned for more diligent and solitary work along with places like the common room and mini-lounges

where students can congregate and work while enjoying each other's company. I have found that students living in the Honors section take their work seriously, but also enjoy having lots of fun. Often waiting in the common room ready to take my mind off class and coursework or to go on an off-campus adventure, my cohorts

in Honors Housing are a vibrant and supportive group. We eat dinner together every night, often taking up an entire length of a row of tables in the Dining Commons with Honors friends. In my time here, twenty Honors students from the section have donned matching shirts with words of encouragement for Boston Marathon bombing victims as they participated in a benefit run in Stanley Park, gone apple picking en masse, taken a group trip to the Big E organized by the Honors Program,

gone to take pictures with Santa at the Holyoke Mall every year, and countless outings off-campus to bowl, hike, play paintball, watch movies, and shop.

If you are reading this as a current or upcoming Honors student at Westfield State, I encourage you with every fiber of my being to apply for housing in the Honors section of Lammers Hall. Trust me when I tell you that the memories you will forge in this incredible space and the people you will meet within its halls will become some of the greatest you have ever known. With only four short years on the WSU campus, I urge you to make the most of this exhilarating time in your life by surrounding yourself in a warm environment dedicated to the advancement of your education and the founding of lifelong friends and family.

Jake is a junior History major from Gloucester, MA.

Has Jake sold you on Honors Housing? If you'd like more information contact the Honors Program.

HONORS STUDENTS GO BEYOND

CONGRATULATIONS TO THREE HONORS STUDENTS FOR RECEIVING THE PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP



L to R: Brittany Moniz, Meaghen Chalmers, Josephine Lannon, and WSU President Elizabeth Preston.

Three Honors students were among the seven recipients of the 2013 President's Award for Excellence in Leadership in recognition of their academic success, community service, and leadership work.

Meaghen Chalmers, a senior Elementary Education and Liberal Studies major, was recognized for her GPA of 3.72 and her outstanding leadership and community service work. Since her sophomore year, Meaghen has been actively involved in the Student National Education Association, SNEA, serving as President for the last two years. She is a member of the Kappa Delta Pi

Honor Society and has participated in numerous community service projects, including Rays of Hope Walk, HOOT Day, volunteering at the Samaritan Inn homeless shelter, and Outreach to Teach, a program that assists in rehabbing the physical facilities of elementary schools. Meaghen says, "Through SNEA, I have been able to work in many schools doing community service projects... and to meet phenomenal practicing and future educators who share the same love for teaching that I do. I joined SNEA to become involved on campus but it changed my life in the most

positive way possible."

Josephine Lannon, a senior Nursing major, with an impressive GPA of 3.63, has made a tremendous difference in the shaping of the new Nursing Department. Serving on the Nursing Faculty Committee, she has participated in program development, scheduling, clinical placements, and creation of a required student handbook—all of which has helped to develop the program for future students. Josephine has been involved in the Nursing Club and has volunteered as a nursing tutor. Her service in health care education and events has been outstanding, from working at blood drives to providing educational outreach at Westfield State's annual Health Fair. Describing a typical day, Josephine explains, "my schedule consists of attending class, labs, clinicals, club meetings, club events, faculty meetings, tutoring sessions, working at Noble Hospital, socializing with peers, talking with family members, going to church, and staying active. Westfield State has enabled me to stay ambitious and future oriented

while still enjoying each day."

Brittany Moniz, a senior Communication and Political Science major, has a current GPA of 3.87 and is the first student to receive the President's Award for a second time. In just the last year, Brittany has continued to serve as her class president. She became a managing editor for the student newspaper and treasurer of the Lambda Pi Eta Communication Honor Society. This past summer, she volunteered through the Washington Center to participate in the Animal Welfare team running dog adoptions. She also serves the campus as a Student Ambassador. Brittany commented on her Washington Center internship, "When I traveled to Washington in the summer, I was proud to represent WSU. Without a doubt, my involvement on campus as well as community service and civic engagement have proven to be an invaluable enrichment to my academic curriculum and overall personal development."

The Honors Program congratulates Meaghen, Josephine, and Brittany.

The Squire Squad

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Visit the Honors Center in Mod Hall 103.

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LIKE US on FACEBOOK! Follow the WSU Honors Facebook page for updates on upcoming events!

**Interested in contributing to *The Squirrel Squire*?
Send your story ideas and photos to Professor
Vanessa Diana at vdiana@westfield.ma.edu.**

HONORS STUDENTS GO BEYOND

SENIOR CLASS PRESIDENT AND HONORS PROGRAM STUDENT BRITTANY MONIZ WELCOMES THE CLASS OF 2017 TO WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY IN HER ADDRESS AT FIRST-YEAR CONVOCATION

First off, I want to welcome you to Westfield State. Going to college has been a rewarding experience for me, and I hope the same will be true for all of you. As I begin my senior year, it is strange to imagine myself anywhere but here. What drew me into Westfield State is its sense of community. I hope you have felt welcomed onto campus and will understand the community feeling that I've come to love about this university.

