

With Honors

Volume 16, Number 1

The University of Louisville UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

Fall/Winter 2002-03



from the director—

We highlight the Honors community in this issue of *With Honors*. Community is one of the many fine facets of the University Honors Program.

We briefly examine the facilities -- the Honors House, the near-by residence hall and scholars floors and the changes that have recently come and those that are about to come to these resources. We explore the growing number of course-work learning communities in "Class Act." Our national and international seminars provide the ultimate community opportunities. Read about one of these seminars in Christopher Skye's Rome article. A long list of people are our most important community resource. These people serve Honors well. Among them is Dr. Patricia Condon, the associate director, who guides students in their next steps. She is featured in "Applying for a Major Fellowship? Look up 'Dr. Pat.'"

To read past issues of *With Honors*, visit

With Honors e-Zine at:

<http://www.louisville.edu/a-s/honors/Ezine.htm>

Our website can tell you more about our classes, travel opportunities, professional mentoring and a great deal more.

John Richardson, Ph.D.
Director
University Honors Program

One powerful community builder in the University Honors Program is seminar-based field study. In spring 2002, students spent a semester studying Rome followed by two weeks of subsidized on-site research.

Learning Layer by Layer

On-Site Travel Seminar Research – the Ultimate Honors Community Experience

Christopher Skye 03
Humanities major
Ancient Cultures concentration

Thanks to a generous grant from the Overseers International Seminar Program, the University Honors Program sponsored the travel of 15 students to Rome, Italy, in May 2002. Throughout the spring semester Dr. Linda Gigante met with students representing a spectrum of disciplines, to prepare for the trip. The group surveyed many aspects of Roman art and culture in her "Art and Culture of Ancient Rome" seminar. Through slides and written text (both ancient and modern), we gained an appreciation for the complexities of a civilization of such longevity and rich diversity.

We conducted independent research to report on a variety of topics. Not only did students present their findings in class, but also gave brief oral reports in Rome as experts on their subjects. As we walked through archeological sites, museums, catacombs and churches a student specialist would remind us of the historical and cultural significance

of a particular structure, work of art or person. Everyone seemed at ease with their subject and held forth admirably. Yet there always seemed to be more to uncover, another layer of time beneath the one being described begging questions from below the surface. This multi-dimensional patina is part of the mystery and magnitude of Rome.

There are, of course, many Romes. Through the centuries scholars have revealed the city's history layer by layer, going back to the early Iron Age. Rome has been the site of continual human habitation for over 30 centuries. Our class studied the events and people of Rome, from the earliest tribal power struggles to the settling of a fortress town on the Tiber River by the legendary Romulus; from the founding of the Republic to establishment of the first Principate of the Empire and on to its official conversion to Christianity. Western culture has inherited the values of many of these earlier institutions and beliefs and our world-view is greatly informed by them. Politics, art, architecture, literature, economics, religion and other areas common to current human

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At Home from page 6

the director and the associate director and a computer lab for Honors students. At times the Honors House teams with students. The offices are highly accessible, with open doors and folks at hand.

Pictures of recent Honors conferences or trips are on bulletin boards found here and there among the works of art. Well-used reading materials -- *The New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Economist*, *IEEE Spectrum*, *Foreign Policy* and *Business Week*, among others -- can be found on the coffee table and in the racks. Several people may be playing a board game, studying for tests, writing papers, looking for a soft drink in the refrigerator or often simply talking.

It feels good here and students hang out a lot. Faculty and advisors move in and out of the room, often stopping to talk or eat lunch with students.

The Honors House is such a good thing for Honors students that plans are well underway to add a similar space in nearby Threlkeld Hall, the newly designated Honors residence hall. Threlkeld currently houses 270 Honors students and is a popular living choice for Honors students.

The new resources in Threlkeld -- a combined 3,000 square feet -- will complement and expand on the assets already available nearby in the Honors House. In addition to another student-friendly study-meeting-kitchenette area, a teaching-advising center with a second high-tech classroom alongside an office cluster is planned.

The Threlkeld Hall building plan provides offices for faculty fellows, the director and academic counselors arranged to give even greater faculty and staff contact with Honors students. Increased meeting space in Threlkeld and the Honors House opens more forums for on-site cultural and social events.

