

THE SQUIRREL SQUIRE

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DEVELOPING PRESENTATION SKILLS AT THE MASSACHUSETTS STATEWIDE UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

WOODY WOODGER



Woody Woodger reads poems on a panel moderated by Westfield State English professor Dr. Carol Bailey.

Imagine a ballroom packed with undergraduate students flanked by their research posters. The room hums as students discuss topics ranging from cellular biology to electoral politics to creative writing. At the Massachusetts Statewide Undergraduate Research Conference (MURC), held each April at UMass, Amherst, Westfield State students joined more than 1000 of their peers from across the commonwealth for a day-long exchange of research and creative work. Of the 48 Westfield State students who participated, many are members of the Honors Program; quite a few were first-year students.

Participating in this event early in your college career is smart: its purpose is to introduce students to presenting their work at an academic conference, an important practice in graduate school and in many professional

fields. The statewide conference is accessible and supportive, accepting submissions from all disciplines and open to all students in the Massachusetts public higher education system. Faculty advisors help students write their abstracts to apply for the confer-



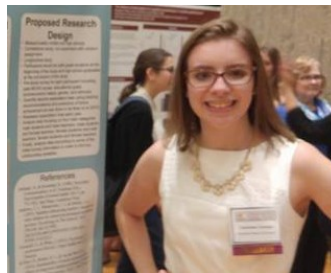
Lauren Stornelli gives a poster presentation on mental health stigma.

ence, which is welcoming and “freshman-friendly.” Lauren Stornelli, a first-year psychology and Spanish major who gave a poster presentation on mental health stigma, confirmed, “it was a very comfortable environment where I didn’t feel like it was high pressure; as a first-year student, I was really glad I had the opportunity.”

While the conference might not be a pressure-cooker, it comes with its share of academic prestige. Stornelli described how the feedback she received from working professionals impacted her: “I talked

to a guy who was in the field for thirteen years. To have him tell me I did a great job and he couldn’t believe that I was only a first-year student meant a lot.”

The welcoming atmosphere and interdisciplinary focus of the MURC encourages students to be inspired by the impressive work of their peers across Massachusetts. That inspiration may lead to future, more ambitious, academic plans that might otherwise seem daunting. English Secondary Education major Christine Luongo, another first-year student who pre-



Christine Luongo presents research on expectation bias.

sented a poster at this year’s conference, can already see the confidence-building impact: “I definitely want to do a Seniors Honors Project, so I’ll have to present my research publicly. I’m glad I got to practice in such a non-threatening venue.”

As students advance in their majors and go on to graduate school or the professions, they will likely participate in discipline-specific conferences. As an English major with a concentration in writing, I have presented my poetry at the National English Honor Society Conference, giving me valuable professional experience and broadening my knowledge of English studies. At first the idea of attending a conference and speaking in public can feel a little daunting, but, trust me, there are few things better than pushing yourself to speak as an authority and finding out you are becoming one. Consider the MURC an opportunity to begin developing those presentation skills, networking with peers across the state, and getting inspired.

Woody is a junior English major from Lenox, MA.



Sierra Bias enthusiastically shares her research on self-worth contingencies.

HONORS STUDENTS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP ETHICS AT HEBREW UNION COLLEGE, JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

RACHEL POLLAN



Rachel Pollan at historic Isaac Wise Temple in Cincinnati.

In high school, I was very involved in the reform Jewish community, which encourages teens to develop leadership skills, so I went to a leadership weekend at the historic Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC JIR) and fell in love with the experience. When given the chance to go back as a college student this spring, I jumped

at the opportunity.

On Friday night, we kicked off the program with a Shabbat service, beginning with a poem about justice. We then engaged in a more in-depth conversation about justice in Jewish texts. One text that stood out was Hillel’s quote, “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I?” Just as on airplanes they tell us to put on our air masks before helping someone else, after we take care of ourselves, we must help our society; we are obligated to try to repair the world.

Saturday morning we attended a Shabbat service that was focused on Kehillah Kedo-shah, a sacred group who all come together towards a common goal. This related to our topic of the weekend; I felt all of us were a Kehillah Kedo-

shah working towards creating justice in our world. Then we headed to Isaac Wise Temple on Plum Street, a huge cathedral-like building that holds the roots of American Jewish Pride.