If you don't know why you're here or what you plan to do during your years here, don't be discouraged or embarrassed. College is a time to figure out who you are and who you want to become. Certainly, you hope to launch a successful career once you graduate, but college is more than refining your resume - it's a time to refine yourself. Westfield State offers countless opportunities to do this.

The easiest way to figure out where you're going is to take a step out of your comfort zone and see where that takes you. During my time at Westfield State, I have challenged myself to try new things. As a sophomore, I spent two weeks of my winter break in San Francisco as part of a service-learning course. Instead of enjoying the last weeks of winter break at home, I traveled with other Westfield students to help serve meals in a homeless community. Those two weeks



Brittany Moniz welcomes the Class of 2017 at first-year convocation.

reminded me of how important it is to be a part of something bigger than myself.

As I've tried to step out of my comfort zone, I've been a member of many organizations on campus. One group I am especially proud to be part of is the 2014 Class Council. At our second annual Mr. Westfield pageant this past April, we raised over \$8,000 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. We have been fundraising for over two years, and we hope to grant one more wish by the time we graduate in May. This is a student-driven project, and our council is so proud of what we have accomplished so far.

Although I haven't made time to study abroad, Westfield State's partnership with

The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars allowed me to travel within the United States and earn class credit the past two summers. In August of last year, I went to Tampa, Florida, for the Republican National Convention and worked for CNN. I met politicians, state delegates, and media personalities. As a Political Science and Communication major, I could not have asked for a better end to my summer.

Just a few weeks ago, I returned from a 10-week program in Washington, D.C., where I interned for the non-profit Save the Children. In addition to the professional skills I gained at my internship, I made a lot of connections and a few friendships too. Spending the summer in D.C. also opened my eyes to the complexities of U.S. politics, especially the pressures of being a public servant. We look to our elected officials to make positive changes for our country and our communities.

In ten or twenty years, who will we see representing us? It could be you, or me, or the person sitting behind you. It's worthwhile to think about who is going to represent you, whether it is your class council or government officials. Whether you are stepping up to lead or supporting your peers in impacting change, ask yourself, what will I use my voice for? Look for opportuni-

ties here on campus where you can step up and develop your leadership skills: run for a position on hall council, join a club or team, take a course that challenges your beliefs, just take that first step out of your comfort zone.

Quite frankly, your college experience is only what you make of it. You are responsible for making it a good one. Of course, it's the people you meet along the way that make it great. Westfield State has supportive and responsive faculty, staff, and administration who will help you succeed; all you have to do is take the initiative. I hope you will take advantage of all that Westfield State has to offer. Good luck to all of you in finding your own way to make a difference. Make the most of your time here at Westfield State, and have a great year!

Want to get involved on campus? Visit the Office of Student Activities in Ely Campus Center or check out the directory of student clubs and activities under Student Life on the WSU website.

REMEMBERING EMILEE GAGNON

A TRIBUTE TO EMILEE GAGNON

VANESSA DIANA

The Honors Program grieves the heartbreaking loss of alumna Emilee Dawn Gagnon, Commonwealth Honors Scholar class of 2013, who was tragically killed September 23rd, 2013, as a result of a bicycle accident in Ohio while on a cross-country trip to benefit Multiple Sclerosis. An art major with a concentration in art history with minors in French and women's and gender studies, Emilee was a passionately engaged member of the Honors Program. Well known on campus for her rainbow-colored hair, artistic clothing, and expert hula-hooping skills, Emilee was a vibrant presence at WSU. Professor Jamie Wainright, Chair of the Art Department, explains that "to describe Emilee is like trying to capture a beautiful prism of color and placing it in a glass jar." She remembers Emilee as "a bright, intelligent, and char-



Emilee at Commencement 2013.

Senior Honors Project, Emilee wrote frankly of the inspiration she found in the photography of Hanna Wilke, whose work documents the artist's "process through cancer and chemotherapy, documenting the physical effects with photographs which represent the harsh duality of vulnerability and strength of the body." Emilee explained, "Although these images may not seem 'beautiful' to everyone, illness and death are a part of life for every woman and man. I believe Wilke's beauty resonates from her smile and positivity in some photographs, but also through her pain. I am able to strongly connect with this series because of my own personal experiences dealing with ovarian cancer and chemotherapy. At a young age, I did not

(Emilee, continued on page 5)

ismatic student, the Art Department's personal rainbow."

Emilee spent many hours in the Honors Center working on her Senior Honors Project, almost always with her friend Chris Holmes sitting at the next computer working on his Senior Honors Project. The two would often stay late into the night, typing away and sipping iced coffee. To remember this cherished image, we have named the computer chair where Emilee logged so many hours "Emilee's Chair."