Continuing changes to the University Honors Program have prompted growth in the Honors Program. The number of active students has grown to 875, and course offerings have been expanded to 35 to 40 classes per term. Bright students who find a good thing vote with their feet. They seem to have found a good home at the Honors House and in the University Honors Program.

A Class Act

Course Work is the Centerpiece

The Honors Program offers 35 to 40 Honors courses each semester in topics ranging from mathematics to the arts, providing students a broad class selection to fulfill the required 34 credits of general education.

Honors classes are we report on learning class to give a bit of

Learning Communities

Honors learning communities at U of L have their origin in an experiment begun four years ago. At that time, the University Honors Program was at the beginning of an upward curve in Honors offerings of all kinds -- including an expanded class roster and increased access to academic advising -- a curve that continues its ascent today.

The development of learning communities was brought about by the initiative of the director of the University Honors Program Dr. John Richardson, who also established many of the other changes that enhance the program. He believed learning communities would be a good place to build on to Honors. The conjecture proved correct. This year, with the number of learning communities expanded to five for the academic year, students signed up for these classes at a rapid pace.

A fundamental definition of a learning community at U of L is the pairing of classes providing Honors students opportunities to

establish rapport with other students holding similar interests. The classes are quite successful in achieving this goal.

One indicator of how well shared class-work builds community is the establishment of a student group from one of last year's learning communities. The group enjoyed their shared class experience so much that they secured housing together in the newly designated Honors residence hall located just a few dozen feet behind the Honors House.

Dr. John Richardson, the most experienced Honors Program learning community teacher, has taught at least one of these classes -- an introductory chemistry class and laboratory -- each of the past four years. According to Richardson, experience indicates that students in learning communities tend to be supportive of classmates rather than competitive. Since Honors chemistry is often a choice of hard-driving pre-med and other science-oriented students, this outcome not only provides a more pleasant four years of study, it also regularly results in greater academic success.



Honors Professional Mentoring Program Draws Record Participation

This year a record 84 Honors students signed up for the Board of Overseers Professional Mentoring Program offered to juniors with a GPA of 3.35 or higher. The program provides a year with a mentor personally matched to the student's interests by the Board of Overseers. Mentor assignments were distributed in October at the mentoring banquet in the University Club.

iece of Honors

ught by some of U of L's best teachers. In this issue, communities and a single session of an Honors insight into Honors coursework.

Professors teaching learning community courses sometimes elaborate on the pairing of classes. For example, the Economics/Mathematics learning community includes "Principles of Microeconomics" taught by Dr. John Vahaly from the Business School and "Finite Mathematics" taught by Professor Thomas Riedel from the mathematics department. Even with tight schedules, the two professors have worked out some collaborative efforts to enrich crossover topics.

For more specific content information, descriptions of learning communities courses can be found online at the Honors website: <http://www.louisville.edu/a-s/honors/Ezine.htm>. In addition, several single-session story snapshots of frequently-taught Honors classes similar to "The Chemistry of a Learning Community" below are also located at the same website.

The Chemistry of a Learning Community

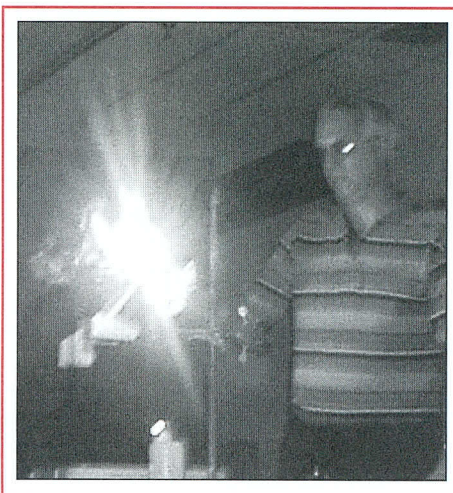
In his fifth year as director of the University Honors Program, Richardson engages students in the classroom by incorporating demonstrations, collaborative activities, online instruction and learning communities into his teaching.

During a visit to a class session of introductory Honors chemistry, Richardson covers balancing chemical equations, combustion reactions and stoichiometry with several demonstrations illustrating the day's topics. In the fall of 2002 Richardson teaches three chemistry sections with labs, two of which are part of learning communities.

