

# With Honors

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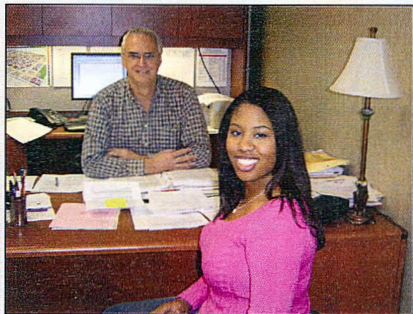
The University of Louisville UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

Spring 2006

## "So, how's the advising?"

"How is the advising?" Do students visiting a college actually ask a question like that? Not usually. But as quality indicators go, advising is more important than many others that are touted.

Harvard educator Richard J. Light, Ph.D., in his highly regarded *Making the Most of College* dedicates an early chapter to "Good Mentoring and Advising." Light, whose longtime research interest is what makes college work, does not shilly-shally. The chapter begins "Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience."



Dr. John Richardson, the director of the University Honors Program, advises Allison Martin, a pre-med Honors student.

In recent years U of L has enriched its advising services. There are added academic counselors, summer orientation sessions and a one-credit class featuring guidance through a bewildering wealth of university resources.

In addition, the University Honors Program has Honors advising -- repeated, extended personal advising especially for Honors-related concerns.

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The Overseers International Seminar "Britain and Its Transition to the Modern World," taught by Dr. Richard Davitt (mathematics) and Dr. Bert Harris (theatre), gather for a group photo where the "groundlings" watched plays at the reconstructed Globe Theatre during the fieldwork segment of the class.

## Visiting an Ancient and Modern World Capital

By Jennifer Wrubel  
Psychology and biology

From the moment I stepped out of London's Victoria Station, looked out the wrong way, and almost got hit by a double-decker bus, I knew my trip to England was going to be an unforgettable experience. Like a child seeing the world for the first time, I was completely mesmerized by the uniqueness and magnificence of my new environment. Less than a few hours after the plane touched down in this remarkable country, I was completely overpowered by the beauty, history and intricate details of the first venue our group visited: Westminster Abbey. This fascination did not stop until two weeks later when the journey concluded. The

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Honors students Becky Popham, Jennifer Wrubel, Lauren Dempsey and Jason Wells examine artifacts related to the Platonic solids and their purported relationship to Kepler's early 17th-century models of our solar system at London's Science Museum.

# Rotary Scholars Bound for Ireland, Mexico

## Chris Patrick Cunningham Political Science and Sociology

Only a year ago, Northern Ireland was very far from Louisville. Filling out applications from the warm confines of Dr. Condon's office in the Honors House, I could only comprehend "the six counties" through myths and a history lesson. I was quite limited in my perspective. The images and characters that personify the land -- the farms, the shorelines, the rain, the Troubles, British paratroopers, the I.R.A., the neighborhood pubs, the rolling green hills of the countryside, the colorful urban corridors of Belfast - were an ocean away.

Now, having been awarded the Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship, that distance has evaporated. Next year, I will study international politics and conflict resolution at Queen's University in Belfast, one of the top universities in the acclaimed higher education system in the United Kingdom. I will be constantly exposed to the underlying tension that beleaguers the country, from going to class to walking through the "Protestant" and "Catholic" ends of town. Belfast offers the chance to witness a host of different divides involving symbols, culture, gender and politics. I will be constantly learning new methods in resolving deep-rooted conflict, skills I will hopefully use the rest of my life. All the while, I will be exposed to an array of fascinating personalities, from both the land and the people.

The Rotary Ambassadorial offers the chance of a lifetime, an adventure to lands we never before saw attainable. In the past I could only describe Northern Ireland through a piecemeal text of tales and images; her real story was always unknown. Next year, the Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship will take me on a journey to that unknown. The only true certainty will be discovery.

## Medina del Castillo Spring 2005 Graduate

It was 8 a.m. when I received the call: "Medina, you got it!" I had just received a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship, a scholarship that would take me to Colima, Mexico, for an academic year. It was only six months earlier that I had heard about this prestigious scholarship. Never did I imagine that countless visits to Dr. Condon's office and continual drafts of application essays would lead me to that call.

As a graduate student studying political science and Latin American Studies, I will continue this type of coursework at the *Universidad de Colima*. There, taking



Chris Cunningham, U of L Honors student named a Rotary Scholar, visited Ireland during the summer.

classes in their political science and public administration department will not only enhance my Spanish skills, but allow me to gain firsthand international experience in a true Latin American setting. Because I am interested in directing an international non-profit or non-government organization one day, I hope to take from this experience a true understanding of how our world works from an international perspective.