Emilee's Senior Honors Project, "Revolutionary Beauty: Five Contemporary Women

Artists' Challenges to the Western Canon," celebrated her passion for art history and feminism. Project Advisor Dr. Ruth Ohayon observes that Emilee's "topic was personally significant and mirrored Emilee's own struggles and identity as a female artist." Emilee remarked in the conclusion to her project, "It is important for me to stay true to myself and how I want to present my art, not how others want to see it. These women have strengthened my love of art and passion for women's justice." At the age of 13, Emilee was an ovarian cancer survivor. In her



"Emilee's Chair" in the Honors Center.



Emilee presents her Senior Honors Project in May 2013.



Emilee, Alicia Boucher, and Melissa Brady at welcome reception for Honors students in Courtney Hall, 2009.

(Emilee, continued from page 4)

know how to express this process or how it affected me because it never seemed like reality. Discovering Wilke's self-documentation of her experiences was a powerful moment of recognition and connection to my past. Her photos are chilling yet truthful, and at times, playful, reminding me of the physical and mental strength it took to survive a life-threatening disease. Wilke has been an inspiration." Emilee has certainly been an inspiration to all of us privileged to have worked with her. We miss her very much, but we are determined that her spirit and memory will continue to inspire here at Westfield State.

Emilee worked at Ely Library, where she became the library's first Lead Student Employee, with special re-



Emilee and fellow Honors students celebrate the new Honors Center space in Mod Hall, 2009.

sponsibilities including supervision of other students and the circulation desk when regular staff were away. Library Director Tom Raffensperger explains, "Emilee loved the library, particularly activities such as author events, poetry readings, and therapy dog sessions during finals. The library has a beautiful events space, with 20-foot ceilings and big windows looking out onto the pines. This space will be

named the Emilee Dawn Gagnon Library Events Space; a plaque and a photo of Emilee will be on display there. Now whenever anything fun happens in the library, Emilee's spirit will be there, challenging us to have even more fun, to question our assumptions, and to be better people."

Fellow Honors alumnus Michael Brill remembers studying for Arabic class with Emilee. He reflects, "Emilee's last actions in life were representative of the way she lived. She possessed a truly generous heart and spirit that left a positive influence with anyone who met her. The world Emilee left is a better place due to the lives she touched during her tragically short time in it. While we will always be sad that she is gone, in an important sense, she is with us for all time now, in our hearts, memories, and as an example to carry with us until the end of our own personal journeys in this world."

Vanessa Diana, Ph.D., is Assistant Director of the Honors Program and Professor of English at Westfield State.



Chris Holmes, Emilee, and Professor Vanessa Diana at Commencement 2013.

THE EMILEE DAWN GAGNON MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Westfield State University has established the Emilee Dawn Gagnon Memorial Scholarship to honor Emilee, an authentic individual who brought to Westfield State University a spirit of creativity, curiosity, wide-ranging academic interests, openness, diligence, and social consciousness. A feminist who championed human, environmental, and animal rights passionately, Emilee combined her personal values and interests with her academic work. This memorial scholarship will celebrate Emilee's unique contributions to the WSU community by recognizing a student who embodies her core characteristics.

Contributions to the Emilee Dawn Gagnon Memorial Scholarship can be made by sending a check, made out to the "Westfield State Foundation, Inc." with "Emilee Dawn Gagnon Memorial Scholarship" written in the memo of the check, to: Westfield State University Foundation, Inc. P.O. Box 1630 Westfield, MA 01086-1630 *Westfield State Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your contribution is tax deductible, to the extent allowed by law.* For more information, please contact Lisa McMahon at the Westfield State Foundation at 413-485-7360 or at lmcmahon@westfield.ma.edu.

HONORS STUDENTS GO SOUTHWEST

HO'ZHOO'DOO

TOM HEBERT



Tom car surfs in Pinon, Arizona.

Ho'zhoo'doo: the Navajo people say, "In beauty I walk, in harmony I walk." While I had cultivated such sentiment prior to my coming down here to the southwest, this semester as part of the Carpe Diem Education program's "Indigenous Americas" course has enabled me to understand this belief at a much deeper spiritual level. By immersing myself in the cultures and environments of the Hopi, Navajo, Zuni, San Carlos Apache, White Mountain Apache, Tohono O'odham, and Havasupai peoples, I have gained new insight into the world around me as well as

into myself and how I want to live my life. Though I do not wish to exacerbate the myth of the "ecological Indian" in any sense, their comprehension of their sacred homelands and the spiritual powers inherent in those lands is enviable by most and equaled by few. And in my short time among each of them, I've barely scratched the surface of their traditional knowledge. What I can discuss here is the most profound moment of personal spiritual insight experienced on the trip.

