Secular vs. Spiritual: An Inside Look at Liberty University

By Alaina Berry

The Honors Program was pleased to welcome Kevin Roose, pictured right, as the speaker for the Fall Lecture. Roose is the author of the book, *The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner’s Semester at America’s Holiest University*, which was the required summer reading assignment for Honors Program students. A former resident of Oberlin, Ohio, Roose was a sophomore at Brown University - a college known for its liberal reputation - when he developed the novel idea of a domestic study away experience. Instead of traveling across the world to encounter a new culture, why could he not do the same in the United States? Roose’s book documents the semester in which he attended Liberty University, one of the largest Christian universities in the U.S., where his goal was to gain a better understanding of the lives of Christian college students.

Before the lecture began, a fellow Honors student, Hailey Sult, had the privilege of introducing Roose. Roose started the lecture by giving a brief history of Liberty University (located in Lynchburg, Virginia and founded by the notorious Dr. Jerry Falwell) and proceeded to describe his experiences during that semester. Ultimately, Roose discovered that Christian college students were not as foreign as he had originally imagined. They spent time with friends, complained about homework, played sports, and watched movies like any other secular student. The main differences were that Liberty students had stricter guidelines compared to secular universities (such as the limitations of three-second hugs, no R rated movies, and no swearing) and, overall, were more enthusiastic and passionate about their faith. In short, Roose concluded the foundational difference as a secular person using the word “lucky” where a Liberty student would use “blessed.”

I had the opportunity to speak with Roose following his lecture where I began by asking about his favorite class while he attended Liberty. He responded that he most enjoyed the class explaining the Old Testament as he affectionately described it as, “The world’s most confusing family story.” Though he was careful to avoid, as he put it, “falling in” the religious groups in order to preserve his journalistic perspective, Roose also explained to me how he missed the idea of “collective effervescence” that he experienced during worship services.

Looking back on his experience, Roose realized that he had initially viewed Christian students as “spiritual warriors,” and he “didn’t realize they’re still just teenagers.” He presented the idea that people are “multi-dimensional” though often, as a society, we are quick to place labels on one another. With this in mind, I asked Roose what he recommended as a course of action regarding bridging the gap between conservative and liberal students. His take-away message is this: “The first step is listening.” He went on to clarify that this meant listening with an open mind and not simply patiently waiting for our next turn to speak. “Listening to people with different views is really hard,” Roose sympathized, “However, it is vital that we overcome our own egos in order to understand and connect with others.”

**For those who are curious as to what happened to the boy who was in trouble from the beginning of the book, I asked Roose about it. Unsurprisingly, he was kicked out of Liberty.**
Each year, the Ashland University Honors Program welcomes a diverse freshmen class into the program. As 27 freshmen began this fall, they contributed with a wide range of majors and home states. The 12 men and 15 women in the freshmen class are native to Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Wyoming. As each new class enters the Honors Program, it is beneficial for the incoming class to learn about the experiences of upperclassmen. Several upperclassmen have shared their experiences with the Honors Program and have provided advice to future incoming classes.

Kathryn Brickner, a current sophomore in the Honors Program, shares her experience thus far:

“My experiences taking Honors classes have all been positive! In fact, it is because of the Honors Music and Drama Across Culture classes offered last spring that I am considering studying abroad in India.” She goes on to share her advice to future classes, stating, “Choose Honors classes that sound interesting and truly try to engage. Take this opportunity to take a class you normally would not and open your mind to something new.”

A senior member of the Honors Program, Paul Lattimer, shares, “The Honors Program can seem intimidating at first, especially the Capstone Project, but, if you want to be the person who is not afraid to fail because of the chance of success, then I encourage you to stick with the Honors Program.” Paul’s advice to incoming classes is: “Don’t be afraid to change your major; it’s better to switch and possibly stay an extra semester or two than be miserable for the rest of your life because you picked the wrong degree.”

Another senior, psychology major Lauren Goossens, comments, “Being in the Honors Program has given me an edge on my grad school applications, as it is something that sets me apart from other applicants, and the Honors thesis has also helped to prepare me for grad school.” She goes on to advise new students to “Make sure you really take advantage of the Honors core classes. I have had a great experience with almost all of my professors during my years at AU, as they are all willing to help and really care about their students.”