Medina del Castillo  
Rotary Scholar

The Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship offers me the chance to serve as an ambassador of goodwill, and to continue the Rotary objective of practicing goodwill to others and enhancing cultural communications in a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I know it will truly open my eyes and allow me to continue my own search for cultural understanding.

# How Is the Advising?

(continued from page 1) As Honors students prepare to enroll for the coming semester, each signs up for a 20 to 30-minute advising appointment with the academic counselor of his or her choice. Melissa Stordeur, Luke Buckman and Tony Robinson are the Honors Program three full-time counselors. Both the Honors Program director Dr. John Richardson and several of the Honors Faculty Fellows are also available for student advising.

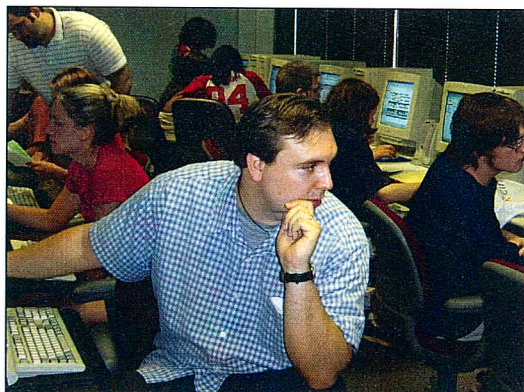
Advising since 2000, Luke Buckman believes the most common mistake new students make is to confuse the college counselor with the high school guidance counselor. The job is similar, but the differences are enormous.

University academic advisors truly guide and advise. They are willing to answer, or find the answer, to any question. And

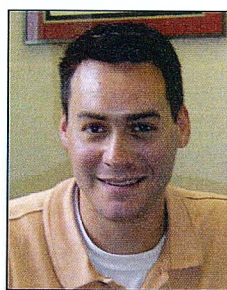
there are some things that university academic advisors never do; these include dictating your coursework, making your decisions and signing you up for a class. According to Luke, Honors academic advisors are interested in the whole person; they encourage you to become educated, not trained, and promote a love of exploration.

“We provide holistic counseling including academic, career and personal goals” according to Melissa Stordeur, who has also advised U of L students since 2000. “We may talk about how the student performed in the past and how he or she enjoyed the teaching style of individual faculty members.” According to Missy, the Honors academic counselors have a passion for what they do, but they also have fun. The Honors counselors plan gatherings and promote activities that make an Honors academic career both socially and academically satisfying.

Tony Robinson, like Luke and Missy a counselor since 2000, immediately rattled off the following, “good advisors are really teachers working with you one on one. The advisor is a



Honors counselors Luke Buckman, above, and Melissa Stordeur, right, assist students during Honors orientation.

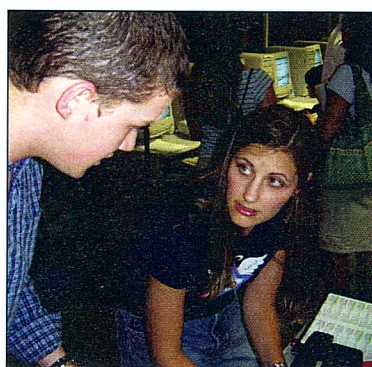


To enhance advising, the Honors Program added academic counselor Tony Robinson, an experienced counselor from A&S.

resource touchstone for everything.” According to Tony, a lot of people view advising as an accounting measure, but it is more about helping students understand themselves. It is intellectual counseling, degree counseling and also career counseling. Academic counselors also help students as they wander in the academic mine field, giving students the tools they don't have, allowing them to make their way through it.

Dr. John Richardson, the director of the University Honors Program since 1998 and one of U of L's biggest advocates of quality advising, describes Honors advising as “welcoming and personable.” Dr. Richardson adds, “We are able to provide personalized advising to students in a wide variety of majors and disciplines.”

Often selected by science and pre-med students as an advisor, Dr. Richardson's own work is in chemistry. Melissa's academic work is focused on history and sociology. Luke, who is working on a master's degree in higher education, has undergraduate degrees in English and humanities; Tony, who is working toward two master's degrees, one in higher education administration and one in history, has an undergraduate degree in psychology. To round out expertise, the faculty fellows frequently serve as Honors advisors. The fellows are specially appointed Honors faculty with Ph.D.s in any number of areas including business, religion, English, political science, communications and psychology.



