



The Torch

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The President's Address

BY: KAREN WOOLIE



Prometheus brought fire to the Ancients many years ago, and with that he brought the brilliance of the gods and their wisdom. Fire became the highest achievement and symbol for the sophistication of man. The Torch bearing the flame became a metaphor for the mind or search for knowledge, and we in the Honors Program want our minds filled with 'veritas scientiaque.' Fifteen years after our inception, the ULM Honors Program has a new logo, a new curriculum and a new spirit.

I am Karen Woolie, President of the ULM Honors Program 2009. It is with great honor that we celebrate the 15th anniversary of our cherished program. Recently, our curriculum has weathered a complete overhaul, allowing students to have a thorough Honors Program experience while maintaining our purpose of enhancing students' college experiences.

The revitalized Honors Program requires a certain number of hours, including hours that Honors students take within their own major. This gives the opportunity for students to get to know professors within their field, which in some departments may be near to impossible due to the number of faculty members or other students. Also, this exposes the student to areas of expertise that others in their class may not have the opportunity to benefit from. At the highest level of Honors, "Honors in the University," students produce their Honors Project, which the student presents to

faculty, staff and fellow students upon graduation, before it is bound and put in the ULM Library.

There are many benefits that ULM and the Honors Program provide to participating students. As Honors students, we are given the privilege of early registration for classes as well as scholarship opportunities beginning in the sophomore year. The Honors Program helps fund Study Abroad opportunities and Winter, Summer and Maymester sessions. In 2008, we happily established our new Honors Lounge on campus. This lounge gives Honors students 24/7 access to computers, couches, television, internet access and study space.

Another new privilege is the availability of the Scholars Dorms. In Bayou Suites, one of the new dorms on campus, students with a 3.5 GPA, a requirement of all Honors students by their junior year, are given priority residence.

Many of our students are involved all over campus. We have sorority and fraternity members, a Miss ULM contestant, professional organization officers and members, and students driven to begin new organizations. Recently, one of our students started a Fencing Club here at ULM, another started the Gay Straight Alliance and I personally brought back the English Studies Society. It's clear that many of our Honors students are leaders across campus. Our Director is also on the National Honors Council Committee for Grant and Funds, and on the state level, I am one of two State Student Representatives voted in Spring 2009 at the Louisiana Collegiate Honors Conference (LCHC). Last year, the ULM Honors Program travelled to Lafayette to LCHC where one of our students

A welcome

presented on "Honors Without Borders," and our Quizbowl team did very well in competition.

Every year here at ULM, we host a Quizbowl Competition for high schools. Faculty and students join to put on this event where high school students compete against each other in rounds of challenging questions. Last year, our winner was River Oaks and our runner up was Neville High School. Both teams showed great spirit and determination at Quizbowl.

With the support of ULM's faculty, staff, and students, our program is soaring to new heights. As we progress into this year and the college careers of my colleagues, we learn more about who we are and what we can be. Through the program, our students have travelled to Greece, Italy, France, Costa Rica, and Peru – and we are not stopping there! One of our classes proposed a project to the West Monroe Mayor and Chamber of Commerce in 2008 focusing on the prospect of building a retirement community in West Monroe. Many of these things would not have even crossed our minds had it not been for the collective drives of the students of the Honors Program. As Honors Students, it is commonplace for people to see us as the ones making a difference in our world and with the knowledge we gained from being in the program, we truly are making a difference.

Our Mighty Leader

BY: LAUREN FUTCH

An interview with our Director



For what reasons did you take on the responsibilities of Director of the Honors Program?

Christian Rubio: I was asked to be the director. And to me, it was an honor and a challenge at the same time. It was a small group of students that wanted to raise the bar higher when it comes to their education, and that was a great incentive.

What other involvement do you have in the university?

CR: I am the Language Learning Center Director. I am also part of the University Faculty Athletic Council, as well as a member of the Diversity Committee.

What benefits would future students find in the Honors Program?

CR: The Honors Program is a small program. It allows its students to get to know each other. They also get to know their professors. Small classes allow for more conversation in class. There are also activities specifically for Honors students. There is an annual Honors conference we attend. We are also the only program that is able to provide scholarships when others do not (i.e. wintersession, summer sessions). Honors students also have the opportunity to study abroad.