The advice that these upperclass Honors Program students have shared emphasizes the invaluable experiences of being a member in the Program. From enrolling in fascinating Honors courses to preparing students for a graduate education, the incoming classes have exciting things to look forward to as the newest members of Ashland University’s Honors Program.

Lydia Felker and Audrey Wagner of the Ashland University Honors Program both spent their summers experiencing new and amazing things.

Lydia went to Ashkelon, Israel for three weeks during the summer of 2012 to participate in an archeological expedition. While there, she found that archeology fascinated her. “It’s like one big puzzle” she said, because one can expect to find things in certain places and put together the pieces to see what past civilizations were like. Lydia considered it an amazing experience, even if it ended up being a lot more hard work than she anticipated. She would definitely recommend that others try it if they get the chance because, in her words, “I got to step back in time for three weeks, and that is pretty incredible.”

Audrey spent part of her summer on a mission trip in the Dominican Republic. She volunteered at an orphanage in San Juan for one week. Her duties ranged from bonding with the children at the orphanage to making sidewalks and digging sewage drains. She said that “the experience was literally life changing” and that seeing a poorer country made her appreciate her life in the United States even more. She was astounded by the fact that even though the people she helped had so little, they were full of joy. This experience reminded Audrey that “we are so blessed every single day of our lives,” and she definitely got as much out of the trip as the children she was helping.
If asked the question, are there more girls or more guys attending college in the U.S. today, how would you respond? Maybe you believe that males have always been favored historically and continue to rise to the occasion. Perhaps you think women have striven to rise above their masculine counterparts. It could be that you believe men and women are equally matched in higher education. But the real question is who are going to college: girls or guys?

Obviously by a quick scan of any American college or university, you will see both male and female students. There is no question whether or not both genders make an appearance on campuses across the nation. Surprisingly though, a gap between males and females attending college is on the rise. In 2011, National Center for Education Statistics issued a study which showed the total undergraduate enrollment of both male and females within the past 40 years. Until 1980, males were almost always the forerunners in college enrollment. Since then, the trend seemed to shift. In 1990 women dominated the enrollment charts at 55% against males’ 45%. By the year 2000, women were ahead with 56.1% of college enrollment. The largest gap between male and female enrollment, according to National Center for Education Statistics, was in 2005 with a nearly 15% gap in favor of women at 57.2% compared to the male enrollment of 42.8%. The projections show that by 2020, the percentages will be divided 60/40 in favor of women for undergraduate enrollment.

When informed about this rising epidemic, several male Ashland University Honors students had some interesting comments about the decreasing number of males attending college. In particular, Chris Beisel, a Journalism/Digital Media major and Theatre minor, believed that college enrollment for males was declining. “On average,” Beisel remarked, “it seems males aren’t as self-disciplined as females to motivate themselves to study and remain academically sound.”

Nolan Dilts, a freshman studying Sport Management, also felt that the gender gap was logically accurate. Dilts said, “It makes sense because men can do more jobs that just require physical labor instead of a degree. Most girls don’t have that opportunity.” Another student commented on the job market. Ivan Larson, majoring in Political Science, replied, “If you look at many skilled jobs that pay well but don’t require a college degree, such as welders or mechanics, they are often seen as ‘male’ jobs.”

So, what has happened to all of the men? Are they in fact opting out of college for jobs that require less education? In some ways, sociologist Michael Kimmel would say they are. “Boys think that academic disengagement is a sign of masculinity,” said Kimmel in his cbsnews.com report, As Gender Roles Change, Are Men Out of Step?, “The less you can do in school, the less connected you are, the less interested you are, the more manly you are.”

Now that we have identified that men may be indeed less interested in enrolling in college, what needs to be done to bring the numbers back up? The same Ashland University males were asked if they worked as admission representatives for a university, what they would do/say to entice males to go to college. Paul Lattimer, a senior Religion major, thought that males would be interested in the large number of females on campus. “I know it sounds very shallow,” Lattimer remarked, “but telling a teenage male that there is a plethora of young women all in one spot would be very enticing to him.” Dilts seemed to agree, “all you need to do is tell them that the school is 60% women. If that doesn’t appeal to them then something is wrong with them.”