Our group hiked into a canyon of spiritual significance to

the Apache people which I will refrain from naming, out of respect for the Apache tribes. Though the travel was only a few miles as the crow flies, the terrain was rough and involved a good deal of climbing up and down rock faces and overcoming other physical obstacles. After approximately three hours, we reached our halfway point, a series of deep, dark pools of water which flow from one into the next. At this time, we reduced our gear to only the necessities, strapped on rappelling belts, ropes, and helmets, and proceeded to jump - - clothed and carrying the aforementioned necessities - - twenty to thirty feet into the water below. The temperature could not have exceeded forty degrees and virtually sapped whatever energy and heat we had not already exhausted by the loads we were carrying. We swam

across the first pool to the next staging area and repeated this process twice more until we arrived at the fourth pool, one-hundred or so feet below our staging area. We rappelled down to the water, swam across, ascended the cliff on the other side, and proceeded to reverse all processes up to this point. To have hiked through difficult terrain only to arrive at a location where most of my remaining energy was taken was proof enough that this journey was not meant to be easy. After we had collected all of our gear upon returning to the staging

point before the first pool, I tied a heavy rope around my neck and left my shirt off, walking back to camp uncomfortably laden and offering my flesh to the forest. The scratches and blood on my skin and my exhausted muscles acted as reminders that I am only human, superior to nothing in this world. The spirituality of such action is debatable, but I choose to view it as re-living the life cycle: beginning in infantile weakness and pushing oneself through the trials and tribulations of life to reach the ultimate destination, whatever that may be to any one individual. This reminder of my finite quality and my equality or even inferiority to my counterparts in the living world constitutes the greatest spiritual ascension I've yet achieved on this journey. May I never forget this lesson lest I destroy and be destroyed in my absentmindedness. Blessed be.

Tom is a senior Psychology major from Holyoke, MA.

Interested in broadening your horizons? The International Programs Office can answer your questions about Study Abroad and National Exchange Programs.

For more information, visit their office in Parenzo 130 (Lobby) or email them at ipo@westfield.ma.edu.

HONORS STUDENTS GO WEST

NOLS: NATIONAL OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP SCHOOL

AMANDA CARRON



Amanda traverses a slot canyon.

This past spring semester, I had the opportunity of a lifetime. I spent 90 days in the backcountry of Wyoming and Utah through the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) all while receiving college credits that transferred back to Westfield State.

Over the course of the Outdoor Educator semester, I received my Wilderness First Responder (WFR), Level 1 Avalanche, and Leave No Trace Master's certifications and learned backcountry skiing, whitewater canoeing, canyon backpacking, and rock climbing. Most importantly, I gained experiences that will help me in my future career as an outdoor educator along with memories to last a lifetime.

Arriving in Lander, WY, I met 19 other students with

whom I'd spend my three months of travels through the Rocky Mountains, a diverse group of people from throughout the United States, each with a unique story. I was surprised to learn that several of my classmates were not studying wilderness leadership; one had a degree in English, while another had a degree in Psychology. A shared passion and love for the outdoors brought us together. Through our shared physical and mental challenges, we became friends and thanks to modern technology, we now stay connected.

After two days in Lander, we headed to Boulder, WY, to begin of our WFR training. Our ten days at the NOLS's Three Peaks Ranch was the longest stretch of time over the semester during which we had indoor heating, plumbing, and comfortable bedding. We learned important wilderness first aid that included everything from how to improvise splints from surrounding resources like sticks or shoelaces, to treating internal medical problems. Learning about the latter helped significantly when two of our classmates became ill with gastrointestinal problems and had to be evacuated. Both were able to return to the field after receiving proper medical help.

Throughout the semester, we were required to develop lesson plans and teach classes on subjects that we found interesting. The instructors for each section brought along

books or E-readers to help in our research. Although there were similarities to standard college courses, nature was my classroom and I learned equally from my peers and instructors.

Over the course of the semester, I travelled close to 200 miles by foot, skis, or boat. I froze my butt off while sleeping in a snow shelter in a sleeping bag rated for -30°; I capsized my boat in freezing cold rapids, and I got stuck in slot canyons. But I also learned so much about myself and the world around me. I saw gorgeous sunsets unaffected by pollution; I pushed myself to solo whitewater canoe down rapids; I woke up from the moon because it was too bright, and I taught classes on subjects about which I am passionate. Life was simple in the backcountry: I ate, I learned, I travelled, I slept. I shall never forget it.

I believe that I am a better person and leader because I

seized this opportunity.

I encourage you to put yourself out there and try something new. Whether it's traveling to another continent or to the other side of the country, participating in a J-term or a semester-long experience, as long as you challenge yourself and believe in the power of experiential learning, you will be richly rewarded.

Amanda is a senior Movement Science major from Wilbraham, MA.

NOLS takes students from all majors on remote wilderness expeditions and teaches them technical outdoor skills, leadership, and environmental ethics. NOLS backcountry classrooms are some of the world's wildest and most awe-inspiring locations.

To find out more visit the NOLS website at www.nols.edu.



Amanda and her group walk along the mesa before dropping into a slot canyon.

HONORS STUDENTS GO GLOBAL

STUDY ABROAD SEMESTER IN FLORENCE, ITALY

CHRISTINA DIVIRGILIO



Christina in Bologna, Italy.

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor.

Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.” - Mark Twain

I would never have imagined packing up and leaving Walpole, Westfield, my family, and the comforts of my life in Massachusetts to move halfway across the world. But sometime last December I got a little travel bug in me, and now I find myself typing this letter in the historical renaissance city of Florence, Italy!

