The newsletter of Pierre Laclede Honors College at the University of Missouri-St. Louis
Provenance is a student-produced publication of the Pierre Laclede Honors College. Its goal is to help keep alumni and friends connected with the college, current students, and each other.

Our Fall 2017 Provenance staff:

Nicole Gevers, Engineering, class of 2019
Ashleah White, English, class of 2019
Lindsey Hoyer, English, class of 2017
Adam Berger, English, class of 2019
JoHannah McDonald, English, class of 2018
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Which version of Provenance do you prefer? Are you reading this online and prefer physical media? Contact Dan (gerthd@umsl.edu) for a hard copy. Are you reading a hard copy and can’t access the embedded webpages? Contact Nicole (nmg tzc@mail.umsl.edu) for an electronic version. We will do our best to provide you with the experience that fits your needs.

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PIERRE LACLEDE HONORS COLLEGE

University of Missouri-St. Louis

Honors 4900-010: Independent Study in Honors: Provenance
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Interested in developing your writing, communication, or design skills? Want to help nurture the relationship between alumni and the PLHC students, faculty, and staff? Provenance is looking for students for Spring 2018. You will be part of a team that develops ideas for future articles; interviews alumni, students, or faculty for articles; collaborates on editorial decisions; and gains valuable writing skills in genres that you may not always be exposed to in traditional writing classes. Credit hours and duties are negotiated so as to provide you with the best possible learning experience. Duties can begin immediately or in the spring, depending on your availability. Non-credit volunteer positions are also available. Contact Dan for more information: gerthd@umsl.edu.

Spring 2018 Courses

1-3 credit hours
Gerth, D.
Dear alumni and friends,

Welcome to the Fall 2017 edition of Provenance. It brings me great pleasure to also welcome 189 new students into the Honors College this year. This is the largest incoming class in our nearly three decades as a college, and it means that 613 students, also a record number, are official members of the Honors College this year. Fall 2007 was the first time we reached the 500 student mark, and I’m very happy that we are able to bring the Honors experience to so many terrific students. And they really are terrific too. Our incoming students bring with them an average class rank of 85% and a 3.6 average GPA. Of course, our current students are amazing as well, and you’ll read about some of their accomplishments a bit later in this issue.

This issue has some familiar features – coverage of student and faculty accomplishments, updates on fundraising and donations, and a “save the dates” for important alumni events. But this issue is also the first one to have a more unified theme among its other features: the Honors curriculum. If you started as a freshman in Honors at any time during our college history, one of the experiences you share with other alumni is enrollment in our Freshmen Symposium class (more commonly known as Freshman Symposium: Cultural Traditions I and II since 2005). Ashleigh White contributes a history of Symposium for our main article. Something else common to the Honors curriculum throughout its history is the rotation of innovative, eclectic, and ever-changing topics, and Adam Berger contributes a look at some new courses that, unlike Symposium, you probably won’t remember from your time here. In recent years, we have also been able to offer study abroad experiences through the Honors College, and JoHannah McDonald provides us with a look at this past summer’s trip to Germany. And the last piece in our curriculum themed issue concerns our writing program and how we hope to support it with contributions made to the Gleason Fund, named after Nancy Gleason, our writing director and associate dean emerita.

I hope you enjoy the mix of tradition and innovation that this issue focuses on. I also thank you for reading Provenance and for being an important part of the Honors College community. If we haven’t heard from you in a while, please consider getting back in touch. You can also now keep in contact with each other and the college via the alumni-managed Facebook page.

Sincerely,

Dan Gerth
Interim Dean
Pierre Laclede Honors College
Spring and Summer 2017 were great semesters for recognizing the accomplishments of members of the Pierre Laclede Honors College.

In summer, the **Honors College Alumni Network** was recognized with the **Outstanding Alumni Engagement Project of the Year** award for the 7th annual Honors College Trivia Night in March. The alumni network is led by Elizabeth Eikmann, Holly Pope, J.B. Carroll, and Ryan and Adrienne Newcomer. (1)

In spring, the **National Society of Leadership and Success** inducted many new Honors students as members: Michael Dunlap, Jordan Farhat, Kenna Mangan, Johannah McDonald, Christian Meeks, Frederick Muika, Madison Russell, Lindsey Schnitzer, Courtney Spink, Hayley Steber, and Aleathea Williams. Honors College public speaking instructor Charlotte Petty received the society’s **Excellence in Teaching Award**. Charlotte is the third Honors College faculty member, joining Geri Friedline and Dan Gerth, to receive this award.