Furthermore, what advice can be given to incoming male undergraduates? Beisel said, “Don’t forget why you are coming to college and why you are spending money on tuition. It is important to have a positive experience here and have fun, but you do NOT want to neglect your academics. That’s the purpose of college. At the end of the day, you are pursuing your degree—so don’t forget that!!”

**The Decline in College Enrollment for Males**

By Larissa Berry

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**Total Undergraduate Enrollment**

Finding the Balance: Sports and School

By Kelly Crowl

Many student athletes are pushed in high school to maintain high grades while still being active in a varsity sport, but by the time they arrive at college, they have chosen to dedicate their time to either sports or academics. Several Honors Program students have chosen to continue to pursue excellence both in a sport and in the classroom. This year, the Honors Program boasts students who play football, softball, wrestle, run cross country and track as well as numerous other students who play on intramural and club teams. Freshman Sport Management major and varsity wrestler, Nolan Dilts, shared some insights about being an athlete and being in the Honors Program. Nolan has been wrestling for six years and has adjusted well from wrestling at the high school level to the collegiate level. He said there are programs to help freshmen manage the change. Wrestling plays a huge part in Nolan’s life—he said it not only helps him stay in shape, but that it was also a factor in attending Ashland University.

Senior cross country runner, McKenzie Roth, agrees with Nolan. When asked about how she manages her time between classes, running, and campus activities, McKenzie said that time management requires “working ahead, being organized, and maintaining good communication with professors.” Nolan devotes up to eighteen hours per week to wrestling and said that it can be difficult to find time to do homework. To help with this issue, freshmen are required to attend study tables for four hours a week. Nolan said that he has time to complete all of his homework but the study tables help him maintain high grades.

McKenzie and Nolan both believe that one of the best parts about being on a college sports team is the opportunity to push themselves as individuals but also work toward a common goal with a team. McKenzie loves the high level of competition that is provided by Ashland University sports as well as the camaraderie of the team. Her teammates have become some of her closest friends. Although free time is limited for both athletes, they believe it is worth the sacrifice, and the limited free time makes it all the more exciting when they do have time to visit with friends or watch a movie.

While many students choose to focus most of their time on either sports or academics, students like McKenzie and Nolan have been able to find a balance between both. They are able to enjoy playing a sport at the collegiate level while still maintaining high expectations for themselves academically.

A Closer Look at the Man in the Crocs

By Ashley Lorah

Last year, the First Year Honors Seminar professor, Dr. Howard Walters, earned a spotlight in the The Honors Bugle. Now it’s Dr. Duncan Jamieson’s turn for his own article. Dr. Jamieson has been working at Ashland since 1979 and for the Honors introduction class since 1995. In addition to the Honors course, Dr. Jamieson teaches history and social science courses. Although he enjoys teaching regular lectures, Dr. Jamieson appreciates how Honors students are more engaged. He thinks they are more open to different ideas yet also resistant. Although that does not sound like good traits for students to have, Dr. Jamieson encourages opposition and debates. His ultimate goal is to get into a verbal argument with a student. He wants students to deepen and improve their ability to think objectively about any subject. Therefore, he warns scholars not to accept anything at face value, but rather, to challenge everything!

Not only does Dr. Jamieson have a busy schedule here at Ashland, but he also keeps himself occupied outside of class. When I asked what he does in his free time, he immediately mentioned his daughter, Heather. He really enjoys watching her run cross-country for Ashland Middle School. In addition, Dr. Jamieson likes kayaking in the Adirondacks, long-distance cycling, and traveling in general. A common theme I recognized amidst our amicable interview was that Dr. Jamieson does what he loves. He is living proof of the expression, “Do what you love and you’ll never work a day in your life.” It is inspiring to see someone in a career that he truly loves. My hope is that his philosophy will motivate his students so they find the same passion in a future position.
A Glimpse into the Metal Scene

By Melany Bagnola

Bla ring, head-banging, screaming music – the metal scene. Sunday morning, worship, praising God – the church scene. One may not think those two have very much in common, or one may think that they could be the antithesis of one another; however, senior Religion major Paul Lattimer embarked on a thesis intertwining the two seemingly opposite worlds.

