After the first week of classes every fall semester, Ashland University Honors Program students have the opportunity to attend the Honors Program retreat. The retreat is one of the four required activities for all Honors Program members and is an overnight experience that takes place in a different location each year.

This year, the Program traveled to the Mohican River Inn where we played large group get-to-know-you games, discussed the summer reading book in small groups, and brainstormed ideas about potential upcoming Honors Society activities. This year, the book that the students read over the summer was *Quiet* by Susan Cain. Students enjoyed discussing their opinions of the book and whether or not they were introverted or extroverted.

Sophomore Honors Society president, Stephanie Julian said that “brainstorming helps the officers get a feel of what the members like or don’t like to do. We can then make up programs that we feel more people would attend based on the reactions we got at the retreat.” After the organized activities were over for the evening, students were free to play board games, snack, sit by the bonfire, and mingle with friends.

In the morning, students assembled into predetermined groups to complete nine different Minute to Win It challenges. The challenges ranged from rolling a quarter on its side between the tines of a fork, to stacking three golf balls, to shooting a pyramid of cans off of a table with a rubber band. All of the students enjoyed the challenges and friendly competition and thought that the games helped them get to know one another better.

Every year after the retreat is over, a group of students go canoeing. Freshman Michael Byndas participated in the canoeing experience this year, and said that “it was great fun to ride down the Mohican River, have friendly conversation with your partner, receive your arm workout for the day, and participate in some friendly splashing combat!”

Stephanie said that she enjoys the retreat and the chance it offers to catch up with friends that she hadn’t seen over the summer; this year she also really enjoyed getting to know the new freshmen in the Honors Program. According to Stephanie, the “retreat benefits Honors Program members because it shows all grades that it is possible to keep with the program and continue to value academics through their college years.” Michael agreed with Stephanie and said that as a freshman “it was great to gather insight from more experienced members of the Honors Program. [He] became comfortable, met new people with ease, and had a marvelous time while doing so.”
Ashland has both met my expectations and caught me by surprise in a few ways as I've started my freshman year. After conferring with a few other Honors freshmen, I found that I'm not alone.

A major part of Ashland is faith, namely Christianity and Catholicism. “Honestly, I did not know Ashland was a religious school when I decided to come here (NOT to say that it is a bad thing),” freshman Emily Dine commented. “I was pleasantly surprised by the numerous people showing their faith.” Be it The Well, small groups, Newman Catholic Ministries, or Young Life, there are many groups to get involved in - and many students choose to do so.

Another topic that surprised several of us is hard to explain but consists of changes in personal schedule. Emily Dine expressed, “Honestly, I hang out with friends more than I ever did in high school.” I definitely agree.

It seems to me that you are truly friends with someone at Ashland if you eat with them, and the more often you eat together, the better friends you probably are. High school was different because lunch times depended upon schedules set by the school and dinner times were determined by parents. It’s nice to follow your own schedule for schoolwork and hanging out with friends. Rebecca Stettin summed it up quite well by saying, “I can sleep in later and stay up later.” I never expected to be able to sleep more in college than in high school, but being able to start class at 9am or later has its benefits!

Education is the real reason why students go to college, and that aspect of Ashland has really met expectations. Professors at Ashland are very willing to help, and their initiative to have review sessions before tests has amazed me.

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Jessica Brown remarked that “the relationship and closeness you can have with your professors” has surprised her. To do well in a class, a student has to take the initiative to seek help, and the help given has not disappointed so far, be it from office hours, review sessions, conferences, or even just a question asked in class. However, it’s well worth it to take this initiative. I didn’t expect college to be so focused on each student’s individual success, but Ashland is!

Ashland is a lovely combination of friendly students, helpful teachers, a beautiful campus, and a comfortable atmosphere. “I must say, I’m so glad I’m here!"

Honors Program students work hard on their academics, but there’s always need for a study break. Aside from the required events this semester, such as the Honors Retreat and the Fall Lecture, Honors students had the opportunity to enjoy a variety of social events.

The Ice Cream Social kicked off the year to come on August 19, the first day of classes, as Honors Program mentors introduced themselves to their mentees. This event allowed freshmen in the Honors Program to interact with upperclassmen, while enjoying some delicious ice cream.