To promote easy access to advising, the Honors offices are in the Etscorn Honors Center located on the ground floor of the Honors residence, Threlkeld Hall. Etscorn is also the site of one of the high-tech Honors classrooms. Geographic convenience increases casual drop-by advising.

Casual advising can be ongoing during the four-year academic career. Students who participate in conferences and the travel seminars get to know Honors faculty and staff well enough to quickly move into a mentor, mentee relationship, adding depth to the advising relationship. Participation in Honors-related activities and professional development as well as working as a student assistant can do the same.

Academic advising is the primary advising Honors offers, but it is not the only advising available. Our National Scholarship Office director Dr. Patricia Condon, located in the Overseers Honors House, meets regularly with students who contemplate competing for prestigious national scholarships and fellowships during or after their undergraduate years. Alert first and second year students make appointments with her early in their undergraduate careers to discuss how to develop academic and personal interests into competitive plans.

## Undergraduate Research Leads Students to “U of L’s Own Rhodes,” Other Opportunities



Elizabeth Russell, named U of L's Mary Churchill Humphrey Scholar for 2006-2008, receives two funded years of graduate work in the United Kingdom.

“U of L’s own Rhodes” is a reference used by some to identify an extraordinary post-graduate scholarship available to students in the College of Arts and Sciences at U of L.

The reference developed because the funding for the Mary Churchill Humphrey endowed Centenary Memorial Scholarship is comparable to the prestigious Rhodes Scholarship. The Churchill Humphrey, awarded for work demonstrating extraordinary analytical, research and writing skills, provides \$25,000 annually toward the cost of transportation, tuition and fees (room and board) for two years of study at any English, Scottish or Irish university.

Like the Rhodes, competition for the Churchill Humphrey Scholarship is intense. The scholarship, which was endowed in the 1940s, is open only to College of Arts & Sciences students who are recent graduates or are graduating. In the fall, U of L named Elizabeth Russell, a 2005 Honors Scholar and *summa cum laude* history graduate, the Mary Churchill Humphrey Scholar for 2006-2008. Runners-up for the scholarship are Natalie Richards and Michele Wilbert.

According to Elizabeth, her Senior Honors Project titled “The Making of Saints: The Impact of Fourteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Historical Context and the Role of Women in the Lives of St. Catherine of Siena and St. Teresa of Ávila” played a pivotal role in focusing both her career interests and her application for the scholarship. “Before beginning my Honors thesis, I had a general idea of the path of my research, which was dependent on my interests in the history of the Medieval European church, but I was unable to focus those interests into anything substantial or worthwhile in the field.”

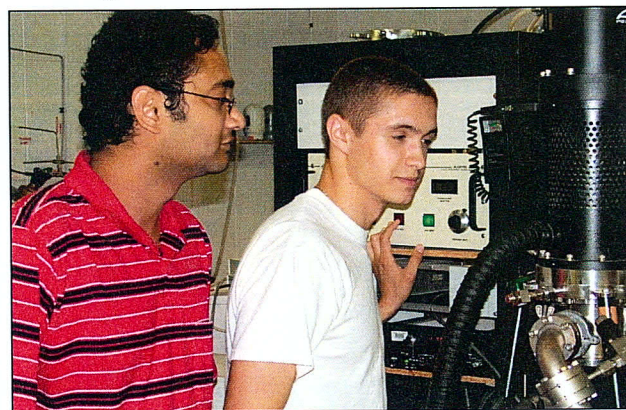
Her work on the project with Dr. Karen Spierling in the history department challenged her to “think past the assignments I had been given as an undergraduate and to find for myself the research that would prepare me to be competitive in graduate school. Not only did the project define my research interests and abilities, but it also provided me with a piece of scholarship to call my own. My thesis proved to be essential in the research portion of my application for the Mary Churchill Humphrey.”

### Undergraduate Research Gives Back

While national and international scholarships and fellowships provide a growing number of students at U of L opportunities for prestigious post-graduate study, every undergraduate student engaging in research -- beginning as early as the freshman year -- finds that it leads to substantial intellectual growth. Undergraduate research can, and frequently does, focus career interests and lead to job opportunities. And, as competition for prestigious scholarships grows, students find that early undergraduate research is an increasingly important factor in obtaining scholarships. Several representative Honors students agreed to share their research experiences.

