honorificabilitudinitatibus

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honing the class of 2009

Features

This edition of the newsletter is dedicated to the members of the program in the class of 2009. They are scholars, athletes, mentors, artists, friends, and a part of the college community. Their contributions to the program have helped shape what it is today. In this issue, they share their capstone studies and experiences at Colby-Sawyer as a member of the Wesson Honors Program. Congratulations and good luck seniors!

thanks and gratitude

The Honors Experience

Nicole Farnham  English major

There have been many influences over the past four years at Colby-Sawyer College that have shaped who I am today: truly amazing faculty members, a welcoming, close-knit environment, and challenges, both personal and academic, posed by the curriculum of the Wesson Honors program. Without the existence of this program, and its wonderful coordinator, I can honestly say that I would not have achieved my full potential. My engagement in a variety of vigorous honors classes has resulted in an enlarged understanding of myself, including capabilities, expectations and future goals. Not only have the honors courses expanded my knowledge base, propelling me towards an understanding of numerous topics outside the English major, but I have also been prompted to think analytically, speak clearly, and act confidently, which are key elements of a successful future. Undoubtedly, this program has played a large role in preparing me for the world outside of Colby-Sawyer College, for I envision endless opportunities where I, as a classroom teacher, will be able to incorporate and share the information that I have acquired. Surfacing in my Capstone study, as I focused on the transformation of explicit adolescent literature over time, I have identified my passion for working with at-risk adolescents, and cannot wait to run my own classroom. Although I have harbored a desire to work in the field of education since my childhood, it is necessary to recognize the honors program, and particularly Ann Page Stecker, for its many significant contributions. I owe so much to this organization, and I want to thank all of those who were involved in making my college career so productive, successful and memorable.

contributors

layout editors  Elisabeth Ryan  Alicia Foss

copy editors  Aubrey Thomas  Megan Ruggiero  Sarah Breault  Abigail Cramer  Joe Doud  Nicole Farnham  Elisabeth Ryan  Ann Page Stecker

English major

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Photo: Alicia Foss

Colby-Sawyer College
Looking Back

Abigail Cramer, English major

When I found out in my freshman year that being in the Honors program meant taking special Honors courses and completing an Honors Capstone (along with maintaining a relatively high GPA), I was terrified. I was sure that I was going to find it nearly impossible, and I was positive that I would hate every minute of it. I was wrong. First, I was proven wrong by the Honors Pathway, which was taught by Russ Medbery that year. Russ made us work hard, but our efforts were rewarded, and we became comfortable in discussions with each other about serious and meaningful issues. We learned to assert ourselves while still being respectful, and I think that we ultimately learned how to start becoming the adults we are today.

I was proven wrong again in the Honors classes that I took, which forced me to reexamine the ways in which I had formerly viewed the world around me. These classes created in me an ability to see the world from multiple perspectives simultaneously, which is the goal of studying in an interdisciplinary way. When it came time for me to create an English Capstone project that incorporated more than one discipline, I was happily surprised to find that my multiple perspectives seemed to come together naturally. My Capstone project grew out of my passion for my future career: librarianship. I decided to examine the images of librarians that I found in popular media and literature to see how those images impact the profession. I found suddenly that, not only had I included two disciplines (literature and Library Science), I had included three (media studies). It was when I realized this that I understood just how integral interdisciplinary study had become to my way of thinking.

My initial assumptions about the Honors program were proven wrong again, (although I had long since changed my mind) when I had the chance to participate in the Wesson Weekend in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, New Mexico just a few weeks ago. Eight students and two professors ventured to the Land of Enchantment to explore the history and culture. What I found was a love for the region and a passion for the landscape. I have even decided to spend a few months there beginning in the fall. The trip changed my worldview immensely, and it changed my life. What more could I possibly want from the Honors program?

Having exceeded my expectations repeatedly, I am now extraordinarily happy and proud to be able to say that I am graduating with Honors from Colby-Sawyer College. The Honors program, and many of the faculty involved with the program, has played a huge role in my experience here at Colby-Sawyer, and many of my closest friends are members of the program as well. Without the Honors program, I might have had a pretty average experience in college. With the program, I have had a fantastic experience. Thank you, Wessons! And thanks to everyone involved with the program for shaping my college experience in such a positive way.

2009 senior achievements

Awards and Recognition

Recipients of Capstone Awards:
- Elisabeth Ryan, Fine and Performing Arts
- Patrick Benson, Biology
- Elizabeth Cortis, Nursing
- Nicolas Richard, Psychology

Patrick Benson has been named the Male Senior Scholar-Athlete
Elisabeth Ryan has been named the Wynne Jesser McGrew Scholar-Athlete
Abigail Cramer is the recipient of the Richard Crosby Memorial Award
Noah Richard is the recipient of the Guy Floyd Williams Award
Aubrey Thomas is the recipient of the Alpha Chi Award

Recipients of Baccalaureate Awards:
- Sarah Breault, Business Administration
- Patrick Benson, Exercise Science
- Nicole Farnham, English
- Patrick Benson, Biology
- Chantalle Pelletier, Psychology

Nicolas Richard is the recipient of the Key Association Award
Noah Richard is awarded the Senior Achievement Award
Elisabeth Ryan is the recipient of the Colby-Sawyer Award
Notes from a Capstone

Elisabeth Ryan
Graphic Design major

In addition to the standard BFA Capstone (a digital portfolio), I completed an Honors Capstone which combined my interest in Irish Art History with graphic design. I spent the semester researching Irish art from 1800 to the mid 20th century, and synthesized my findings into a few key points focused on influential Irish paintings. This research was then presented as a learning tool in a poster format. The 13 posters were designed to present information, highlight the featured artwork, and be visually engaging. The integration of Irish art history with graphic design provided a unique interdisciplinary perspective.