In September, the Honors Program held two events: Field Day and Movie Night. On September 6, the Honors Program returned to grade school while enjoying some fun in the sun at Field Day. The group of students that attended competed in Ultimate Frisbee, Cornhole, and KanJam. Even Dr. Swanson and his daughter, Paige, joined in on the fun! Wednesday, September 25, the basement of Clayton Hall filled with Honors students taking a break with Movie Night. Enjoying a variety of refreshments, students had the opportunity to watch Wreck-It Ralph followed by The Dark Knight Rises.

Honors Program students enjoyed fall festivities in October. A few students went apple picking at Mitchell’s Orchard. Although not many students went, they had a great time! For Halloween, the Honors Program had a costume contest and went trick-or-treating for UNICEF. Trick-or-treating may have been postponed for Ashland on October 31 because of the rainy and windy weather, but that didn’t stop the costume contest from happening! Students got creative in their costumes, such as a black-eyed pea and a fairy!

This semester was full of a variety of events for the Honors Students. This just goes to show how much fun Honors students have; everyone needs a study break!
A wonderful aspect about the Honors Program is that it is available to students from any major. The four graduating seniors for December 2013 are definitely a representation of that. One of the requirements for graduating from the Honors Program is to complete a capstone project in one’s area of study. This allows the student to delve into topics that are most interesting, important, and relevant to them and their fields. This semester’s graduating class covers a broad range of topics and each student has shared how the Honors Program has impacted his or her time here at Ashland University.

Paul Dyczkowski
Major: English and Creative Writing
Title of capstone project: *A Reckoning of Strange Rain and Invisibly Growing Petals: An Essay Collection*
“I am thankful that Ashland University offers an Honors Program, as it has encouraged me to remain dedicated, focused, and humble in the pursuit of unraveling just what truth and honor and knowledge are and how we know about them and what they are good for. I would be at a loss if the Honors Program and the university had not graced me with the opportunities to meet and to share ideas with the earnest and hard-working learners and teachers who gather together here.”

Justin Nolan
Major: Management Information Systems & Computer Science
Title of capstone project: *Johnson Brother’s Rubber Company Database Upgrade*
“The Honors Program has definitely helped me find my career and challenged me along the way.”

Anna Falls
Major: Biochemistry
Title of capstone project: *Synthesis, Characterization, and Degradation of Multi-Armed Calixarene-Core Polylactide Star Polymers*
“The Honors Program has helped me to present a well-rounded application to medical schools.”

Rob Woodward
Major: Mathematics  Minor: History
Title of capstone project: *Fun With Farey: An Exploration of the Mediant Sequence*
"The Honors Program helped me explore non-major topics in-depth through the more rigorous versions of the Honors core courses"
Imagine living on one dollar a day. Zach Ingrasci, the speaker at Ashland University’s fall lecture, did just that. He and three of his friends went to a small Guatemalan village to raise awareness and to truly understand what it means to be impoverished: 1.1 billion people live on one dollar a day, and Ingrasci, like most middle class Americans, I imagine, lacked the empathy he felt he needed. In the village in which they lived for a summer, one out of two people live in poverty because they lack what we take for granted. They encountered children taken out of schools to help their families survive—children who, when asked what they wanted to be when they grew up, said without hesitation or remorse, “A farmer.” Parents who had to choose between food and medicine.

When returning back to the States, Ingrasci spoke of a profound culture shock; he felt guilt while eating a hamburger. This led him to a question: do you feel ashamed of poverty, or do you make a change? He and his friends renovated a 1978 school bus, lived in it, and traveled across the country spreading their story. Along the way, it became obvious to them that this was not about the story of four college kids traveling to Guatemala to learn empathy—it was about the people of Guatemala. Of every impoverished country. Ingrasci left the students at Ashland University with one last piece of advice: figure out how you are going to make a difference.

You can find more details on Zack Ingrasci and his story at www.livingonone.org.

