

Fall 2005

The Promethean: Fall 2005

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Honors Program News

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NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL 2005 CONFERENCE

By Mandy Schepis and Katie Skomra

Assistant Director, Dr. Donna Kowal, senior and Peer Mentoring Coordinator, Jen Heim, junior and Honors Club Vice President, Katie Skomra, and senior and Honors Club President, Mandy Schepis, attended the annual national meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) in St. Louis, Mo., Oct. 27-30, 2005.

Returning from last year's NCHC Conference in New Orleans, Skomra realized Brockport's Honors Peer Mentoring Program is unique compared to other colleges. This revelation prompted Skomra and Heim to do a presentation about the program at the conference this year. In response to their presentation, at least 15 other schools requested additional information so they, too, can implement a successful program.

Attending the St. Louis conference was both a challenging and beneficial experience. With each session, more knowledge was gained and furthered understanding of the dynamics of a successful Honors Program. Each returned to Brockport with a breadth of new information for improving Brockport's Honors Program. Overall, the conference was a great success and an incredible experience.



Jen Heim and Katie Skomra presenting at the NCHC meeting. *Submitted Photo.*

THE NCHC EXPERIENCE

By Jen Heim

My experiences at this years NCHC conference were priceless. Throughout the weekend, I met many students and faculty from across the country, from large schools, and from schools you'd never know existed. The most beneficial piece of the weekend was presenting.

At first I thought it would be one of the most nerve-racking experiences of my life, but once we started planning our presentation, we realized we knew the mentoring program like the back of our hand. The mentoring program is something I feel is a huge selling point for our Honors program, and is beneficial for all students who have gone through it.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

BY DR. KEN O'BRIEN

This last year has been very fulfilling, even though we had to say fondest farewells to wonderful students who graduated this past May. But we welcomed a large and talented new class to the Program this spring, 71 freshmen and 52 transfers. Both groups brought higher averages than those of previous years, 95.5 for freshmen and 3.76 for transfers. They represent every discipline, several foreign countries, and a wide variety of talents.

We welcomed the return of Mrs. Darlene Waters last fall, and Prof. Donna Kowal, the Associate Director, this fall who spent last spring on sabbatical leave. She worked on her book on Emma Goldman, a radical (she welcomed the term) leader during the first decades of the century who championed workers and women rights wherever and however she could. I completed a more modestly sized article on "The United States, War and the Twentieth Century," that will be published in a Cambridge University collection in 2006. And, in May, I was honored to receive a Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Faculty Service, the second awarded to a faculty member at the College.

In the spring, a distinguished team of external reviewers came to campus and met with students, faculty and administrators as part of the Program's first, "Periodic Program Review." Their final report was favorable, which serves as a testament to this College's commitment over the past six years to the Program. The most evident change has been the revision of HON 395, the Junior Colloquium.

Dr. Kowal, Mrs. Waters, the teaching faculty, and I look forward to continuing our work on your behalf, as we strive to make the Honors Program not only the largest, but the best, in the region and state.

RESEARCH AND THESIS PREPARATION

BY KELLY SABETTA

As a journalism major and an honors student, I am participating in CMC 419 Freedom of Expression, which is a course designed to take a deeper look into the issues surrounding freedom of speech, expression, and the legal boundaries limiting these forms of communication.

Expression comes in many forms including speech, print, and symbolism. Each form represents a belief, an opinion, or a statement of some kind, yet each of these forms of communication may not have equal protection under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

As part of the Honors contract, I am researching a topic of interest and taking a deeper look into what it means for Americans, both throughout history and the current debates of today, on the topic of flag desecration. In times of war, government protest, and expression of individual beliefs, I believe it is an important controversial issue that has been present since the early establishments of this country.

The CMC 419 Freedom of Expression course has been influential in my studies, serving as a stepping-stone in my desire of becoming a journalist. Not only has this class taught me a great deal of the controversy surrounding the protection of American freedoms, but the design of the course helps in preparation of extensive research.

Another course designed for extensive research is the HON 395 Junior Colloquium, which I am also involved in. This course is specially designed to prepare students for their senior thesis by forming and focusing on a topic of interest relevant to their major.