Sometimes I forget I'm in Florence, but as soon as I see those red tiled roofs out my bedroom window, I instantly

remember how lucky I am. I wake up every day to church bells from Santa Croce, I walk past the Duomo on my way to school, and probably more often than I should, I cross the Ponte Vecchio to get gelato!

I live in an adorable apartment near the historical city center, with five other women, all studying at Florence University of the Arts (FUA). I'm taking four classes through FUA: Italian Language, Italian Contemporary Cooking, Renaissance Architecture in Florence, and Inter-cultural Communication.

I highly recommend studying abroad. I was the last person anyone expected to study abroad, and I am loving it. The city is amazing, the language is amazing, the food is to die for, the Italian women are so fashionable, it's just perfection. Although scary at first, the sense of displacement that comes with travel abroad makes me appreciate all the aspects of my new home and my new life with a sense of child-like wonder.

Christina is a junior Communication major from Walpole, MA.

STUDY ABROAD SEMESTER IN ORMSKIRK, ENGLAND

JENNIFER SHAKSHOBER

We came from Boston, Philadelphia, New York, Little Rock, Omaha, Charlotte, and Chicago, as well as Paris and Amsterdam to gather in Ormskirk, England, approximately forty miles from Manchester, for a semester at Edge Hill University. That first day at Edge Hill University, as the rain leached the color from my overweight luggage tag, I wondered if I would ever grow to like - let alone love - a place that isn't home.

What I learned in the space of three months is that all of the clichés are true: studying abroad will change you in ways you can't imagine, and just as it takes a lot of time to get used to the rhythm of everyday life in a foreign country, you will have to devote just as much time assimilating to life at



Jen (c.) and new friends at Conwy Castle in Wales.

home when you return. For me and Lindsay Tanguay (also a senior at Westfield State), certain “triggers” evoke Edge Hill University's rural campus, grabbing a bite to eat at the quaint town center, catching the Merseyrail service to Liverpool or Preston, and most of all, forging interpersonal connections with people we resolve to see again someday.

Edge Hill's international

program led excursions to Conwy Castle in Wales and Manchester's annual Christmas market, while personal travels included overnight sightseeing trips to London, and Boston, UK, where I researched my maternal grandmother's family. I also spent weekends in Nuremberg, Copenhagen, and Paris. Nuremberg's streets are quite literally paved in gingerbread (the medieval location is

famous for its heart-shaped cookies); Tivoli Garden appoints Santa Claus and a real-life Rudolph at Christmastime. And somehow, Lindsay and I had an easier time navigating the Parisian catacombs than Paris' labyrinthine metro system.

In the midst of traveling, Ormskirk was my home base. A month after my return, I still feel homesick for that little town and friends I made while attending a British “uni.” I'm wholeheartedly appreciative for the chance to study at Edge Hill University, and to any prospective study abroad candidates I'd like to offer up another tired yet true cliché: make every minute count.

Jennifer is a senior English and Economics dual major from West Townsend, MA.

HONORS COURSES IN REVIEW

A LEARNING COMMUNITY OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS BRIDGES MATH AND WRITING

LIZ WALLACE AND EMILY TARJICK



Professor DiGrazia and Lori Merlo find symmetry.

English+Math = What?! Typically, you would never hear these two subjects discussed in the same classroom. Our whole lives we first-year students had been taught that English and math had absolutely nothing to do with each other, and we had always believed that fully. So, when we were asked about taking a combined class in the two, our jaws dropped. The results have blown our minds and far surpassed our expectations. Our class, a learning community taught by English professor Jennifer DiGrazia and Math professor Christine Von Renesse, is a blast. We spend half the class learning math by moving around and doing different activities and spend the other half fine tuning our English composition skills. Our writing projects have explored the intersections between math and composition, and we are seeing how both the art of writing and the art of math can simultaneously enrich our thinking and analysis. During

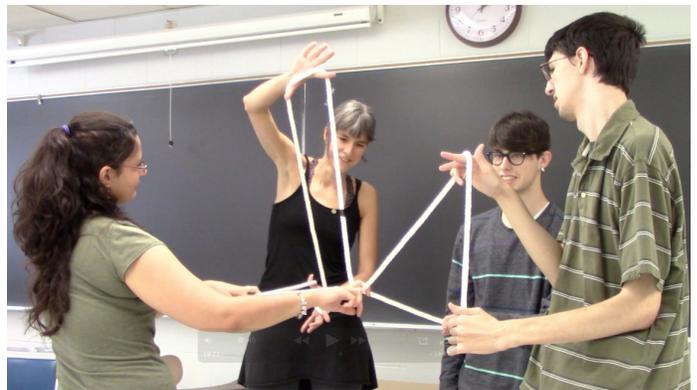
one week, our entire class took an even further step out of our comfort zones and let Erik Stern and Karl Schaffer, aka MoveSpeakSpin, lead our class. These two men originally started a dance company in Santa Cruz, California, but decided to take their love of dance and apply it to the classroom. As soon as class started we gathered in groups and began to dance. Erik played the beat with the drums, and we were told to memorize our funky, made up positions. After an hour or so we were wondering what this had to do

