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Honorable Mentions

Honors College

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Honorable Mentions

Fall 2015

A Publication of the PSU Honors College Public Relations Committee

A Letter from the Director

Greetings from the Honors College!

It has been an active and exciting fall semester in the Honors College with many great things happening within our organization and student membership. You will read in this newsletter about numerous events that we have held this fall to continue to build strong relationships and friendships amongst our student population. The students continue to be active in serving the campus and community at large as well.

I am so very proud of the efforts of our students, both in and out of the classroom. There were eight students who attended the National Collegiate Honors College conference in Chicago with me this past November and after attending many sessions and engaging in robust conversations about what they learned, it became quite clear that the Honors College at Pittsburg State is very unique in its focus and structure and indeed provides our students with incredible opportunities and experiences during their time in the program.

We hope you all have a wonderful and safe holiday season and wish the very best in the new year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Craig Fuchs
Director of the Honors College



Contents

Director's Letter	1
2015 Freshman.....	2
New Cohort	2
Picnic.....	3
Senior Sweep	3
Cheer Squad	4
Help Desk.....	5
Cohort Reduced.....	5



2015 Freshman Class Begins their Honor College Journey

By Marissa Page

They began in the usual way: a classroom and a hallway of somewhat familiar faces from the overnight. Now they are roommates, floor mates, and best friends. The incoming freshmen class this year consisted of twenty-one Kansas natives and thirteen out-of-state students. In addition to the American students, the Honors College welcomed two international students – one from England, and the other from Paraguay. The average ACT score for this class was 30.5 and the average GPA was an exceptional 3.95.

This year's freshman class took advantage of the honors clusters within the residence halls. One cluster is located on the first floor of Nation, and there is both a men's cluster and a women's cluster out at Crimson Commons. The most impressive cluster is on the third floor of Dellinger, where the majority of the ladies reside.

Every year the freshman class completes a community service project together, building community within the group, as well as serving the community around PSU. This year the class continued a five-year tradition of cleaning the parking lot after home football games. After every game, the freshman geared up in rubber gloves, grabber sticks, and trash bags. Then they fanned out around the parking lot and grabbed all the trash left behind from tailgating.

The incoming freshmen class is poised to do great things and take Pitt State by storm. They are bright and strong, and have already built a family amongst themselves.



Photo: 1 Dellinger Honors Cluster

New Freshman Cohort has an International Flair

By Gretchen Reed

This year's Honors College freshman class is unique in many ways; however, one thing that makes the class of 2019 stand out is the two international students Talia Ayala and Lewis Furze. Talia is from Paraguay and is majoring in Business Management with a minor in Marketing, and Lewis is from England and is majoring in Psychology. Both Lewis and Talia have a lot to offer in terms of broadening the cultural knowledge of those around them because they each come from unique cultures and are more than willing to share their opinions about how their lives back home differ greatly from their new lives here in Pittsburg, Kansas.

When asked what she misses the most about Paraguay, Talia said that she misses being around people that have the same manners as her. For example, she feels super weird greeting someone without kissing their cheeks and she said that a normal greeting in America such as a handshake feels inadequate to her. Lewis, on the other hand misses the sense of humor of English people and being able to say popular phrases, even though all the American students have definitely picked up on his distinctly English lingo. Lewis is also shocked that people wear camo so often here, but, honestly, that's just Pittsburg.

Both international students immediately noticed that our food is much different from the food in their home countries. Talia said that Paraguayans are generally healthier than Americans and Lewis has been very concerned about how Americans eat so many things with their hands such as pizza and French fries. Overall, throughout the short period of time that Talia and Lewis have been with the Honors College, they have taught us an incredible amount about themselves and their cultures and have, in turn, learned a lot about life in America.

Year Starts Off with Annual Welcome Back Picnic

By Gretchen Reed

At the beginning of the year, Honors College students of all classes got together at Dr. Fuchs' house to celebrate the beginning of the collegiate year. This kick-off picnic was tons of fun for everyone who attended. At this event, all kinds of people involved with HCA enjoyed hotdogs, hamburgers, a plethora of side dishes, and some awesome desserts. However, the most important aspect of this fun start to the fall semester was the opportunity that students had to meet new people in the Honors College. "I had a great time, and I talked to so many people that I had never met before," says freshman Jordan Gorges, "I got to know people outside of the honors cluster in my dorm and got a better feeling of what the PSU Honors College is really about."



Photo: 2 Members taking part in "Welcome Back" activities

This cook-out acts as the first time in the year during which new Honors College freshmen can meet older members who are not peer mentors and can truly feel like active and intrinsic parts of HCA. This event served as a wonderful opportunity to bring HCA students of all classes back together and to remind students of what an awesome program they belong to. Freshman Ben Kelm commented "I feel like this is the type of event that could bring all members together, even the ones who haven't been around in a while." All in all, the kick-off picnic was both a fun, energetic event complete with tons of delicious food and awesome friends and the perfect venue to bring the Honors College members closer together.

A Senior Sweep

By Joshua Yeomans

At Pittsburg State University, we have a competition of sorts that crops up every year. The Outstanding Senior Man and Woman awards, given every spring, are an honor reserved for two outstanding individuals in their senior year. Because Pittsburg State is a high-quality institution, there are many candidates eligible for these awards. However, this year, there were two that stood above the rest: Michael Giffin and Ellen Wieberg.