Later that day we visited a mosque to follow our faith’s teachings and learn about our neighbors. Imam Ismaeel Chartier gave us a brief tour and led our conversation. A convert who had lived in Boston for part of his life, Imam Ismaeel was raised Irish Catholic. It was interesting to learn about him and how he wants everyone to love each other and work together in the Middle East. Imam Ismaeel left his ordination program in Egypt (after nine years) to focus on practicing Islam through an American lens. Imam Ismaeel’s Islam and Reform Judaism are relat-

ed in the sense that they have been reformatted to accommodate living in our current society. Imam Ismaeel feels Muslims and Jews can come together to repair the world. If there are more reform Jews who want change in the world, and if there are more Imams like Ismaeel, I believe religion can spread love not war.

When we returned to HUC JIR, Rabbi Rachel Sabbath, a leader of Reform Judaism, led us in a conversation about obligations of Jews when it comes to ethics. On my journey home the next day, I reflected on how much these Jewish Leadership weekends inspire me to consider my impact on the world.

Rachel is a first-year Nursing major from Northborough, MA.

SHAC OFFICERS for Fall 2016 - Spring 2017

Co-Presidents: Amanda D’Aprix and Christine Luongo

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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 want to find out more about SHAC?

Contact Amanda D’Aprix at adaprix8121@westfield.ma.edu or Christine Luongo at cluongo0748@westfield.ma.edu.

The Squire Squad

Student Editors and Contributors: Woody Woodger (intern), Christian Biseinere, Jessica Collette, Jillian Dicken, Samantha Lee, Fiona Mwariama, Brooke O’Connor, Rachel Pollan, and Kelly Steele.

Staff Editors: Glen Brewster, Vanessa Diana, and Gretchen Konrad.

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

Get in touch with the Honors Program:

Visit the Honors Center in Mod Hall 103.
Call (413) 572-8086. Email at honors@westfield.ma.edu.
LIKE US on FACEBOOK!

Follow the Westfield State Honors Facebook page for updates on upcoming events!

(squirrel art courtesy of Prof. E. Stassinios)



HONORS STUDENTS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

NORTHEAST REGIONAL HONORS COUNCIL CONFERENCE

KELLY STEELE



A view of the Charles River from the conference hotel.

Cambridge, Massachusetts, a vibrant city that sometimes gets overshadowed by the bustling city of Boston, was the location for the 2016 Northeast Regional Honors Council (NRHC) Conference, and for this weekend, Cambridge stole the spotlight.

with a staple of every NRHC Conference: the *City as Text* event where students have the opportunity to explore different aspects of the host city. The options included trips to Boylston Street, Harvard Square, the Freedom Trail, and the Black Heritage Trail.

lence, and gangs in South Boston. He framed his speech by illustrating how his own experiences helped him become an activist working with social programs and giving a voice to adult and youth survivors of drug and of gang violence, and poverty. Chelsea Orifice was so inspired that she practically ran out of the ballroom to get the chance to speak with him.

On Saturday, student presentations ranged from the portrayal of autism in young adult literature to a study on the financial impact of “going

even be a possibility. Looking back at my undergraduate career, I am proud and happy that I got the chance to participate. Conferences like the NRHC give us the opportunity to hone our presentation skills, network, and be proud of the academic work of our peers at Westfield State and in the region. It can be scary to apply to a conference you have never been to, but trust me: pushing yourself out of your comfort zone is when the greatest experiences come about. I can say that present-



Seen here at the banquet on Friday evening, Westfield State students were one of the largest groups accepted to the conference.

Hundreds of Honors students from as far away as Washington, D.C., migrated to this unique place for the weekend. 18 Westfield State Honors students from various disciplines presented their work. Being able to attend this conference emphasizes how our university is committed to supporting undergraduate research and civic engagement.

Professor Brewster and Professor Diana loaded us into the university vans on a sunny Thursday morning for the start of our weekend in Cambridge. Friday morning kicked off the main events

Several Westfield State students chose to explore Harvard Square and Harvard College.

Friday night featured the banquet dinner and student dance where we enjoyed time with our fellow students and friends. David Clark exuberantly represented Westfield State in the Honors student parade. During the banquet we were privileged to hear an address from this year’s keynote speaker, Michael Patrick MacDonald, the author of *All Souls: A Family Story from Southie*. MacDonald spoke powerfully about his family’s struggles with drugs, vio-

green.” Many of our students presented their Senior Honors Projects. We had an opportunity to learn about research being done by Westfield State students and by students from throughout the region.

When I entered college, I had no idea that presenting my work at a conference would

ing at the NRHC Conference three years in a row is one of my favorite memories from my time at Westfield State; I hope more students get the chance to have the same positive experience.

Kelly is a senior History major from Weymouth, MA.