As a requirement to graduate from the Honors Program, each student completes an Honors Capstone Project. Paul’s project, “Sacred Metalcore: A worship, culture, & missiology study of the Christian metal scene,” seeks to unveil the enactment of the Christian faith within the metal scene. His argument is, “that the redemptive power of Christ is powerful enough to redeem a broken music scene and transform it into a new creation that can bring honor, glory, and praise to the one true God.”

When asked how the thesis has helped him personally, Paul responded with three distinct areas of growth. First, he remarked that his fear of the project, which initially made him want to drop out of the Honors Program, was transformed into a vessel that allowed him to see that he is capable of bigger things than he thought. Second, he was able to have fun researching and studying the metal music genre, of which he was a huge fan, on an academic level. And third, Paul stated that this project has taught him to stand up for what he believes in.

Lattimer included some words of wisdom for younger Honors Program students: “Don’t give up. If you quit on yourself before you even begin, what kind of standard will that set for the rest of your life? Not a good one. Sure, this Capstone Project is probably going to be your biggest academic undertaking to this point, but don’t quit. Use it as an opportunity to climb to the next level. But, even more importantly, don’t forget to give God the glory for blessing you with the ability and always being there for you always!”

Paul’s plan after his December graduation is to follow where God leads him. He and his wife, Michaela, plan to set off on a yearlong mission trip to Asia to share the gospel and love of Jesus with nations who have never heard it before. Intrigued? You can follow updates on their journey at lattimers.blogspot.com.

Peer Mentor Program

By Amanda Mayes

In the fall of 2010, the Honors Program made the decision to create the Peer Mentor Program. Why? Nancy Andres, the Honors Program Coordinator, says it helps “incoming Honors Program freshmen acclimate to college life as well as build a community in the Honors Program.” Mentors, says Andres, should be able to stay in contact with their mentees and be able to answer any question, whether it be Honors Program related or not. Interaction between the mentor and mentee should, ideally, begin by early summer before a freshman’s first year, usually via email, Facebook, texting, etc. This relationship, Andres says, should be trusting; “they are social equals in the university environment and yet the mentor hopefully is able to develop a relationship of a trusted friend or one who is able to provide guidance and share wisdom with the incoming student.” Almost always, Andres notes, this relationship holds true. However, there is the occasional negative feedback when a mentor never meets with his or her mentee.

From a student’s perspective, do these ideals hold true? Stephanie Julian, freshman, says they do; “it was helpful knowing that if I had any questions, someone who actually went through freshman year at Ashland was willing to answer me.” Julian and her mentor, junior Melany Bagnola, talked throughout the summer, and Julian notes that Bagnola is still more than willing to help her out. Julian is a full supporter of the Peer Mentor Program for the sole reason that Bagnola was, and is, a great mentor. Julian states, “Melany made me feel comfortable with my choice to join [the Honors Program] and has become a friend I know will help me if I need it.” The Peer Mentor Program is certainly making great headway at Ashland University.
Dear Readers,

The fall semester of 2012 has proved to be very successful for the Honors Program! This year, we have offered more social activities than ever and have made unbelievable strides in fundraising. It is so wonderful to be a part of a program that is improving annually. Thanks goes out to the members of the Honors Society who planned the events, the Honors interns for composing articles for this newsletter, and each member of the Honors Program that played a role in the growing success of the Program. This was undoubtedly achieved by a group effort.

Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Swanson for his enthusiasm, direction, and participation in the Program as well as Nancy Andres for coordinating events, her input and ideas, and her continual support of the program and its individual members. This newsletter would not have been possible without Nancy’s leadership and guidance and the contribution of my fellow Honors interns.

These articles truly showcase the talents of the Honors Program members—through both their accomplishments that are highlighted in multiple articles and also via the writing abilities of each intern. I am proud to be a member of the Honors Program in addition to being the editor of the current issue of The Honors Bugle.

Congratulations to each Honors Program member who was featured in this issue, and best of luck to graduating senior Paul Lattimer!

I am looking forward to what the Ashland University Honors Program has in store for not only next semester, but for years to come!

Best Wishes,

Alaina Berry, Editor