with math. Amazingly, dancing has everything to do with math. Eric and Karl showed us all the symmetries and connections between geometry and dancing. They shocked us even more on Thursday, by showing us how amusing playing with a rope can be. We learned how to transform the rope into all different kinds of shapes from other shapes, and even made a table out of what symmetries we could move into. Our class is a ton of fun and a really great way to learn. We are always standing up, working in groups, and talking about our ideas. We are currently in the middle of a unit on math and

salsa dancing. We may not all be the best dancers, but it is definitely a fun and exciting way to learn. We explore the subjects in ways that many people do not even know are possible, and learn not only math and English but new ways to look at the world and everything around us. If you want to view math and writing differently and are open to change and a lot of fun, we highly recommend this class.

Liz is a first-year Movement Science major from North Attleboro, MA.

Emily is a first-year Undeclared major from Cheshire, MA.



Professor Von Renesse and students create shapes from ropes.



MoveSpeakSpin guest lecturer guides Honors students in rope play.

HONORS COURSES IN REVIEW

HONORS SEMINAR: EMBODIMENT IN ARTS AND LETTERS

NICOLE GODARD AND JIM MADIGAN

Honors students have often heard about the mysterious required upper-level interdisciplinary Honors seminar, but few know what exactly a seminar entails, or what distinguishes it from a core Honors course.

Our seminar, “Embodiment in Arts and Letters,” with Dr. Beth Ann Rothermel, explored the connection between the mind and the body, and the artificial barriers between the two, in modern society. We began by reading Descartes, who adamantly declared, “I think, therefore I am.” By the time we ended, however, we had challenged the mind/body split and questioned our culture’s tendency to privilege mind over body. We combined mathematics with dance, choreographed our own versions of different poems, and gathered outside of class to watch a movie, all the while identifying, defining, and explaining the dualities that exist in our lives.

The class was small, like all Honors courses, creating a strong sense of community.



Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*.

As Dr. Rothermel explained, a seminar is not only a chance to “deeply investigate” a question as it pertains to themes or ideas, but also it gives professors a chance to “create something new.”

With professors able to center a course around their own interests or intellectual pursuits, there is a greater sense of engagement, from the professors as well as the students. Dr. Rothermel shared that the idea of a seminar on embodiment and duality came from a combination of both a class and

her experiences with dualities in her own life.

“The idea blossomed in relation to a thematic English Comp II class I taught, which was ‘Writing, Literature, and Dance.’ Dance was infused throughout the course.... We talked about the body/mind split, and then we read Ntozake Shange’s *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Unfurled*. One student, as she was reading ‘The Lady in Orange’ part, exclaimed, ‘She’s got a body/mind split!’ It was a lovely ‘aha!’ moment that made me think about a more extended, deeper investigation of the topic.”

The class also has a personal connection for Dr. Rothermel, as she has been exploring the mind/body connection in her own life and career. She credits some of the inspiration for the course to the realization that her two passions; dance and literature, didn’t need to

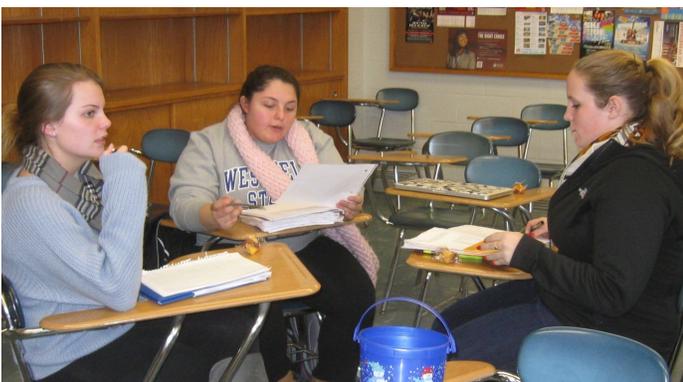
be as separated as they had become. In realizing the symbiosis between these two seemingly disparate facets of her life, the idea for the class was born.

As in most Honors courses, Dr. Rothermel observes that the level of student involvement and interest is greater in a seminar, due both to the small class size and the narrower focus of the course content, allowing for deeper thought and a more engaged classroom. Seminars are also interdisciplinary, both in scope and students, which doesn’t often happen at the 300 level. This blending allows students from various majors to discuss and interact in ways they simply cannot do in their other classes, creating an atmosphere unique to the seminar.

We were invited to think about, write about, and talk about living in new ways. We were encouraged to pursue an independence of thought and conversation that is not often found in typical classes, and we were given opportunities to express ourselves in a variety of ways. Taking a seminar is definitely a unique, worthwhile experience, a highlight among the diverse offerings of the Honors Program.

Nicole is a junior English major from Northfield, MA.

Jim is a junior English major from Westfield, MA.