Honors College students were elected as important **Student Government Association** leaders for the 2017-18 school year. Sean Burkett was elected president, making him the third consecutive Honors College student to hold SGA’s highest office. New senators include Corinne Anselm, Kat Riddler, Emma Kneifl, Aleathea Williams, and Joseph Dordoni. Ben Branco was elected as the new comptroller.

Of the 28 total posters and papers presented at the **Undergraduate Research Symposium**, 20 of them came from Honors College students: Kristy Gammill, Dana Channell, Nathaniel Jones, Isaac Wilson, Nicole Gevers, Heidi Wallner, Kaitlin Henning, Zachary Lee, Sarah Myers, Stephanie Faulkingham, Claudia Campbell, Drake Anderson, Adriana Givens, Josie Stiens, Courtney Jones, Destiny Tierney, Kayla Shane, Lindsey Rodgers, and Madison Bick. Special congratulations to award winners and honorable mentions: Nathaniel Jones, **Honorable Mention, Life Sciences**; Lindsey Rodgers, **Outstanding Poster, Physical Sciences**; Sarah Myers, **Honorable Mention, Physical Sciences**; Destiny Tierney and Drake Anderson, **Outstanding Poster, Social Sciences**.

Honors students also starred at the **St. Louis Area Undergraduate Research Symposium**, where they competed with students from St. Louis University, Washington University, and other area universities and colleges. Ari Zakroff received **Honorable Mention, Physical Sciences**; Drake Anderson received **Honorable Mention, Social Sciences** as well as the **Collaborative Research Award**. (5)

Madison Bick was named UMSL’s 2017 **Newman Civic Fellow**, joining previous Honors students Brandi Grieshaber, Bailey Bollinger, Elle Fitzpatrick, and Dan Mueller in holding this position. Madison was also awarded runner up in the 15th annual **Celebrating the Arts** show in April for her painting *Spring Break*. Get details about participating in next year’s art show on page 9. (4)

The **New Student Programs** office recognized many Honors Students at their One is Done ceremony in spring. Heather Lange won the Shining Star award and Lindsey Rodgers was selected as Peer Mentor of the Year. Honors students were also inducted into the **Tau Sigma Transfer Honor Society** at the event: Lauren Becker, Evan Carlen, Samuel McKee, Lejla Omerovic, Ali Vasquez, Nicole Yingst.
Ellen Vehige was one of the winners the UMSL Women’s Trailblazer Award. She is the fifth recipient from Honors, joining Associate Dean Emerita Nancy Gleason, Jessie Bleile, Eric’el Johnson, and Antionette Dickens. Stay tuned for an interview with recipients in an upcoming issue of Provenance. (3)

The Triton Star Employee of the Month award went to Academic Advisor Mandy Bibee in February in recognition of Performance Versatility.

Last but not least, the Office of Student Involvement recognized many Honors students at their annual Leadership Awards (2):

Rising Student Leader of the Year - Heather Lange (PLHCSA)

Student Advocate Award - Kat Riddler (The Current, PLHC alum)

Emerging Leaders Program graduates - Tim Bragg, Kalyn Clinton, Madison Koogler, Heather Lange, Chanele Rash, Bailee Warsing

Advanced Leaders Program graduates - Nicole Gever, Emma Armbruster, Lingru Kong, Awa Konte, Elizabeth Wiley

Female Athlete Leader of the Year – Madison Russell

Outstanding Contribution to Leadership Programming - Awa Konte

Fraternity and Sorority Life Member of the Year - Braxton Perry (Alpha Sigma Phi, PLHCSA vice-president)

Student Leader of the Year - Nick Domescik (PLHCSA president)