This semester, I had the pleasure of exploring literature of the American Southwest under the guidance of one of my favorite professors, Dr. Linda Joyce Brown. I, along with nine other students in the Honors American Literature class, read works by famous novelists such as Willa Cather, Rudolfo Anaya, and Leslie Marmon Silko. After receiving her BA at the University of Washington, her MA at the University of Oregon, and her PhD at the University of New Mexico, Dr. Brown has a proclivity for American texts and writers so she was quite excited to conduct this Honors section. She also mentioned that she enjoys hiking, gardening, and, of course, reading! Dr. Brown’s life partner, Al Cheverine, is a registered nurse who works in oncology; she has two cats (Theophrastus Such and Abby) and a retired racing greyhound, Georgie, that she adores so much that her “life revolves around her.”

Even as a distinguished professor, Dr. Brown continues to learn from her students. One lesson they have taught her is: “To respect the silence…my students have shown me that these pauses are often needed to mull over a difficult textual passage or to work through a complex idea. Great things come out of quiet moments!” As a student in her class, I can attest to the successfulness of the silence. When asked about how she adapts to teaching an Honors class compared to her other classes, she thoughtfully explained: “I find that I often develop more challenging questions to guide our class discussion because I know that students will be able to wrestle with these questions. The small size of the class also allows me to work individually with students as they develop their essays.” As indicated by Dr. Brown’s insight, the advantages of an Honors course work especially well in an English class as students are able to delve deeper within the texts during group-led discussions and receive even more individualized attention.
At Ashland University, students have the opportunity to participate in two major academic programs: the Honors Program and the Ashbrook Scholar Program. While the Honors Program invites students from all majors to study together in various core classes, the Ashbrook Scholar Program is designed for those studying History or Political Science. The Honors and Ashbrook Programs both attract serious, hardworking students; however, many eligible students are deterred from applying to both programs because they believe they will be unable to handle the required workload. This leads to many students feeling as though they must choose one program or the other, and many do so. While this is a perfectly viable option, many students participate in both programs with great success, as the programs are very compatible. Many required Ashbrook classes are offered at the Honors level, and Ashbrook students are permitted to use their senior thesis as their Honors Program "Capstone Project." Freshman Josh Frey, a double major in Political Science and Sports Management, sees many benefits of being a member of both programs. "As an Ashbrook scholar, I'm challenged in my major, while with the Honors Program, I get to be a part of a diverse community with students from many different majors," he said. Not only are those involved with both programs able to interact with these different kinds of students, but they also have access to all the resources both programs offer and are able to enjoy the community atmosphere and special events unique to each program. The combination of the two programs presents students with an extremely rewarding educational opportunity that should definitely be taken advantage of here at Ashland University.

Ten Days in Greece and Turkey

By Amanda Mayes

Every other year in the spring, the Honors Program offers a class that ties in with a trip overseas. In May of 2013, I was one of the nine people who went to Greece and Turkey, Dr. Swanson included. In a word: unbelievable. I can remember our first night in Athens standing on top of Mars Hill (see the picture below), the Acropolis to my right and the city to my left, thinking, "This is real. This is really happening." Not only did we get to learn about Greek and Turkish history, but we had the once in a lifetime opportunity to witness that history. We stood where the first Olympic Games were held. We spoke with the Oracle. We spent a morning in the church of Hagia Sofia. We walked the paths of ancient Greeks and Turks, seeing what they saw. It was an experience I will forever hold dear. If you have an opportunity to go overseas, take it. College has a way of defining who you are, and on these trips, you'll be amazed just how far you've come.
Dear readers,

College can be a perplexing mixture of stress, excitement and wonder. But it truly is worth it; to quote John Green, “I’m on a roller coaster that only goes up.” Maybe you think nothing is better than high school. Maybe you’re right. But maybe Ashland University just might surprise you. The Honors Program was established to make the transition easier for freshmen as well as to create a deeper bond between classmates—your family away from family, so to speak. Yes, this program does challenge you, but would that not make the experience more meaningful? It’s worth it. The Honors Program exists to help you, and all of us, reach our greatest potential.

Thank you to the Honors Society Officers, Dr. Swanson, Sarah Papesh, the Honors Interns, and all the other members of the Honors Program who make this possible. It is the combination of the social and academic aspects that make this a truly fantastic program. None of this would be possible without you. Together, we will face a future full of limitless opportunities.

Happy reading,
Amanda Mayes
Editor