Although Richardson adds sizzle to his clear presentation with deadpan humor and several explosive demonstrations, he does not avoid challenges. At one point, a half dozen alert students without hesitation jump to correct an unbalanced equation he has purposely thrown in to thwart student assumptions. Razzle dazzle and humor may be part of the class, but it is no vacuous

Course descriptions for the learning community courses can be found online at the University Honors Program website: <http://www.louisville.edu/a-s/honors/Ezine.htm>

In the academic year 2002-2003 the five learning communities offered are: Chemistry/English, Chemistry/Communications, Humanities/Music History and Economics/Mathematics all in the fall and Modern Languages/Communications in the spring.



Flashes in the dark enhance Dr. John Richardson's intro chemistry as he teaches combustion reactions.

lecture. The students enrolled in this class are mostly science majors including a large number of engineers and premed students.

Balancing equations, particularly for combustion reactions, is the focus for this session dealing with yields of chemical reactions. "Set it up first, put the numbers in later. . . Grams to moles to moles to grams. This is the chant I give to folks to help you remember . . . Is my answer reasonable? Ask yourself that question." Along the way, students and professor fill in the numbers for equation after equation examining the points at which language or other criteria may set analysis on the wrong track. Class is thorough, business-like, clear.

The in-the-moment playful repartee that often exists between an excellent teacher and the class brings the "bagpipe guy" to the fore of the chemistry classroom. It happens when an unfamiliar sound interrupts class. Students identify another sound that they believe could be a bagpipe player practicing at strange hours. Richardson identifies that noise as a nearby truck plant siren and returns to the topic. A measure of Richardson's comfort level with momentarily moving from serious subject material to the humorous is apparent when the bag-

pipe guy comes back for a couple of short guest appearances during otherwise content-rich moments later in the class.

According to Richardson, the student recitation units are the heart of the Honors chemistry course. Students will incorporate library research, PowerPoint and other web development into group presentation and online poster sessions later in the semester. Presentations with topics ranging from robotics to drug design provide a forum for student academic work and creativity.

Besides his duties directing and developing the Universities Honors Program and teaching, Richardson serves as an academic advisor for many of the 875 Honors students. A popular and busy teacher whose classes and advising schedule fill quickly, Richardson nonetheless often stops to chat informally with students he meets while walking across campus or who drop by his office or gather in the Honors House.

Richardson is a graduate of the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, Canada, with Bachelor of Science (Honors) and Ph.D. degrees. He has been at U of L since 1987, serving as vice-chair and twice as acting chair of the chemistry department. Richardson is active in national organizations providing leadership as treasurer of the National Association of Fellowships Advisors and serving as co-chair of the Scholarships and Advising Subcommittee of the National Collegiate Honors Council.

With Honors is published by the University of Louisville's University Honors Program.

Director, John Richardson
Editor, Ruth Spangler

Visit our website at:
<http://www.louisville.edu/a-s/honors/>

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Layer by Layer

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experience resonate from Rome.

It is one thing to read the history of Rome and look at slides, and quite another to experience it. Diagrams can illustrate the composite layers of construction from the early Empire to the present-day Basilica of St. Peter in Vatican City, yet they cannot compare to a guided tour through those excavated layers beneath St. Peter's.

The layers go back to Nero's infamous Circus, which witnessed the martyrdom of St. Peter. We walked along the excavated streets and alleys of an ancient necropolis and stood in pre-Christian tombs, where prominent Romans interred their families and gathered on special anniversaries to remember them. We could see where Emperor Constantine had his fourth-century basilica built over these tombs. Having removed the dead and back-filled a portion of the Vatican Hill into the tombs, his engineers further drained this swampy area and constructed the Basilica of St. Peter over the shrine of the apostle's remains that tradition placed just outside Nero's Circus wall. We could see portions of this shrine, with its one remaining red wall and yellow column, and its relationship to both Constantine's monument and the Renaissance structure we see today.