José Reyes (2nd from left), Emma Rodriguez, Andy Rosario, and Marissa Cremin lead a roundtable discussion on connecting campus and community.

HONORS STUDENTS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITY: WHITE OAK HIGH SCHOOL

CHRISTIAN BISEINERE



Westfield State and White Oak High School pen pals take a break from making care packages for Syrian refugees to pose for a photo with Cameron Rodak and Professor Catherine Savini (far right).

Civic engagement classes involve students in community outreach and service learning as a primary part of the curriculum. In Professor Catherine Savini's Honors civic engagement first-year composition course "Writing That Matters," we chose different community-based writing projects. My group worked with students from White Oak High School for students with language-based learning disabilities. We partnered with White Oak English teacher Cameron Rodak, 2013 Westfield State and Honors Program alumnus, to

do a weekly letter exchange with his students and share two combined classes, one at their school and one at Westfield State. Our goal was to give both classes the opportunity to write for a real audience while also giving the White Oak students an opportunity to learn more about college life while we learned more about language-based learning disabilities.

We each partnered with a student from White Oak for five weeks, exchanging letters on topics from college life to global issues. These letters were a departure from the

essays and term papers found in most other classes; they gave us the opportunity to write for a real audience (and get direct feedback) instead of a theoretical audience or just our professor. Having a real audience made me feel like my writing was important, and through our correspondence, I gained new insights into another student's high school experience that was very different from mine.

A memorable milestone was meeting the students at White Oak High School and creating care packages for Syrian refugees. In the weeks leading up to the visit, we collected donations and researched and wrote about the Syrian refugee crisis, and the students at White Oak did the same. It was great to finally meet the partners that we had spent so much time writing to, and our project was a great success:

we packed and sent off more than 20 completed care packages. Another highlight was the day White Oak students came to Westfield State to join our English class. Mr. Rodak explained, "they all got something from this presentation and sitting in on a college class." And his students seemed to confirm this sentiment, saying "I thought it was cool because not many other high school students get to explore college life." By engaging with the community through our projects, our class was about more than just grades or word counts; instead it was about writing for a real audience and doing work that we are proud of, and that is what sticks with you beyond the classroom.

Christian is a first-year Computer Science major from West Springfield, MA.

WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITY: FRESH CHECK DAY

BROOKE O'CONNOR



Professor Savini and Professor Diana hop into the ball pit with Honors students to share in the fun.

For our "Writing that Matters" civic engagement project, my group contributed to Westfield State's first ever Fresh Check Day, an event

held on college campuses around the country to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues, to encourage students to speak up about

mental health concerns, and to bring to light the fact that there are 1,100 college student suicides each year. Despite the somber reason for Fresh Check Day, the event provides a lively and fun environment in which students connect with each other, become allies for the mental health community, and work to prevent suicide. Participants visit activity booths, interact and connect with fellow students, and compete for

cool prizes.

We organized the Honors Program-sponsored "Reach Out" booth to educate participants about how important it is to make connections with others. To help facilitate these connections among Westfield State students we made a ball pit out of a kids' blow up pool and 1,000 plastic balls. Students could hop in and make a new friend by asking

(Fresh Check Day, continued on p. 5)

HONORS STUDENTS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITY: HOLYOKE EARLY LITERACY INITIATIVE

JILLIAN DICKEN

My “Writing That Matters” group collaborated with the Holyoke Early Literacy Initiative, or HELI, an organization that works with family, community members, the school system, and activists to improve Holyoke’s early literacy for children from birth to third grade. HELI’s work is important because the city of Holyoke has noticeably low literacy rates. In 2013, 13% of Holyoke’s third grade students scored proficient or advanced on the MCAS, compared to a 57% state average

HELI believes that family is important when it comes to early literacy because children spend the majority of their non-school time at home. Many children are first exposed to language by their parents or guardians, and children’s literacy continues to be influenced by their parents as they get older. According to research, miscommunication



VISTA volunteer Jose Gonzalez addresses students at HELI.

between parents and school-systems is a significant cause of low literacy rates. According to the 2015 census, around 48% of Holyoke identifies as Hispanic or Latino. HELI recognizes that home languages should be valued and preserved in order to help cross-cultural communication.

Students in Professor Savini’s class were tasked to create a memo and an annotated bibliography for HELI of current research on the topic of family outreach. This research will serve HELI when they apply for grants. A significant area of investigation involved how

organizations can better interact with English as a second language, or ESL, parents. Our liaison for this project was Holyoke native Jose Gonzalez, a 2015 Westfield State graduate who coordinates a HELI Parent Café.