New Organization of the Year - Alpha Sigma Phi (Braxton Perry, president; Nick Domescik, vice-president)

Most Innovative Program - Are You Smarter than the Professors? PLHCSA

Best Sustained Program - Brain Stew PLHCSA (Zach Lee, Nicole Gevers, Meagan Burwell)

Organization of the Year - Pierre Laclede Honors College Student Association PLHCSA
In 1997, eight years after the Honors program became the Pierre Laclede Honors College, Bob Bliss became the dean (following Fred Fausz, the college’s first dean). He was drawn to the “community of scholars” who all shared “some similar intellectual experience,” which was a working pedagogical emphasis of the Honors College. Freshman Symposium, a class required for all incoming Honors freshmen, was one of the biggest contributors of this culture. Twenty years later, Symposium still stands, but it has gone through several great changes. Course name, class size, and leadership all differ from when Bob arrived. Students from 2005 until the present know the course better as Cultural Traditions I and II. One of the constants, then and now, is the shared experience of liberal education.

The idea of liberal education plays out in multiple ways in the Honors College. It is a subject but also a style of teaching and learning. Students both study and experience it. They look at works like Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Martha Nussbaum’s Liberal Education & Global Community—classic works analyzing and criticizing traditional styles of educational discovery—and read corresponding scholarship on the topic. As they discover the purpose and the goals of the concept, freshmen soon uncover they are in a liberal education class—a humanities survey (or now perhaps a social science survey) with a goal of cultural literacy, among many other goals. The discussions are often student led and the projects dictated by student curiosity. Liberal education in the Honors College, then, ultimately delivers “the pleasure of becoming an educated person,” as classicist Edith Hamilton once said. It delivers under the dynamic guise of Freshman Symposium.

The first run of Freshman Symposium was called Honors 20: Contemporary Issues and Events Symposium. Its course description notes that the class was an “open discussion of current and usually controversial issues relating to various disciplines.” The class structure had “a panel made up of pre-selected students and a faculty or community guest expert” for “an exchange of views.” In the late 90s, under the leadership of Bliss, the course went through its first major revision, expanding from two to three credit hours, and becoming Honors 20: Cities and Good Lives: Knowledge, Decisions, and Consequences. This rendition lasted for seven years. Students’ assignments marked growth in their lives and a greater understanding of liberal education. In 2004, a major paper assignment asked students to compare their high school educations with the objectives of Symposium. For their term paper, students defended their majors as important fields of study in liberal education. Some of the notable instructors included Dean Bliss, Associate Dean Dennis Bohnenkamp, and Andrew Theising, recipient of UMSL’s Distinguished Alumni Award in 2015 and current chair of the Honors College Leadership Council.
The next iteration of Symposium, under the leadership of Birgit Noll and Dennis Bohnenkamp, came in fall 2005, and the course became a two semester sequence: Cultural Traditions I and II. It had a new focus on major works of literature, philosophy, and theology in world cultures, along with increased emphasis on what has come to be known as First Year Experience (FYE). The FYE is a formal program of events and activities designed to help incoming students transition to college and develop the skills they need to navigate the university and start preparing immediately for the world they’ll enter after graduation. The strong focus on liberal education remained.

Like the previous Symposia, Cultural Traditions involved all incoming Honors freshmen meeting together two days per week in a large auditorium classroom. But with seminar style classes being another key aspect of the Honors world, it was decided that the new version of Symposium needed to be multiple, small sections instead of one large one. Could this division maintain the shared experience that was so important to the meaning behind Symposium?

As the Cultural Traditions I and II sequence stands as the longest lasting incarnation of Symposium, the answer was assuredly yes. The course no longer underwent massive, structural changes but, instead, an endless chiseling to its syllabus. The new instructor team was led by Birgit Noll and included Kim Baldus and Dan Gerth. They “were instrumental in shaping” the class, Noll reflects. “We met regularly, argued vigorously about readings and textbook selection, and finally agreed on a syllabus in which 90% of the assigned readings in each of our sections overlapped—a requirement set forth by the Dean [Bliss] to help us provide a shared learning experience for our freshmen.”