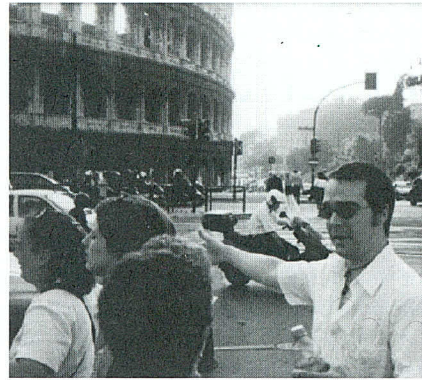
From this vantage point we could actually look up through a grate in the floor of the modern basilica and see portions of Bernini's *Baldacchino*. It was strange to pass through modern security doors as we wound our way through the subterranean past. A more unexpected event occurred when, after exploring the bowels beneath one of Christianity's most sacred sites, we ascended directly into the spectacular and cavernous interior designed and constructed during the 15th and 16th centuries. The contrast was spellbinding. From the artificially-lit and cramped ancient tombs of Imperial Rome, we emerged into the immensity and brilliance of the modern St. Peter's Basilica. Instead of faded subterranean murals, we were met with vibrant fres-

coes. The gilded sarcophagi of popes and saints replaced the tomb niches of Roman families. The effect was not lost on any in the group and could never have been experienced through reading a book.

Throughout the city one can see the work of millennia. Although the seminar focused on ancient Rome, we were visiting a modern city built over, into and among ruined edifices accumulated over hundreds and thousands of years. The enormous Baths of Diocletian (fourth century A.D.) supply the foundations for much of the *Piazza della Repubblica* (19th century); its great central hall the physical structure for the Church of St. Mary of the Angels (16th century). The mausoleum of Augustus (first century A.D.) is surrounded by fascist architecture. The 17th-century church of San Clemente is built upon its fifth-century predecessor, which sits on top a residence from the first century A.D. Below this are the buried ruins of Nero's fire. We toured this particular site and freely explored these layers, which included a second-century A.D. shrine to the Persian cult of Mithras converted from a room of the first-century house.

One can absorb only so many frescoes and columns...

Around and under all this, modern inhabitants speed along in cars, motorbikes and subways. And the Metro goes practically underneath the Coliseum. Cars travel the ancient stones of the *Via Appia*, along which modern estates share boundaries with the remains of Roman tombs, Christian catacombs and Imperial palaces. The opportunity to experience firsthand the continuity and diversity of Roman cultural gave genuine form to what I could only have



Christopher Skye with other seminar members at the Colosseum in Rome.

imagined in the classroom.

One can absorb only so many frescoes and columns before succumbing to sensory overload. We each had remedies to relieve this situa-

tion. Breaking into smaller groups, we found lunch at local *trattorias* or bars (practicing our broken and usually imperfect Italian), tried a cup of *gelato*, walked along a less traveled street or took a siesta back at the *Pensione San Paolo*, our home away from home. But probably the most popular activity was shopping.

Shopping and eating out are great ways to meet and talk with Romans. Conversation with locals provided some genuine human unity to a trip full of museums, churches and archeological restorations. For it is the people of Rome that form the real and uppermost layer of the city. If only by calling out "*buon giorno*" on your way to the Metro, it feels good to communicate with the people you're visiting.

For each one in the group there are stories and experiences always to be remembered. I encourage anyone in the University Honors Program with a sense of adventure to consider an Overseers International Seminar. There is no substitute for hands-on field work. The contours of the imagination can only approximate the full sensory experience of visiting another culture in a new latitude. I threw a coin into the Trevi Fountain. They say that will bring me back to Rome. I hope so.

Thanks to Betsy Langness and Dr. Gigante for their invaluable organization. Dr. Gigante planned a wonderfully flexible itinerary (we saw a lot in two weeks). Thanks also to Dr. Richardson for keeping everything in order, and to Dr. and Mrs. Davitt, who shared our marches and adventures in the Eternal City. And finally, I thank all my traveling colleagues, from whom I learned more than they know.

People Are the Honors Community

Applying for a Major Fellowship? Look Up "Dr. Pat"

"Dr. Pat" is the affectionate name often used when students talk about Dr. Patricia Condon, the associate director of the University Honors Program. And there is good reason for it.

She is *always* there for Honors students and her welcome is genuine and warm. She keeps the door of her office open to all students-- Honors, graduate and any other U of L-affiliated student -- interested in applying for prestigious scholarships and fellowships.

And she goes the extra mile. Before school started, she provided three delightful dinners -- entirely prepared by Dr. Condon -- in her home as a welcome back to the Overseers Scholars Development Program (OSDP) students. Cooking dinner is definitely not in her job description, but it is typically Dr. Condon.