When asked about the importance of HELI’s work, Gonzales responded, “The future of Holyoke is in the hands of Holyoke’s children. There is no way Holyoke will prosper if kids don’t have the skills necessary to navigate in this society and become community leaders. One of HELI’s goals is to build a community of parent leaders who will tackle Holyoke’s literacy crisis. A lot of Holyoke kids become alienated from learning at a young age, and they lose their love for learning. Therefore, children never gain the necessary skills to become self-determined, self-reliant, and self-sufficient as

adults.” HELI hopes that, through parent outreach and empowerment, they can help the children of Holyoke establish good learning habits.

Working with HELI has shown us the value of pairing English composition with a community organization. One student who had the opportunity to work with HELI said, “This was the first time that I had done a research project that was going to be read by someone other than my professor. I think that having HELI as the audience for the memo challenged my writing and made me work harder. It felt good that the memo and research were going to benefit the children of Holyoke and hopefully increase their literacy.”

Jillian is a sophomore Political Science and Economics dual major from Belchertown, MA.

(Fresh Check Day, continued from p. 4)

fun questions written on big beach balls.

Our booth also featured Westfield State’s “Tell Me about Your Day” campaign led by Caroline Koty, a social work major, which encourages students to actively ask others about their day and to listen, rather than just accepting the usual “fine.” One volunteer at our booth, Jillian Dicken, explained, “I was surprised how engaged everyone was.” Julia Nedry from



Honors students Brooke O’Connor, Marlayna Buco, and Marcus DiBacco volunteering at the Honors Program’s “Reach Out” Fresh Check Day booth.

the Counseling Center reflected on the event, saying, “I am gratified when I think back on the fun, welcoming, and positive atmosphere that we created; it felt so alive, and what

better than that for a suicide prevention event?”

Fresh Check Day was a great platform to let people know that it is okay to be open about anxiety, depression, and

any other mental health issues, that they can feel safe to share, and that they are not alone. Since this event I have been trying to have more meaningful talks with friends and family. I encourage all Honors students to volunteer next year. Fresh Check Day is centered around community, and it has really helped me to feel included in something special.

Brooke is a sophomore Elementary Education and Liberal Studies dual major from East Taunton, MA.

UPPER-LEVEL INTERDISCIPLINARY HONORS SEMINAR

JAPANESE CULTURE - LEARNING ABOUT OUR PACIFIC NEIGHBOR

JESSICA COLLETTE



Professor Chen and students in the teahouse of Wa-shin-an at Mt. Holyoke College.

When I learned that I needed to take an upper-level interdisciplinary Honors seminar in order to graduate as an Honors scholar, I found myself scared. Would the workload be too much? Despite my reluctance, I steered my nerves and signed up for the course with a Pikachu smiling on the information sheet, Japanese Culture, taught by Professor Brian Chen. I couldn't be happier that I selected this Honors seminar.

Professor Chen's class goes far beyond the basic knowledge of Japan that Americans have. Our first order of business was to address the beginnings of the Japanese language. Culture always begins with the formation of a unique language, something to truly define a culture as its own. For the Japanese, their language came from the introduction of Chinese to the country. This was the language of the nobles and was used in all official writings. Women and those of lower classes were not allowed to learn this language, so they created their own local language by changing the

characters of Chinese, which were pictograms (characters that represented words), into ideograms (characters that represent sound). From here,



Mountain River Taiko group performs "Beat of Japan" at Dever Stage.

the local language of Japanese was born. To add to our understanding of the creation of the language, we were given sheets with characters in Katakana (used in official documents) and Hiragana (used in casual writings) and were taught to write different phrases. We were also taught how to speak some Japanese by learning key phrases such as "good morning" and "good evening."

From here we really got going. We read articles addressing the importance of

archeology in Japan, the various cultural differences in raising children, and the difference between Shinto as an ideology and Buddhism as a religion. Professor Chen brought in different professors to teach us the art of calligraphy, the history of Kabuki and Noh theatre, and the history of earthquakes, tsunamis, and natural disasters in Japan. He also invited a local taiko group to perform at Dever Stage, where they not only per-

took a fieldtrip to Wa-shin-an, a traditional Japanese teahouse and garden at Mt. Holyoke College, where we learned about the art of tea ceremony and Japanese aesthetics.

The Japanese Culture seminar was more than I expected when I signed up, and I am beyond glad that I took the chance. I have learned so much about a culture that few of my friends talk about outside of anime and manga. Professor Chen made every class entertaining and informative. Discussions were engaging, and he is always willing to hear the opinions of others. Though there was quite a bit of work, Professor Chen was available for assistance.