Amber Robert, Jessica McKinnon, and Ariana Roche engage in group work.

HONORS COURSES IN REVIEW

HONORS SEMINAR: MUSIC AS A SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

JESSICA COONS

Upper-level Honors seminar. The name can be intimidating, especially when it's completely unrelated to your major or interests. After I signed up for "Music: A Social Experience," I was nervous. Music is not my area of expertise, as I am a Special Education major, but I needed the Honors credit, and the aspect of social experiences being drawn in with music sounded interesting enough.

This class turned out to be my favorite class of the semester because of its uniqueness. It wasn't unique simply because it dealt with music and not education, but because we were a small class from different majors with diverse interests, coming together, discussing topics in-depth, including music and ethnicity, music and gender, and music and politics. The small class size allowed for more discussion based on what we, the students, found intri-

guing in readings and videos, a welcome change from the typical class experience of responding to predetermined questions and listening to lectures. Having a small class size also allows for a "more self-motivated [class]," Professor Sonya Lawson explained. Knowing that we were from different majors, few of us being music majors, Professor Lawson wanted to make sure that she could "push [students] for music but also push [students] to think globally," which influenced how she structured our class. The most unique piece of this class was that we got to pick our own topic, "music and..." and create a chapter to extend our book. This allowed us to connect what we learned from class with something that interested us. For example, my chapter is titled "Music Therapy." Other project titles



Classical string musicians break the stuffy stereotype.

ranged from "Music and Sexuality," "Music and Martial Arts," "Music and Film," and "Music and Health." Instead of being given questions, told what to think, or assigned a topic for a project, we were key players in guiding the class discussion and our own work for the class.

Having a small class size enabled us to present our capstone projects, the research and music that we found to support our interest, to one another.

This class not only inspired me to pay more attention to music, but to see the connections that music makes throughout our lives. The freedom and possibility for in-depth discussion offered in an upper-level Honors seminar far surpass those offered in the large lecture-based classes.

Jessica is a junior Special Education and Liberal Studies dual major from North Granby, CT.

HONORS DESIGN FUNDAMENTALS CLASS TRIP TO MASS MOCA

DAVID SHAPLEIGH

Professor Shapleigh's Honors Design Fundamentals class visited MASS MoCA (Museum of Contemporary Art) in North Adams, MA, to view the many exhibits they discussed in class. Sol LeWitt's *Wall Drawing Retrospective* influenced numerous students' own projects, which were based off simple shapes similar to what LeWitt used in his work. As the MASS MoCA catalog states, "the exhibition ranges from layers of straight lines

meticulously drawn in black graphite pencil lead, to rows of delicately rendered wavy lines in colored pencil; from bold black-and-white geometric

forms, to bright planes in acrylic paint arranged like the panels of a folding screen; from sensuous drawings created by dozens of layers of trans-



Sol LeWitt installation at MASS MoCA.

parent washes, to a tangle of vibratory orange lines on a green wall, and much more. Forms may appear to be flat, to recede in space, or to project into the viewer's space, while others meld to the structure of the wall itself." This exhibition broadened the class's view of the use of simple shapes to visually describe an emotion, feeling, or concept.

David Shapleigh, M.F.A., is Assistant Professor of Art at Westfield State.

CONGRATULATIONS, COMMONWEALTH HONORS SCHOLARS

FALL 2013 SENIOR HONORS PROJECT PRESENTATIONS



MEAGHAN CHALMERS



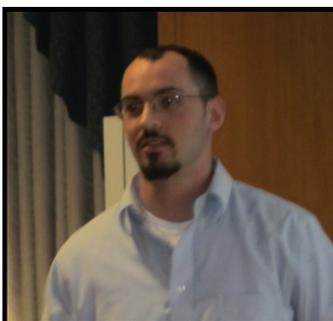
LAUREN DENIO



AMY ELCOCK



KAILA FLANAGAN



MICHAEL MAILLOUX



CATHERINE ROBERTS



LYNDON SEITZ



KATIE THOMANN

The designation of Commonwealth Honors Scholars is awarded to students who complete a minimum of four Honors courses (at least one upper-level Honors seminar) with a B or higher, maintain an overall GPA of 3.30 or higher, and complete a six-credit, individually designed Senior Honors Project (SHP). Listed below are recipients, their major(s), their SHP titles, and their Project Advisors.

Meaghan Chalmers: Ele-

mentary Education and Liberal Studies, *Education Theory in Practice: Learning to Make My Own Decisions*, Dr. Megan Kennedy.

Lauren Denio: Elementary Education and Liberal Studies, *Critical Skills for Post-Secondary Success*, Dr. David Raker.

Amy Elcock: Elementary Education and Liberal Studies, *Using Children's Literature to Teach Mathematics*, Dr.

Maureen Bardwell.

Kaila Flanagan: Elementary Education and Liberal Studies, *Tiered Intervention Models: A Study of One District's Implementation of a Universal Screening Program in an Elementary School*, Dr. Terri Griffin.