#### **Boris Chernomordik** **Chemical Engineering**

Since high school I have been interested in nanotechnology. When I came to Speed School, I searched for a professor involved in this field. At this time, I am an undergraduate member of Dr. Mahendra Sunkara's team in his Chemical Vapor Deposition lab. Our lab is conducting leading research in different areas of nanotechnology. As an undergraduate, I have had the



Second year Honors student Boris Chernomordik, at center, working with Hari Chandrasekaran, one of Dr. Sunkara's Ph.D. students.

David Soleimani-Meigooni, left, a Grawemeyer Scholar who presented his research at the National Collegiate Honors Council conference in St. Louis, pictured with fellow Grawemeyer Scholar Josh Yuen. (Photo by Luke Buckman)



same access to the lab as the graduate students and have been able to do the same kind of investigations. I started by helping a graduate student, but now I am able to pursue research on my own. The things I have done include using hot filament and microwave reactors to grow carbon nanotubes and even diamond.

### **The Faery and the Beast** **Abigail Heiniger** **English and Humanities**

Discovering Charlotte Brontë's subtle use of fairy tales in the novel *Jane Eyre* gave the book a whole new meaning for me.



Concepts from Dr. Alan Leidner's Honors seminar "Fairy Tales" and Dr. Tamara Yohannes' "Women's Literature" came together in *Jane Eyre* and fueled my research paper "The Faery and the Beast." Although this theme often goes unnoticed, Brontë used fairy tales to counter sexist Victorian cultural mythology. *Jane Eyre*'s fairy-like qualities are contrasted with those of the Classical goddess. Fairies are active, powerful female characters, while the domestic goddess of Victorian literature is a passive being valued for her temporal beauty. Brontë was able to empower *Jane Eyre* through fairy tales because the oral tradition of fairy tales was often shaped by women, whereas classical mythology was created and recorded by men alone. This article will be published in 2006 in *Brontë Studies*.

### **David Soleimani-Meigooni** **Biology (with specialization in subcellular and genetics)**

I am currently working with Dr. Paula Bates of the Molecular Targets Group to study the use of guanine-rich DNA sequences (a.k.a. g-rich oligonucleotides) for cancer treatment. My particular project involves finding the intracellular changes and the cancer cell-death mechanism that is induced by the g-rich oligonucleotides on U937 leukemia cells.

It is no secret that the University of Louisville offers opportunities for undergraduates to perform research, however very few students seem to know about the opportunities available for presenting their work. Through the Honors Program I have presented my cancer research at the Kentucky Honor's Roundtable, the Southern Regional Honors Conference and the National Collegiate Honors Council. These conferences have allowed me to share my research interests with students and faculty outside of the university, and to meet other students who have a similar passion for cellular and molecular biology and cancer biology.

If you are interested in research, I recommend communicating with professors who work in a field that you are interested in. After you have found a project to pursue, you should talk to an Honors advisor and your departmental advisor to see what support and presentation opportunities are available. The student information page of the Office of Research provides an overview of the research opportunities available within the university. Good luck!

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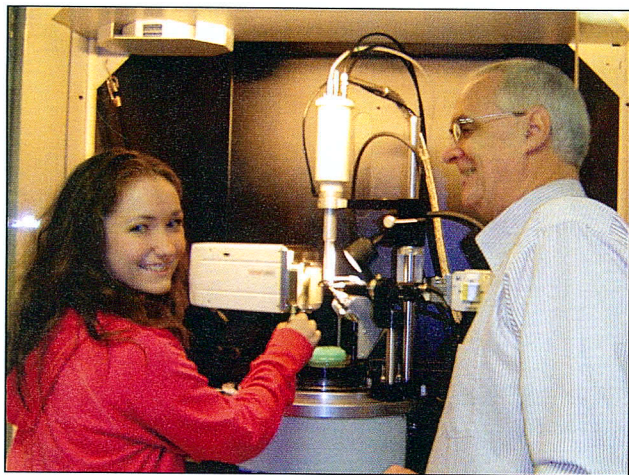
# Undergraduate Research Leads Students to "U of L's Own Rhodes," Other Opportunities

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## Courtney McKenzie Biology