Professor Chen plans to offer the seminar again. When he does, I highly recommend taking the class. The subject matter is interesting, and Professor Chen adds flair to everything he teaches. Arigato, Professor Chen!

Jessica is a sophomore History major from Holden, MA.



Professor Chen and students admire the meditation garden at Wa-shin-an ("Peace Mind House"), a traditional Japanese teahouse at Mt. Holyoke College.

HONORS COURSE ENHANCEMENTS



Professor Carol Bailey's Honors World Literature class hosted Nigerian-born novelist Chika Unigwe in the Honors Center as part of a Cross-Cultural Literature Symposium.



Professor Tamara Smith's Honors Principles of Sociology class hosted the Raging Grannies, a social justice activist group, for conversation, lunch, and protest songs in the Honors Center.



Students in Professor David Lovejoy's upper-level interdisciplinary Honors seminar Modern Approaches to a Nineteenth-Century Science hosted guest speaker Dr. Diane Genereux of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, who discussed the suspected interbreeding of modern humans and Neanderthals. Although a majority of class members were biology or environmental science majors, students in four other majors explored a variety of topics utilizing basic concepts in ecology and evolution as applied to the distribution of animals and plants, often using examples on oceanic islands.

HONORS STUDENTS GO GLOBAL

ADVENTURE AWAITS: MY SEMESTER IN COSTA RICA

FIONA MWARIAMA



Fiona testing fate at Volcan Arenal in Costa Rica.

As a second semester junior, I have been reflecting quite a bit on my college experience so far. I've thought about how truly epic freshman year was. It is sort of like being 5 years old again in an enormous ball pit with a bunch of kids who eventually end up becoming your best friends. If you are like me, and have been mentally checking off a list of things you must do while still in college, you must have considered studying abroad at least once. You may have heard, as I did, that it is an experience of a lifetime, one that you will never forget. What you heard was right.

When I applied last year to a semester-long program in Costa Rica, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I knew a pretty basic level of Spanish, and I hadn't been on a plane since I was 11. But I attended an information session hosted by the International Programs Office, and it undoubtedly sparked a fire in me. There was a whole world out there, and I needed to discover it. I applied immedi-



Awaiting a monkey visit while admiring clear skies and deep blue sea.

ately, and a few weeks later I was accepted into the program. I was ecstatic. The months leading up to my arrival in Costa Rica were full of excitement but also anxiety. I would be living with a host family. "What would they be like?" "Would they like me?" "Would I like them?" When I finally arrived and first felt the tingle of warmth blanketing my skin, and first set eyes on the palm trees right outside of the airport, my anxiety melted away.

The next few weeks felt like an actual honeymoon. Everything was exciting! I met so many students from all over the United States, some even from other parts of the world.

My host family welcomed me with open arms, and my professors were accommodating and very kind. My program, Academic Programs International (API), took us on amazing excursions. Our first one was a hike to Volcan Arenal, an active volcano. The view was fantastic and the weather was perfect. I also visited a few beaches, one of which is

credible insight. I learned how truly amazing our world is and how important it is to preserve it. During my trip I faced many fears and built a confidence I never knew I had. I also learned quickly how to adapt to new situations and people. I am certain this is something I will carry with me for the rest of my life. It doesn't matter if you go to Costa Rica, although I recommend it, but if you have been on the fence about studying abroad, jump on over. Fill out an application. It will be one of the best decisions you will ever make.

Fiona is a junior Psychology major from Worcester, MA.



Fiona gives a thumbs up after her first scuba-diving lesson.

famous for its monkey population. The monkeys interact with the people as casually as people do. They also try to steal your food, but that is forgiven on account of their cuteness. I took a scuba-diving class during the last two months, and did something I never thought I would ever do. I swam with sharks. It was, in a word, breathtaking.

My time in Costa Rica was full of adventure but also in-

Interested in studying abroad or in another state?

The International Programs Office can answer your questions about Study Abroad, Exchange Programs, Short-Term Study Abroad Programs, and National Exchange Programs.

For more information, visit the International Programs Office in Parenzo Hall lobby, Room 130.

HONORS STUDENTS GO GLOBAL

“HASTA LA PROXIMA, NICARAGUA”

SAMANTHA LEE



Samantha and her peers are guided by Justo, a recent graduate from university, who works for La Esperanza Granada. Justo was an integral part in the group's success, acting as a guide, role model, and friend to all.