What are some activities the program is involved in besides academic study?

CR: We are involved in a good bit of community service. We

have our newsletter. We go to the Honors Conferences. And we do several events with local high schools, such as our annual quiz bowl, and our yearly banquet.

What changes have been made in the Honors curriculum that makes the program more successful and better for the Honors students?

CR: We have reduced the required hours to make it more flexible and open to all colleges in the university. There are still a few extra hours required for the completion of the Honors Program, but they are all targeted to make students better candidates for careers or graduate school after graduation.

What is the honors program and what does it entail?

CR: The Honors Program is a small and selective program that offers classes within the curriculum that gives the opportunity for more in-depth discussion while fulfilling your university core and major requirements.

What are the different honors one can receive, and how can those honors help shape the future of Honors students?

CR: Students can receive Honors in the Major, Honors in the College, or Honors in the University. All honors will be recognized on the students' transcripts and make them better candidates for graduate school or employment. With Honors in the University, however, students are recognized at graduation and receive medals.

What changes or improvements does the honors program have in store?

CR: Eventually, we would like to take students to the national conference for honors programs. We are working on improving and finalizing the student lounge. I have four long-term goals: 1) I would like to offer laptops to each of our students going for Honors in the University while they are working on their honors project; 2) I would love to have 15 students in each class, which would be the maximum we would accept; 3) I hope that we become the leading Honors program in the region; and 4) I would like to someday make an Honors dorm exclusively for Honors students.

Any additional thoughts?

CR: As director, it gives me great satisfaction that recruitment numbers are up. We have the best freshman class since I became Director. Involvement of all Honors students has been excellent. Our students are eager to be challenged. I am also very satisfied with our Honors Faculty Council. We have worked out all the major challenges and are now running smoothly. Our main objective now is overseeing minor changes for the long-term improvement of the Honors Program.



The Value of Education: Simple Math

BY: DR. ROBERT EISENSTADT



"The Less the Education, the Greater the Risk of Dying Early," says the headline from an article in the Washington Post (May 14, 2008). Joint research from the American Cancer Society and the Centers for Disease Control demonstrate a very strong inverse relationship between education and the probability of dying early. In other words: get a degree, get a life...and more of it.

It has been my privilege to spend my career (20 years and counting) teaching economics in a university setting. During those years I've discovered, along with most of my colleagues, that college faculty experience no lack of frustration enduring what can only be described as an apparent and seemingly protracted lack of motivation/interest in education on the part of many college students. The fact that many of my colleagues and I spend countless hours searching for that magic nugget--the pearl of wisdom--that triggers students' universal appreciation of education (rather than the grade) is akin to some legendary grail quest.

We all know the principal motivating feature of higher education: money/earnings capacity. Rest easy because the hype is true. On average, a college graduate will earn approximately twice the lifetime earnings of a high school graduate with no college, and nearly that much more than a high school graduate with an unfinished college degree (pigeon-holed in the statistical black hole titled "Some College"). So now we have two motivating reasons to take education seriously: (1) lots more money; and (2) lots more time to enjoy it. Add to that the fact that

college graduates stay healthier longer, and you get reason (3): Better health for a longer time to enjoy more money.

At the risk of being a bit boring, to add perspective I offer this recent data from the current recession (*Fig. 1*). The first half of the table shows the median annual earnings by education. Note that in our current recession only college graduates (4-year and advanced degree) show any significant earnings growth from 2008 through the 3rd quarter of 2009. Most striking, however, is the unemployment rate for college versus non-college graduates. Though unemployment in all categories has increased in the current economic downturn, it seems that the greatest job security accrues to college grads, with a comparatively healthy-looking current unemployment rate of 4.9%. So, motivating reason for education (4): Less anxiety and more insulation from economic uncertainty.

This thing called higher education, produced here at ULM and a few thousand other institutions in the United States, is truly powerful stuff. For the fortunately focused few (about 24% of adults) who have kept their eyes on the prize, it has the power to (1) raise wages, (2) extend life, (3) improve health, (4) foster a sense of security and well being, and (5) open doors to opportunities that our previously closed minds thought happened only to "other people." A secret: "Other people" were all formerly

students enrolled in classes, reading and synthesizing endless pages of text, solving ridiculously difficult and pointless math problems, and complaining about trivial rules of grammar (among other educational nuisances/skills that actually have high market value).