The scholarship support office located in the Honors House and directed by Dr. Condon provides high-achieving students the critical support services that smooth the way for those choosing to apply for national fellowships and scholarships. After wading into the waters of Marshall, Carnegie, Fulbright, Gates, Goldwater, Madison, NIH, Rhodes, Rotary and many other fellowships and scholarships, not to mention graduate school applications -- even high-achieving students can feel dizzy and lost. At U of L they have the scholarship support office.

Stephanie Mattingly, a junior music major from Louisville, is contemplating some of those highly competitive applications and comments that "Searching for scholarships is difficult for students. There are so many out there and we don't know which are legitimate, much less prestigious. Dr. Condon pairs each student individually with the scholarships that best suit his/her plans for the future."

Even high-achieving students
can feel dizzy and lost.

At U of L they have "Dr. Pat" and OSDP.

By early fall 2002 in the first rounds of scholarship applications Dr. Condon and countless faculty had provided assistance to two Rhodes, three Marshall, one Mitchell and eight Fulbright applicants.

All U of L students interested in applying for fellowships and scholarships are given support in their searches. In addition, the Overseers Scholars Development Program (OSDP) offers those who are willing to commit to extra work and activities outside of the classroom exceptional opportunities.

OSDP applications are competitive. Among requirements are a 3.5 GPA, significant extracurricular activity, the initiative to learn independently and an interest in research.

Along the way, OSDP students have new and diverse experiences. Musicians tour the medical school, engineers attend opera, biology students find themselves in conversation with politicians and U of L trustees. Such activities are designed to help students develop the self-assurance and social presence necessary to thrive at the highly



Students lunch at the University Club with Dr. Condon, center, and Mary Tolar third left. Tolar, a Truman Foundation representative as well as a former Rhodes Scholar and Truman Scholarship recipient, discusses the ins and outs of applying for prestigious scholarships and fellowships.

competitive level of prestigious national or international fellowships, scholarships and graduate or professional school applications.

During the 2001-2002 academic year, OSDP students met and dined with Janet Reno and attended Actors Theatre, Louisville Orchestra and Kentucky Opera productions. They toured Louisville hospitals, meeting and talking with Business School award-winning professors, the School of Medicine academic dean and others.

Sessions with U of L Business School Dean Robert Taylor offered OSDP students insights into leadership. In January they toured the visiting "Brush With History" exhibition from the National Portrait Gallery and discussed the collection during a catered dinner at the Speed Art Museum. At the end of the year, many OSDP students traveled to Greece with Dr. Condon, members of the Board of Trustees and President Shumaker.

Added to her OSDP and scholarship advisor responsibilities, Dr. Condon teaches Honors 215, "Renaissance Through Modern Art, Advanced Composition."

Dr. Condon, a graduate of the University of Louisville with an M.A. in art history, received her Ph.D. from Brown University as a specialist in 19th-century French art, with Renaissance art as a secondary field. Among her many credits are seven years of teaching art history at the University of Kentucky and two international art museum exhibitions she has curated. The "Dr. Pat" in her character comes out when asked what specifically should be included in the short description of her background. "Please say I've been teaching and mentoring students since 1978."



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Honors Slated for More of a Good Thing

At Home in Honors

At the center of the Belknap campus is the only house to be found among the academic buildings at U of L.

It is the home of the University Honors Program, the heart of the Honors community. A facility so successful, that another will soon be found nearby in the recently designated Honors residence, Threlkeld Hall.

Threlkeld is a gentle distance behind the Overseers Honors House -- fewer than 100 paces -- on the way to the Student Activity Center (SAC). Step through the doors of the Honors House and find the Honors community and the reasons for adding a similar space in Threlkeld.

You might hear: "I forgot orientation, so I didn't go. Now I have to sign up for spring semester classes, what do I do?" Immediately, Will Armstrong, the Honors administrative assistant, suggests an academic advising appointment. In the meantime, Patricia Pollock, an Honors student and senior communications major seated nearby, draws the freshman in and gives him a good peer viewpoint, off-the-cuff reality orientation reassuring the now wiser Honors student that the academic advisors will help him work it out. And they do.

The greatroom where this conversation takes place is a comfortable, but classy, ground-floor space that includes kitchen facilities. On the second floor is a high-tech classroom. Clustered around these are offices for Honors academic advisors,

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The Overseers Honors House pictured at right above includes the greatroom below. The house is located near Threlkeld Hall, the Honors residence hall which is visible at center, and the Student Union Center (SAC) with its clock tower seen on the left.