In January 2016, I embarked on my second journey to Granada, Nicaragua, with the goal of making a positive impact for the students in the village of Nueva Esperanza. Within two short weeks, my class of sixteen Westfield State students would prove to be the most hard working and caring individuals I have had the privilege of knowing.

As a student leader on my return trip to Nicaragua, I was challenged with multiple areas of leadership among my peers. Prior to our departure, and with the help of a generous donation from a local school district, I developed multi-level math and English literacy lesson plans to teach our students. We donated these math supplies to the program we were volunteering with, called La Esperanza Granada, a non-profit which works to support and improve public education in developing villages near Granada. 110 pounds of supplies split into four filled with foam shapes, rulers, clocks, and snap cubes boxes followed us onto the plane. Each afternoon, our class was able to

work with and teach the students in Nueva Esperanza, providing hands-on activities to practice math and problem-solving skills. When I am not in Nicaragua, I hold the children I met firmly in my heart, remembering their positivity, smiles and immense joy.



The kindergarten classroom near the end of the group's time in Nicaragua.

In addition to teaching, our Westfield class was faced with the task of building an insulated classroom, providing students a cool environment in which to learn during the hot summer months. This new kindergarten classroom would allow La Esperanza Granada to expand their education program to the youngest learners of Nueva Esperanza. After raising over \$8,000, our group purchased the supplies necessary to build this class-

room. Daunting physical tasks faced us each day on the work site, including re-locating over 1,500 cinderblocks, shoveling and hauling dirt, and mixing cement. In Nicaragua, especially in small villages like Nueva Esperanza, construction machinery is non-existent. Our hands and muscles, therefore, became our



Samantha receives a lesson in patty-cake from a Nicaraguan student.

most useful tools. As a student leader, I developed skills to encourage and motivate my peers to work hard and approach new tasks with a positive attitude. I also developed my Spanish and communication skills while working with the Nicaraguan construction workers. They were incredibly patient and welcoming of the help our group was ready

to provide. While we did not see the final completion of the kindergarten classroom, the money we raised would provide these men with an additional month of work and pay, helping them support their families.

My experience in Nicaragua has demonstrated the amazing ability of individuals to come together around a common goal to help others. For me as a student at Westfield State, this experience has proven that the knowledge I am gaining while at college is not meant to be kept within. I have experienced the amazing outcomes that stem from being open to receiving knowledge from people and cultures around the world. I am blessed to have had such an amazing experience with fellow Westfield State University students.

Samantha is a junior Elementary Education and Liberal Studies dual major from Hopkinton, MA.



Student teachers and children they taught gather on their last day together to celebrate the building of a new classroom and of new friendships. The celebration included dancing, singing, and enjoying lunch together.

IN THE HONORS CENTER



A brief list of job fair tips:

- ◆ Go to fairs even if they aren't specific to your major.
- ◆ Come prepared with a resume and a brief summary of your qualifications.
- ◆ Practice your handshake.

They can be daunting, awkward, and a bit terrifying, but job fairs - especially in the current competitive job market - are enormously important. Junior Delgado, Westfield State Career Center Director, offered his expertise in all things job fair, from dressing secrets to the elusive elevator pitch, to a pizza-fueled group of Honors students.



President Ramon S. Torrecilha engaged students in a lively conversation about their experiences during the spring semester Conversation Hour with the President. A chocolate fountain provided a welcome study break.

Student Honors Advisory Committee members hosted a Board Game Night, made more delicious by Wings over Westfield.



An Honors Program tradition: senior send off at the End-of-Semester Chinese Dinner.

HONORS STUDENTS GETTING INVOLVED



Honors students get involved on campus and in the community. From top left: Relay for Life fundraiser for the American Cancer Society; representing Westfield State at the statewide student council for the Commonwealth Honors Programs; presenting research at Westfield State's Celebration of Undergraduate Research and Creative Work; volunteering at the Boston Marathon; performing in Mr. Westfield, a fundraiser for the Make-A-Wish Foundation; campaigning to ban plastic bags in Westfield; and representing the Honors Program at Accepted Student Luncheons.

HONORS STUDENTS FROM RESEARCH TO NEW CAREERS



Honors students discuss their research with donors, administrators, and faculty at the 2016 Pathways to Excellence Gala hosted by the Westfield State Foundation. Carolyn Dufraime provides musical entertainment.

2016 Honors Graduates

Hope Anderson is pursuing a Master of Social Work degree at the University of Denver.

Brian Aurelio is working as a store operations employee at T.J.X. Companies.

Haley Batchelder is a member of AmeriCorps National Civilian and Community Corps in Denver, CO.