Photo: 3 Ellen Wieberg & Michael Giffin

These two Honors College members were, and are, fantastic examples to their peers. Both are hard workers, high achievers, and helpful friends. For traits like these, they were recognized as Pittsburg State's Outstanding Senior Man and Woman for 2015. Additionally, they both participated in campus activities such as international programs, community service groups, and honor societies.

Wieberg has always been a leader on campus, and her experience in the international office led her to study multiculturalism from a first-person perspective by traveling abroad to several countries. Over the course of two summers, she lived with five different German host families, and was accepted into the Media and Public Relations Master's Program at Leicester University in England. We at Pittsburg State know that she will represent us well and excel in all that she does!

Giffin, a six-semester recipient of All-A Academic Honors, is staying in Pittsburg, much to the relief of all the underclassmen who have received tutoring from him in chemistry courses. The Golden Gorilla award winner is currently working on an accelerated Chemistry Master's degree, and later plans to study in Europe once he has completed it. His previous time in Europe, a semester in Malta, is likely a large factor in this career plan, and we are excited for all the potential he shows.

Our outstanding seniors are two most excellent individuals who plan to make big impacts on a global scale; one might say that they already have. Wherever their studies and adventures take them, we are proud to call them Gorillas and alumni of the Honors College!

Acrobatic Academics

By Joshua Yeomans

I speak for myself when I say that many Honors College students are known more for their achievements in academia than in the gym. Personally, high school sports were the end of the road as school became an increasing demand in my life, and time to exercise and practice seemed impossible to find. That is why we are so impressed by Hannah Pio and Gavin Houser – two Honors College students who work incredibly hard to make themselves academically well-versed and athletically successful.

If you look at the schedule for Pittsburg State's cheer squad; my goodness, they put in work. For Gavin, weight training in the mornings, business classes throughout the day, cheer practice in the afternoon, and homework in the evening make up a daily routine. When football games or cheer competitions approach, even more time is spent working on technique and athleticism, but those events don't slow down if he has a big test, which means he has to make time to prepare for both. The success with which he can do both makes him a standout in the PSU Honors College.



Photo: Hannah Pio & Gavin Houser

Hannah is no slacker either. As she works towards her degree in biology, she has to put in massive amounts of time in chemistry, biology, and physics classes, all of which require focus and effort. Fortunately for Hannah, she develops those traits on the cheer mats of the Weede, and at the tops of human pyramids, as an excellent, committed cheerleader for PSU. Practice, exercise, and studying would break most students. However, she pushes through admirably and is one of PSU's brightest for it.

The Honors College may be a collection of smart and driven individuals, but we think one of its greatest sources of pride is the collection of students like Hannah and Gavin, who can balance school, athletics, work, and fun, in order to be complete and well-rounded students.

Honors College Students Man the Help Desk

By Joshua Yeomans

The first week of college can be a pain. There is a lot going on between classes starting, projects being assigned, and trying to figure out how to get all your toiletries and new clothes to the dorm bathroom in good order. On top of all this, campus is a big place compared to most high schools, and it's easy to get lost. Fortunately for the freshmen on the campus of Pittsburg State, faculty and informed Honors College students were strategically placed in the middle of the mess this year, offering guidance at a small pavilion called the "Help Desk."

For two days during the first week of classes this fall, the Help Desk assisted hundreds of students in several ways. Official tallies of question types were not taken, but it is common knowledge to those who worked at the desk that directions to classes were the most prescribed tips. It was entertaining to watch situations unfold, such as Dr. Olson attempting to explain where Russ Hall was to a herd of freshmen (it was five hundred feet to the right), or hearing seniors in the Honors College try to explain how Banana Bucks work.

Though the Help Desk was a small event directed at new students, it says a lot about the way the faculty at Pittsburg State go about ensuring student success. Whether or not the students always got the answers they needed, they certainly noticed the effort put forth by their fellow classmates and staff to make sure they had everything they needed to succeed.

Incoming Freshman Cohort Reduced to 30 for the Fall of 2016

By Craig Fuchs

A significant change has been made for the Fall 2016 Freshman Cohort. For the past number of years, the total incoming cohort has been at 36 students. Within the scholarship structure, this meant there were 12 Presidential Scholars, 12 University Scholars, and 12 Crimson and Gold Scholars. However, when the scholarship amounts were considered, there was a fairly significant discrepancy between the top two tiers and the Crimson and Gold tier. The total scholarship package amounts were \$40,000 for Presidential, \$20,000 for University, and \$2,000 for Crimson and Gold. As part of those packages, the Presidential and University Scholars received a \$2,000 Study Abroad Stipend, while the Crimson and Gold did not.

In an effort to bring the overall scholarship packages at least a little closer in amounts, a proposal was submitted and approved to raise the Crimson and Gold scholarship package to a total of \$6,000 over the four years, which now also includes a \$2,000 study abroad stipend. However, in order to achieve this, with no "new" money provided by the university, it was necessary to reduce the number of students taken in the Crimson and Gold tier to just 6 instead of 12.

Over the past few years, we have been losing prospective students who were offered a position in the Crimson and Gold tier due to the small scholarship amount associated with that level, which has been a total of \$2,000 for their first two years only. We have also found that some students in that tier tend to not be as involved after their first two years and in some cases voluntarily remove themselves from the program once their scholarship ends. It is our hope that with this new structure, we will retain students in this category throughout their full four year collegiate experience. It will also be extremely positive that all students, regardless of level, will now have the benefit of the study abroad stipend.