This thing called higher education holds an immense amount of power to deliver benefits way beyond its price of acquisition. The power comes not from the "A" or "B" or "C" grades you get away with but from the knowledge you take away. The value of education derives from the added value that all of that knowledge delivers to the public (and personal) good. Education is the heart of consumer products like cellular communication technology, disease prevention/cure and pharmacology, entertainment and the arts, and simply good management of tens of thousands of efficiently run businesses and organizations that produce the myriad products and services in our daily lives. The value of education is manifested in the immense value of the products of education.

My colleagues and I frequently feel that we need to invent ways to motivate students toward an appreciation of education. Motivation--personal motivation--is as easy as counting from 1 to 5.

| | Median Annual Earnings | | August Unemployment Rate | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------|--------------------------|------|
| | 2008 | 2009 | 2008 | 2009 |
| Less than HS | \$23,556 | \$23,625 | 9.8 | 15 |
| HS only | \$32,136 | \$32,431 | 6.3 | 10.8 |
| Some College | \$37,544 | \$37,527 | 5.1 | 8.5 |
| College (4-yr) | \$52,624 | \$53,404 | 2.6 | 4.9 |
| Adv. Degree | \$66,924 | \$69,229 | n/a | n/a |

Fig. 1

Teaching Honors

BY: ELIZABETH BOSTON BENNETT

Dr. John Sutherlin



Dr. John Sutherlin is a Political Science Professor. His educational background is firmly grounded in Louisiana

having earned his PhD in International Relations and Comparative Government from the University of New Orleans in 1998. Though his degree's emphasis was on environmental policy, throughout his studies he took graduate courses in a range of environmental classes: engineering, sociology, law, geography, and urban planning. After teaching at

Tulane for 7 years and working as a policy consultant for an EPA-funded think tank, he joined the ULM faculty in 2005. During his time at ULM, he has developed Political Science into a separate degree and started the Social Science Research Lab. This research lab helped spark a great Honors Social Science class in Fall of 2008. Inspired to help combat the "brain drain" in Northeast Louisiana, the class melded Brownsfield redevelopment and research of our community's unique attributes, culminating in the proposal of a retirement community given by the students to the West Monroe Chamber of Commerce. The Honors Program has had an influence on him as a professor and

has given him an outlet to teach courses designed by his unique educational and professional experiences.

"I have taught courses with the best students and the most interesting topics that I have ever taught anywhere. My experience with the Honors Program has shown me how ULM students could compete with anyone anywhere. There are less tests and more research based projects. Also, I encourage them to develop their own lectures." This tactile approach to learning is something common among all Honors Program courses which strive to develop critical thinking skills through experience in addition to lecture.



Dr. Claudia Grinnell



Dr. Claudia Grinnell has an incredibly diverse educational background. She earned her first undergraduate

degree in banking and finance from German university Universität Dortmund. After coming to the US in 1985, she earned a BA in General Studies, a Master's in English (both from ULM), and a doctoral degree in Instructional Technology and Systems Design from Grambling University. Here at ULM, she directs the Write Place (our writing center), teaches classes in professional writing, American literature,

composition, and various Honors courses.

Throughout her educational and teaching career, her research pursuits have expanded to include issues in popular culture, social media (i.e. Web 2.0/Web 3.0), economic/financial theory, poetry, composition studies, graphic design, and philosophy (particularly the Frankfurt School).

To describe Honors courses in three sentences or less, Grinnell says, "Read. Think. Write." This is what we do, put simply. Her most recent Honors course grew out of her interest in (wo)man and the machine. "With that in mind, I developed a course that sought to explore the impact

of twentieth century revolutions in information technology and genetics on our lives and on diverse cultures by looking at changes in relationships, work, privacy, reproduction, and personal responsibility." She loves that the Honors program encourages critical thinking in a constructivist learning environment; emphasizing and honoring the process of learning and not the product (which is static). "For me, as the 'teacher' or, better, as the facilitator, I get joy when students arrive at new learning outcomes [and] they, too, experience this joy of discovery."

Activities



Arts & Crafts at Celtic Fest



Cleaning up the Lounge



Ace's Amazing Race



Newsletter Committee
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