Michael Mailloux: Mathematics, *Investigation of Square Spirals*, Dr. Anna Rokicki.

Catherine Roberts: Ele-

mentary Education and Liberal Studies, *Hometown History and Children's Literature: Creating Enjoyable, Engaging, and Educational Historical Fiction for Children*, Dr. Kathleen Itterly.

Lyndon Seitz: English, *Re-birth Inc.*, Dr. Michael Filas.

Katharyn Thomann: English, *"What Are You Prepared To Do?" Teaching Classic Literature through Accessible Writing Practices*, Dr. Beth Rothermel.



Katie Thomann (2nd from r.) with her committee members.



Catherine Roberts (c.) with her committee members.

HONORS STUDENTS BUILD FUTURES

BioTech Futures

Honors students Carl Favata (center) and Dylan Gamache were among the Biology Department student volunteers who hosted two high school groups in a college-level lab activity at WSU as part of the BioTech Futures program, which provides students with an inquiry-based approach to molecular techniques while introducing them to the university experience and offering



a deeper understanding of the application of technologies to real-world situations. The

Mass BioEd program expressed appreciation for the Westfield State students' role

as mentors to the high school students and for sharing their enthusiasm for science, taking the time to answer student questions, and showcasing the WSU educational experience to demystify college and allow students to see future studies in STEM as a realistic goal. The high school students expressed greater confidence about working in a college lab setting in the future after participating in the event.



Go Public!

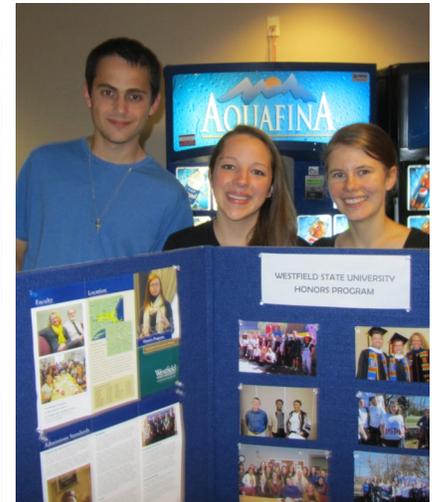
WSU Honors Nursing major Hillary Duda (3rd from left) encourages students from three Springfield high schools to get involved in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) as part of the statewide "Go Public!" campaign, which is promoting the STEM fields at the state's 29 public college campuses. Hillary was one of six speakers from local colleges who addressed 450 students from area schools at the event.



Leadership Voyage

WSU students build leadership skills, challenge themselves through physical and mental exercises, including ropes course events and zip lining, and build meaningful relationships with other campus leaders, at a yearly weekend retreat at Camp Hazen YMCA led by professional leadership trainers. Fifteen Honors students participated this fall: Megan Brochu, Matthew Carlin, Rachel Cofsky, Ashley Deleon, Evelyn Dina, Becky Glennie, Steve Kligerman, Randi Lemenager, David Lepine, Jessica McKinnon, Brittany Moniz, Fiona Mwariama, Sara Palis, Ariana Roche, and Emily Tarjick.

HONORS STUDENT LEADERS



We are very proud of our Honors students who have taken the lead on stage and in various clubs and organizations on campus. From top left: Quidditch team, *Persona* Literary Journal, Relay for Life Club, Intersivity Christian Fellowship, *The Westfield Voice*, Student Honors Advisory Council, peer leaders at Honors Early Move-in Weekend, and cast of *Rent*.



RUN STANLEY AND EARLY MOVE-IN



Honors students (top and left) raise funds for bridge rebuilding at Stanley Park during the Run Stanley 5K organized by Prof. Diana (top left). Honors students (below) enjoy Early Move-in Weekend events in the park, including Prof. Brewster's grilling (bottom left), and a pizza party in the Honors Center.



STUDENT HONORS ADVISORY COUNCIL



The Student Honors Advisory Council (SHAC) organizes events throughout the semester, which are open to all Honors students. From top left: SHAC meeting, Welcome Brunch, Big E outing, End-of-Semester Chinese Dinner, and Yankee Candle outing. For more photos, check out the WSU Honors Facebook page.



STUDENT HONORS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Student Honors Advisory Council (SHAC) acts as a liaison between Honors students and administration. SHAC allows Honors students to be heard in an open and constructive way. In addition to addressing student concerns, the council plans fun events throughout the year. Have ideas for programming or just want to find out more about SHAC? Contact: Irina Znakharchuk at iznakharchuk6701@westfield.ma.edu or Connor Jackson at cjackson4857@westfield.ma.edu.

SPRING 2014 SHAC OFFICERS

Co-Presidents: Irina Znakharchuk and Connor Jackson
Vice-President: Chelsea Baker
Secretary: Lauren Nastari
Treasurer: Allison Davis
Co-Publicity Officers: Lauren Joyce and Mikayla Fucillo
Historian: Sierra Bias
Commuter Rep: Emily Doiron
1st-year Rep: Julia Suheena