The study of Irish art is relatively new in the field of art history and is not part of the standard survey of art taught at the college level. I was introduced to this area of art history while studying at the University of Limerick, Ireland, during the summer of 2008. I was fascinated by the complex relationship Irish art had with the nature of the Irish national identity. The development of Ireland as a nation is complex, as is the Irish identity. To claim that something or someone is “Irish” implies a certain construction of history and identity that is wrapped up in Ireland’s colonial relationship with England. This complex relationship is expressed in the visual representation of Ireland and ‘Irishness.’ From the reading lists provided by the lecturers in Limerick, I collected books and articles on art in Ireland. From these readings, I developed a list of influential artists and their key paintings, as well as the important ideas and historical circumstances reflected therein. This body of information formed the basis of my posters.

I learned a great deal about Irish art in general and the ways in which visual culture and national identity interact. The project was also a great opportunity to work independently and explore this subject according to my own interests and at my own pace. The most fun and rewarding part of my Capstone was seeing the finished posters on the wall for the exhibition. I did not really know how it would come together in the end, but I am very happy with the way it all turned out. At the same time, that was the most stressful part. I did not have a cohesive body of information to use, like a paper with isolated ideas loosely connected through the common theme. The posters were the best solution I had. I was not sure that the whole thing would come together in time. For me, these posters will become a strong part of my overall portfolio. For others, I hope that they will become the educational tools they were meant to be. I wanted to present this material to others in an interesting and engaging way, so that viewers could learn about Irish art and the relationship between visual culture and national identity.

integrations and assimilation

A College Experience

Sarah Breault
Business major

My Colby-Sawyer College education has helped to make me a more informed, well-rounded person. The liberal arts focus combined with my Business Administration major and Sociology minor have helped me to see and understand the world in new ways. The culmination of my undergraduate education with the Strategic Management Capstone nicely integrated the knowledge gained during my four years here. The addition of the Wesson Honors component to my capstone further helped me to assimilate my prior learning to create a product that demonstrates my ability to think critically through multiple perspectives.

I could not have progressed throughout the past four years without the wonderful faculty at Colby-Sawyer. The friendly, inviting atmosphere that the professors create allows students to think critically and unconventionally. The small, intimate community within the Business Department breeds support, encouragement, and honesty from each of the professors. The individual attention and support that I have received from my professors has helped to make my college experience successful and one that I will never forget.
I've kept a note congratulating me for being on my college’s Dean’s List tucked in one book or another for over forty years. Presently it’s in Lewis Hyde’s The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property (1979). Hyde proposes that we consider the value of gift economies, and that gifts cannot be bought, rather they arrive through acts of exchange – acts of being passed on. For Hyde, for instance, the creative arts are gifts, not commodities. Here’s my Dean’s gift to me, which I pass to you, oh talented and gifted scholars: “It is my hope that the attitude you have shown toward your academic opportunities and responsibilities will make you chronically discontented with intellectual achievement of less than your best. Thus motivated, may you have great and abiding joy in the lifelong process of education.” Congratulations!

As a Business Major, my Capstone class is called Strategic Management. This class is basically split into two parts. The first is a classroom setting where we read various articles by different authors about business management strategies. The second part is far more intriguing and practical because it involves the students in an interactive simulation where the class is split into five teams, and each management team is given an airline company that they control for the semester. I was the Chief Executive Officer for Air Phoenix, a luxurious airline providing the highest quality in the industry.

I had a lot of fun in this course, specifically with the simulation because we had so much power to make choices. The simulation lasts for three years, with decisions coming every quarter. This means that the teams get to make 12 decisions that affect both one’s own company, as well as the industry. My team made a mistake in the second quarter that significantly hurt us and caused us to work from behind for the semester, but we ended the simulation in second place out of the other four teams, and arguably had the most promising company in the industry.

as the leader of my team, I could apply what I was learning in class to the way I managed my team. This was a great experience for me, and I am certain the concepts and theories I learned this semester will help me in the future. This course was very time consuming and stressful at times, but definitely worth the effort!

For my honors English capstone, I decided to explore The Canonization of Literary & Artistic Idiom: the Entrance of Socially-Driven Graffiti Art and Graphic Novels into the Canon. Ideas for my paper primarily emerged from my experiences in Northern Ireland through the Governor’s Institute of Vermont. In Northern Ireland, I was overcome by the amount of political and social graffiti art, art that spoke to me from a perspective I had not yet discovered. Due to my interest in this artistic medium, I sought to explore the social and political implications of this complex, yet direct form of expression. I also wished to challenge the art canon, asserting that graffiti art is just as important, if not more, than recognized artists like Picasso and Rembrandt.

Though I knew the graffiti art portion of my paper would fill my “honors” requirement, the trouble was that I could not find the literary connection. After months of topic searching and endless trips to Professor Stecker’s office, I eventually made the connection between graffiti art and graphic novels, focusing on Fun Home and Persepolis. Like graffiti art, these graphic novels moved me in ways that the classics have never achieved; they were blunt, straightforward, and cleverly academic. Ultimately, I also decided to explore the graphic novels’ role in the literary canon and came to the conclusion that the literary canon’s vault should be reevaluated.

by Professor Ann Page Stecker

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