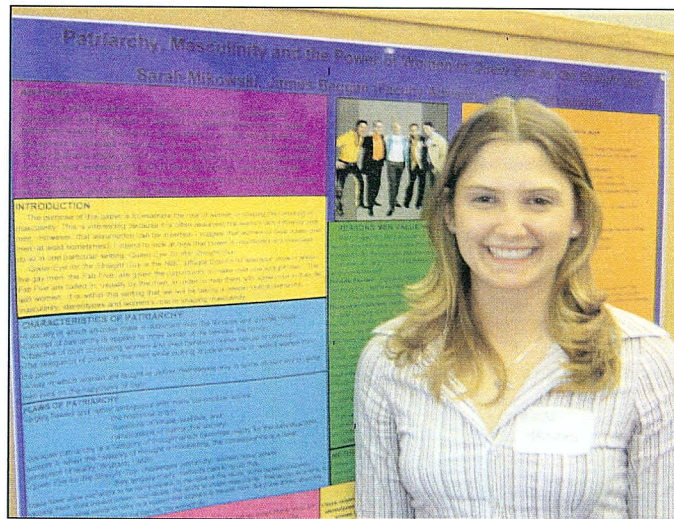
Undergraduate research. It's something everyone thinks they should do, yet no one really knows quite how to go about it. What most people don't realize is how easy it truly is to get involved -- even as an underclassman.

I work in the lab of Dr. John Richardson. His studies are in the area of X-ray crystallography, analyzing substances to determine of what they are composed, packing arrangement, etc. The crystallography facility is in constant use by all the chemistry faculty labs for analysis of synthetic materials.



Courtney McKenzie works with Dr. John Richardson at the X-ray diffractometer.

Such research is a great opportunity, and U of L is committed to giving undergraduates such opportunities. It's as simple as asking: look into what kinds of research professors do, find one that corresponds to your area of interest, and e-mail/call/approach the professor in person to see if they have room for an additional undergraduate assistant. Research experience is useful not only for graduate or professional school purposes; it also provides hands-on experience in what's learned in class, and shows how relevant such concepts can be in actual laboratory environments.



Sarah Mikowski is pictured with her research poster examining "Patriarchy, Masculinity and the Power of Women in 'Queer Eye for the Straight Guy'."

## Pop Culture TV Program the Focus of Sarah Mikowski's Research

How does one choose a research topic? Sarah Mikowski, who will graduate with a double major in sociology and English, is writing two honors theses, which means she has confronted this question more than once. Sarah advises that a key factor is "... finding the professor that I jived with." Her spring 2005 project, "Patriarchy, Masculinity, and the Power of Women in 'Queer Eye for the Straight Guy,'" grew out of a mentor relationship with Dr. Jim Beggan, a professor in one of her freshmen classes. A visit during office hours helped her define a research topic that year, and a mentor relationship for the rest of her undergraduate education. In fall 2005, the focus of Sarah's attention is her English research paper on a Brontë topic developed with the advisory assistance of Dr. Tamara Yohannes.

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Director, John Richardson, Ph.D.  
Editor, Ruth Spangler

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

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# Visiting an Ancient and Modern World Capital

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knowledge I obtained during the seminar "Britain and Its Transition to the Modern World" allowed me to better understand and appreciate the importance of the remarkable events, people and places that we witnessed throughout our trip to London in May 2005.

During the semester, the seminar unfolded as anything but a normal history class. Instead, our two professors from diverse fields (mathematics and theatre) acted as priceless tour guides who introduced us to the people, places and institutions that sculpted Britain into the strong country it is today. By traveling to London and the surrounding areas, what we had studied and learned during the semester was brought to life when we were able to visit the actual venues of diverse events in British cultural and scientific history. In fact, several times during the two-week trip I found myself frozen, overcome by an unexplainable rush of emotion caused by my wonder and amazement at being in the presence of greatness. Whether it was watching a play in Shakespeare's reconstructed Globe Theater, sitting by the famous fountain at Trinity College in Cambridge, standing only feet from Traitor's Gate at the Tower of London or enjoying a meal at the very pub where Watson and Crick first announced their discovery of the double helical structure of DNA, we were constantly immersed in reminders of the progress of the past that laid the foundation for London's success in the future.