David Clark is doing an internship at Baystate Medical Center.

Michelle Coombs is a biology intern at the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority.

Chelsea Cox is working for Meyers Brothers Kalicka, P.C. and is pursuing a Master of Science in Accountancy degree at Westfield State.

Michael Drew is pursuing a Master of Broadcast and Journalism degree at Syracuse University.

Emily Ellis is pursuing a Master of Arts in Applied Behavior Analysis degree at Columbia University.

Rebecca Glennie is a VISTA AmeriCorps member at the Middle School in Athens, GA, where she teaches about environmental issues and nutrition.

Kane Hardaker is a VISTA AmeriCorps member at Viva Farms in Skagit Valley, WA.

Connor Jackson is pursuing a Master of Arts in Forensic Mental Health Counseling degree at Westfield State.

Shawn Luce is teaching chemistry at Medfield High School in Medfield, MA.

Kelsey Manns is pursuing a Master of Education degree at Boston University.

Zachary Martin is pursuing a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree at UMass, Lowell.

Amanda McLeod is pursuing a Master of Science degree in Environmental Economics at the University of New Hampshire.

Lauren Nastari is a fellow in the Van Loan School of Graduate Studies in Special Education at Endicott College.

Chelsea Orifice is pursuing a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction at Boston College.

Sara Palis is employed as a Victim Advocate at the Berkshire County District Attorney's Office.

Selena Perotti is pursuing a Master of Social Work degree at the University of Connecticut.

Ryan Poulin is pursuing a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree at UMass, Lowell.

Amber Robert is an 8th grade English Language Arts teacher at Hampden Charter School in Chicopee, MA.

Madison Schiltz is employed as the head strength coach at Western New England University and as a strength and conditioning coach at Continuum Performance Center.

Kayla Schmidt is pursuing a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction at George Washington University.

Zachary Spicer is pursuing a Master of Accountancy degree at North Carolina State University.

Nicholas Taliceo is pursuing a Master of Science degree in Geospatial Information Sciences at the University of Texas at Dallas.

Kira Thomas is employed at the YWCA of Central Massachusetts.

Dominique Wells is pursuing a Master of Social Work degree at Westfield State.

SEND US YOUR NEWS!

SPRING 2016 SENIOR HONORS PROJECT PRESENTATIONS



SIERRA BIAS

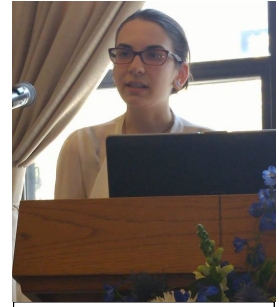


CHELSEA COX

★ Congratulations to Honors students who presented their Senior Honors Projects in spring 2016, and thank you to their committee members, librarians, and the Reading and Writing Center for supporting their work.



PAUL FALCONE



JULIENNE GERNER



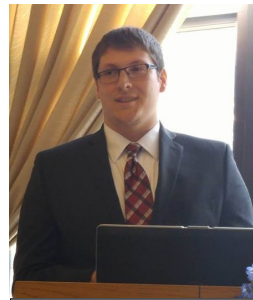
KANE HARDAKER



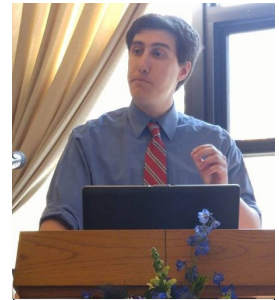
ELIZABETH HORNE



CONNOR JACKSON



ZACHARY SPICER



CONNOR SWAN



At the end of their year-long independent research work, Commonwealth Honors Scholars present their Senior Honors Projects to faculty, staff, administrators, fellow students, and families. Celebratory photos with committee members are part of the tradition. For Senior Honors Project titles, see p. 14.

COMMONWEALTH HONORS SCHOLARS



Lauren Nastari: English, *Collapsing Binaries: The Portrayal of Characters with Autism in Young Adult Literature*, Dr. Jennifer DiGrazia.

Chelsea Orifice: English, *Growth Mindset and Writing Centers*, Dr. Catherine Savini.

Amber Robert: English, *Adolescence, Young Adult Literature, and the English Language Arts Classroom*, Dr. Sophia Sarigi-anides.

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.



Smiling Honors students, pictured with President Ramon S. Torrecilla, are among the seventeen Honors students who were recognized as Commonwealth Honors Scholars at this year's Academic Excellence Awards Ceremony in April. Many of these students also received departmental recognition at the Academic Excellence Awards ceremony.