Together, these two courses have supplied me with a solid foundation to achieving my goals by providing endless opportunities, useful knowledge, and outstanding support by professors.



Kelly Sabetta. Photo by Donna Kowal

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When you present something you feel strongly about, it makes it easy. The numerous pieces of positive feedback we received at the end of our presentation further solidifies my confidence in the mentoring program. People from different schools, including many faculty meetings, requested we send them as much information as possible on our mentoring program.

The weekend opened my eyes to different professional possibilities, as well as gave me the opportunity to explore a new and exciting city. I'm not thinking of this experience as a resume builder, because it was much more to me. Take a chance, try something new, and attend next year's conference. I promise you won't be disappointed.

HONORS STUDENT PROFILE: JON KERNER

BY KELLY SABETTA



Jon Kerner. Photo by Kelly Sabetta

Deciding to complete a Bachelors degree may feel like an obligation to many young adult students. But for older adult students, returning to school can be intimidating after years of being away from the classroom. Jon Kerner, an English major at SUNY Brockport, proves this popular belief wrong.

"It's a complete myth that you get older and you can't handle knowledge anymore," Kerner said, "but just the opposite is true."

Kerner, 44, is a junior at SUNY Brockport with an interest in creative writing. He is also pursuing natural and social sciences, French, acting, and is an active member within the Honors community. As part of his Honors studies, he is taking junior colloquium, which prepares students for researching their senior thesis, and he is also participating in the Honors Club.

"I wish I was in more, but I try to stay realistic about time commitments," Kerner said.

"It's not unusual to see my light on in my office at 4 o'clock because I can't sleep, because I'm thinking about some exam," Kerner said. The average rule of spending one hour per class credit does apply, Kerner said, "I definitely do at least that." Spending four to six hours on homework in one day and two hours on another is an average amount of time for him to spend on schoolwork.

"I'd gotten feedback from some faculty where they really appreciate

what adults bring to their classroom," Kerner said.

Terry Lehr, an advisor to the English department, was the first to be contacted by Kerner in his search to return to college. "The older students are often less shy about asking and answering questions in class and they take time to help other students," Lehr said. "I think the biggest difference is that they see themselves as partners in discovery with their professors.

"Older adults are kind of scared at first because it's been a long time since they took notes, sat in class, and read and wrote outside assignments," Lehr said. "But they soon realize that they are often more focused and have goals that are different from traditional-aged students."

Kerner agreed. "You're so much better equipped because of organization, appreciation for time management, the fact that you're spending your own money, etc," he said.

In addition to school, there are responsibilities that need to be taken care of at home. "I am married, so I don't just forget about my wife," said Kerner, who also has three children of his own, and two stepchildren. His son, Nicholas, and his daughter, Jennifer, graduated from college.

Jennifer Kerner, 26, who is currently working on her master's degree, graduated from SUNY Geneseo with a dual certification B.A. degree in Elementary Education and Special Education in 2001, fully supports her dad's decision to continue his education.

"I was not shocked or surprised when my dad said he was going to go to college," Jennifer said. "He's a risk-taker and a lifelong learner. I think that some of my family members were a bit skeptical probably because they knew that my dad would no longer be at a secure full-time job with a good income."

Kerner left his career to continue his studies at SUNY Brockport in the literary field. "I worked technical field

of Kodak for 26 years," Kerner said. An electrician, Kerner prepared himself for his return to college. "I was ready to leave my employment and the life I had," Kerner said, "I was bored with it."

Kerner asked his daughter for advice before returning to school. "I said to her, 'What do you think? Ya know, can I do this?'" She said, "You'll be able to do it; in fact, you'll probably do really well at it," Kerner said. "She's been right."

Kerner accumulated college credits while working at Kodak by attending school part time. Before enrolling at SUNY Brockport, Kerner transferred credits from RIT and MCC, and has had an awarding experience.

"I don't feel different than anyone else," Kerner said, "because once everyone gets into the material and all the rigors of study, that is what everyone is focused on."

With the transition from a career to college, Kerner has adjusted well. "I'm very happy with the things as they are," Kerner said. When he does have some free time with his busy schedule, he enjoys camping, visiting the mountains, and working on maintaining his home.