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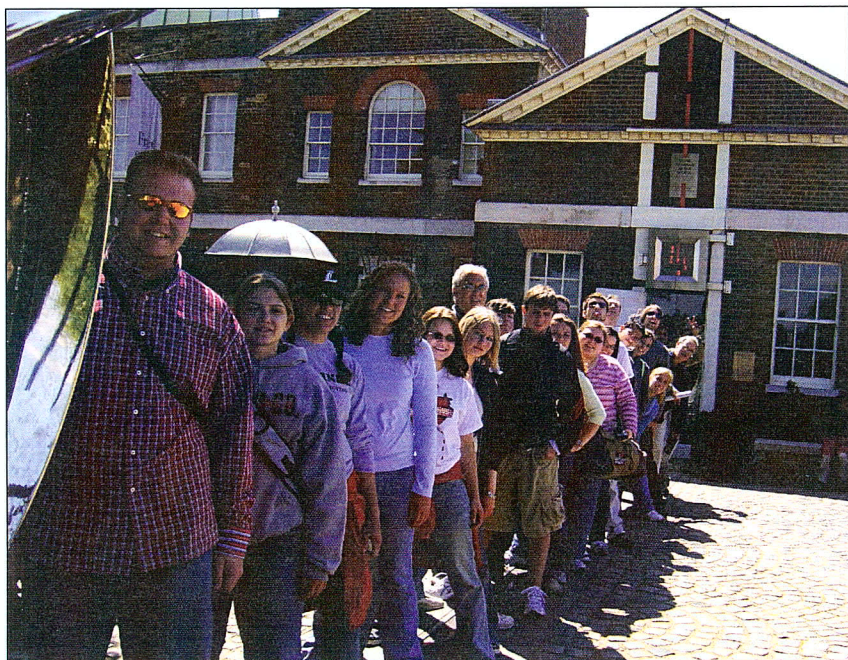
Sam Vermani, Becky Popham, Allie Fox and Tess Payton pose after a two-hour hike by the white cliffs of Dover. [photo by Becky Popham]

Although we had come expecting only to experience the historical aspects of Britain, our ample amount of free time allowed us to pursue our individual interests and experience the current social and political similarities and differences

existing between British and American societies. For many, sleep was not a top priority because there was so much to be experienced. Most of the group visited various and sundry world-famous London attractions such as Big Ben, the Tower of London, Tower Bridge, the Houses of Parliament and Harrods department store. On some days, the group split up: while some hiked up the white cliffs of Dover, others enjoyed a play in one of England's oldest theaters. Some even took the time to explore family roots; for example, Becky Popham journeyed through the countryside west of London to visit her ancestor's castle. Furthermore, we traveled to ancient wonders such as Stonehenge and the Roman baths in Bath that marked the earliest eras of civilization in the British Isles.

On one of the last days, after climbing literally hundreds of narrow, windy stairs to the top of St. Paul's Cathedral, I peered around at the vast city of London. I was able to see the impressive legacy left by the many scientists, artists, architects and other powerful professionals who had lived in this land many years ago. After traveling by boat, train, tube and plane, I was able to retrace the footsteps of numerous past luminaries, both where they worked and where they played.

Seminar members stand in two hemispheres (eastern and western) as they straddle the Prime Meridian.



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# Awarding News

We are very proud of our National Scholarship Office headed up by Dr. Patricia Condon.

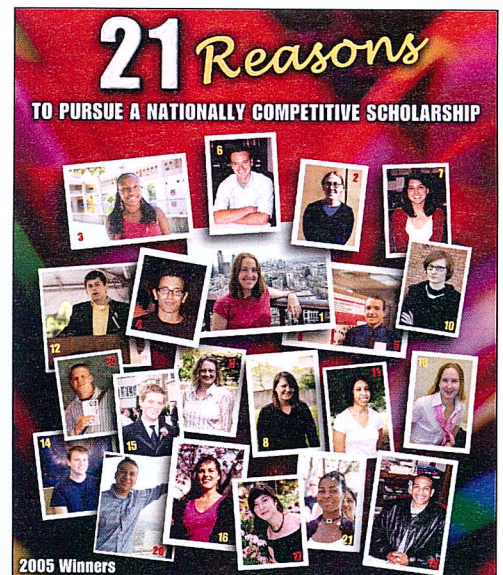
During the last three academic years in which the office has been active, U of L students applying for national and international scholarship and fellowship opportunities have had extraordinary success. Of the applicants applying for Fulbright Fellowships each year, between 30 and 40 percent of U of L applicants have received awards.

"The Top Producers of Fulbright Awards for American Students by Type of Institution," an article in the Nov. 4, 2005, issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* named the top 28 research institutions with student Fulbrights for 2005-2006. Among these universities,

only ten had an award percentage rate of 30 percent or higher.

Another U of L Scholarship Office point of pride this year is the National Security Education Program (NSEP)/David L. Boren Scholarship news.

The National Security Education Program announced that of the 730 applicants for Boren Scholarships, 47 were awarded. Of the four Boren applicants from U of L, two were awarded scholarships and one was named an alternate.



Students recognized during the last round of national and international fellowship and scholarship competitions.