Sierra Bias: Psychology and Spanish, *Self-Worth Contingencies, Self-Stigma, and Community: A Mediation Model*, Dr. Rebecca Burwell.

David Clark: Biology, *Diversity of Methylation Patterns in Normal and Abnormal Tissue: A Two-Pronged Approach to Develop a Baseline for Cancer Screening*, Dr. Robin White and Dr. Diane Genereux.

Chelsea Cox: Business Management, *Accounting Standards Update: Revenue from Contracts with Customers*, Christine Irujo, M.S.A., C.P.A.

Emily Ellis: Elementary Education and Liberal Studies, *The Intersection of Life and Children's Literature: A Look at Generalized Anxiety Disorder in the Elementary Classroom*, Dr. Stephanie Grimaldi.

Paul Falcone: Communication, *Dear Hope: Mental Health Advocacy through Storytelling and Art*, Dr. Catherine Savini.

Julienne Gerner: Psychology, *Visual Arts as Evocative of Depression, Anxiety and Rumination*, Dr. Rebecca Burwell.

Kane Hardaker: Environmental Science and Regional Planning, *Regenerative Agriculture in Peru*, Dr. Hillary Sackett and Dr. Brian Konz.

Elizabeth Horne: Psychology, *Exposure to Natural Landscapes and Delay Discounting*, Dr. Jorge Reyes.

Connor Jackson: Psychology, *Reliability and Validity of a Psychopathy Self-Report*, Dr. Joseph Camilleri.

Abigail Madden: Early Childhood Education and Liberal Studies, *An Exploration of Universal Themes in Children's Literature*, Dr. Kathleen Itterly.

Madison Schiltz: Movement Science, *Post-Activation Potentiation*, Dr. Melissa Roti and Dr. Jacob Earp.

Zachary Spicer: Business Management and Economics, *Financial Analysis of Going Green*, Dr. Liem Nguyen.

Cameron Swan: History and Political Science, *Public Funding of Gillette Stadium*, Dr. Marijoan Bull and Dr. David Smalles.

Nicholas Taliceo: Mathematics. *A New Landscape Metric*, Dr. Julian Fleron.



UNIVERSITY HONORS SCHOLARS



The designation of University Honors Scholar is awarded to students who complete a minimum of six Honors courses (at least one upper-level Honors seminar) with a B or higher and maintain an overall GPA of 3.30 or higher. Listed below are recipients and their major(s).

Hope Anderson: Social Work.

Brian Aurelio: Business Management.

Haley Batchelder: English.

Mitchell Benedetti: Art.

Rachael Buckley: Psychology.

Courtney Cavanaugh: Special Education and Liberal Studies.

Elizabeth Cebula: Elementary Education and Liberal Studies.

Rachel Cloutier: Elementary Education and Math.

Stephanie Cobb: Elementary Education and Liberal Studies.

Michelle Coombs: Environmental Science and Regional Planning.

Casey Croteau: Criminal Justice.

Karen Dempsey: Business Management.

Matthew Dickson: Psychology.

Emily Doiron: Athletic Training.

Michael Drew: Communication.

Mikayla Fucillo: Sociology.

Rebecca Glennie: Environmental Science and Regional Planning.

Heather Kirby: Biology.

Shawn Luce: Chemistry

Amanda Magri: Athletic Training.

Kelsey Manns: Mathematics.

Zachary Martin: Movement Science.

Caroline Mayotte: General Science.

Amanda McLeod: Economics and History.

Erin Meany: Psychology.

Jennifer Mitchell: Social Work.

Sara Palis: Criminal Justice and Psychology.

Selena Perotti: Gender Studies and Social Work.

Ryan Poulin: Movement Science.

Sara Riordan: Political Science.

Kayla Schmidt: History.

Kelly Steele: History.

Kira Thomas: Elementary Education and Liberal Studies.

Jeffrey Underhill: History.

Dominique Wells: Social Work and Spanish.



Honors students, pictured on this page with President Ramon S. Torrecilha, are among the thirty-five Honors students who were recognized as University Honors Scholars at this year's Academic Excellence Awards Ceremony. Many of these students also received departmental recognition at the Academic Excellence Awards ceremony.

CONGRATULATIONS, 2016 HONORS GRADUATES!



Congratulations and Best Wishes to the Class of 2016 Honors Scholars, including Valedictorian and University Honors Scholar Sara Palis (pictured left, receiving her diploma from President Ramon S. Torrecilha) and Salutatorian and University Honors Scholar Erin Meany (pictured center, receiving her diploma from President Ramon S. Torrecilha)!