But focusing his studies in creative writing, Kerner has aspirations to write a novel after graduation. He also focuses on not wasting time, and prioritizing his responsibilities. His advice to others who are thinking about returning to college to further their education would be the same rules he followed when deciding which path to follow.

"Think about it, start doing it part time, and then be honest about what you like and what you are interested in," Kerner said.

"Don't be too worried about, 'If I studied such and such, then what will I do?' Never mind that. Learn what you want to learn, become

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who you want to become, and then the rest will take care of itself later," Kerner said.

As for his time in the classroom, Kerner joked about students' reactions to him on the first day of classes. "I usually get asked if I'm the teacher," Kerner said. "Which, now I can anticipate, I usually tell them I am, and play with their heads a little. Then tell them I'm really not, and then I tell them I am."

Kerner's experience at Brockport has been all he hoped it would be, he said. Feeling welcomed by the faculty and students, he does not hesitate to actively participate in class and contribute to the college.

"I feel like I am here once, and do it right," Kerner said.

IN NORTHERN WOOD

BY JON KERNER

Dedicated to Nicholas Kerner - a true lover of the outdoors.

In northern wood, 'neath graying skies, I stood in winter's air;
I'd wandered to a lonely glen while I'd been hunting there.
Companions never quiet, whose shouts and laughter heard, were silent now,
were far away, from this temporal world.

A movement rare, periphery, I turned naught but my head,
and saw like fleeting phantom a hare to warren fled.
Looking down, the curled brown leaves collected crystals white
that fell from heavy darkening clouds who hastened forth the night.

My gaze then fell on barren trees of black and shades of brown;
monoliths with outstretched arms and roots in frozen ground.
Piling gently on those arms the gathering soft snow
reverently transformed the place, lent sanctifying glow.

As day's first snow, like woodland sprites, dense around me fell
the fairest of soft sounds rose up to cast enchanting spell.

I bowed my head, and closed my eyes, and in amazement heard
a sound like children's voices murmuring small words.

The gentle flakes angelic strain awe and reverence bade;
and opening my eyes I saw the brown beneath white fade.

I stood below those skies of gray, my world in white aglow;
and in that hallowed northern wood snow's song I came to know.

TRANSFER EXPERIENCE

BY WESLEY SALEN

Coming to SUNY Brockport from Genesee Community College was a big change for me. I went from attending a small, one-building campus, to entering a seemingly complex system of more than a dozen separate structures. Yet as the semester has begun and I've started to learn my way around. I found Brockport isn't so complex at all, but is actually well laid out.

I've come to understand something in the last two months. Simply put, Brockport is the real deal; it's an invigorating world of intelligent and focused individuals, all aimed at so many outstanding goals. I find myself walking the campus on these beautiful fall afternoons watching the students as they head on their daily endeavors. I see a unique quality to this place, from the energetic ambitions of the students, to the spirited intentions of the professors.

I was nervous when I started this semester, but since my arrival, I have seen that Brockport contains qualities I could never have experienced anywhere else. It is here the real world meets the academic one, and as students at this great school, we have the opportunity to prepare ourselves for the future, to grow into adults, and to let our unique abilities and determination stand tall.

Different from a community college is the fact that because of its size and level of academics, the student has to take on a much more proactive approach, monitoring their DARS report, keeping up to date on events and deadlines, and taking the initiative to prepare for their semester. It is these experiences that will help lead a student into adulthood, to come to a point where they can individually go the distance in any pursuit they see fit.

My experience at Brockport thus far has been a fantastic one. I've met wonderful people, gotten a chance to discover new opportunities, and have been opened up to an entirely new world of possibilities. I've also learned my way around the campus, which was something I deemed impossible at the start of the semester.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE HONORS NEWSLETTER

The Honors Program Newsletter is a publication dedicated to the Honors Program, faculty, students, and alumni. Articles are written by Honor students, and are designed to provide information to the Honors community. Content will include a wide variety of topics, including research, Honors program news and events, student and professor spotlights, experiences, and creative work. For submissions or more information, please contact Kelly Sabetta at ksab0610@brockport.edu.