In addition to having similar syllabi, Noll, Baldus, and Gerth worked together to improve other aspects of Symposium. There were five sections of Cultural Traditions. The classrooms for the sessions had technology that allowed for further exploration of course material. “When discussing the Epic of Gilgamesh, for example,” explains Noll, “we were able to pay a virtual visit to the Philadelphia Art Museum and view artifacts from the Royal Tombs of Ur.”

In 2013, Baldus took on Noll’s role and continues to be the leader of the Cultural Traditions team today. The instructor team now also includes Geri Friedline, Ann Torrusio, and Christoph Schiessl. The addition of Christoph Schiessl, an historian, allows the class to be taken for social science general education credit, in contrast to the traditional humanities that the other sections permit. Overall, the content of the course remains predominantly unchanged from Noll’s supervision. Baldus focuses, however, on developing and improving the FYE aspect. Pushing the boundaries out of the classroom and getting students to engage with peer mentors and attend events is her main objective.

As part of a campus FYE initiative in 2014, Honors began using peer mentors in Cultural Traditions. Peer mentors—still students themselves—encourage freshmen to experience campus life, present resources, and answer questions. Baldus notes, “All those kinds of things have been a great, new addition that we couldn’t really do as faculty before. I can talk to [the students] about stress, but I don’t experience it the same way that [they] do as a student [body].”
A major turning point for me in Cultural Traditions occurred when we were reading a story about a woman who was also a dragon, and a man fell in love with her beauty at some point and kidnapped her and kept her a prisoner in his house. At some point in this story, she kills another character... I don’t recall the specifics, but I do remember how this story filled me with righteous indignation in sympathy with the dragon woman character. I came to class ready to commiserate and to my shock found that everyone else (literally every other student) felt the dragon character was to blame for this and deserved her fate [death] in the story. In my shock and confusion, I raised my hand (terrified, of course) and disagreed with the consensus. The combined defense of the class only served to ruffle my feathers sufficiently to bang on that hill. I walked up to Birgit at the end of the class period and asked her if I had misunderstood the point of the story. She told me that I could “argue anything I wanted as long as I had a reason.” This one sentence has had more of an impact than I could have believed possible; it also made me a holy terror at parties, but that’s beside the point.

--Hannah Stow, class of 2015, on discussing Ueda Akinari’s “Bewitched” in Cultural Traditions
SAVE THE DATES!

TRIVIA NIGHT

Saturday, March 3 at St. Ann’s. Doors open at 6:15 p.m.

Proud winner of the Outstanding Alumni Engagement Project award, the 8th annual Honors College alumni trivia night needs your support! This is our largest single fundraising source, having raised important funds for the Dennis Bohnenkamp Scholarship, the Robert and Paulette Bliss Study Abroad Scholarship, and the Nancy Gleason Fund to benefit our writing program. For information on tickets, sponsorships, donations, or how to be a part of the planning committee, please contact Dan Gerth at gerthd@umsl.edu.

BELLERIVE

Submission deadline: October 1. Launch Celebration with refreshments: February 23 at 2:00 p.m. in the Honors College.

Bellerive is our annual literary publication produced in an Honors College seminar. The publication features previously unpublished original creative works by UMSL students, faculty, and staff. We are currently collecting submissions for Issue #18. Please see our webpage for more information and to submit your artwork, photography, poetry and other creations. You are also cordially invited to our launch party for the new issue.

CELEBRATING THE ARTS

Submission deadline: Thursday, April 12. Art on display: Monday, April 16 through Thursday, April 19. Reception and announcement of winner: Thursday, April 19 at 2:00 p.m. in the Honors College.

Celebrating the Arts is our annual community art show, featuring art from UMSL students, faculty, and staff, and alumni. Art is featured prominently throughout the halls of Provincial House. There is voting for popular choice and runner-up, but primarily this is a chance to spread a little light, color, and creativity into the halls as the semester comes to a close. Please consider submitting art of any medium and/or visiting the show yourself! Submissions may be dropped off in the Honors College Main Office, C-109 Provincial House (South Campus). For additional information about Celebrating the Arts 2018, contact Kate Votaw at katevotaw@umsl.edu. You are also cordially invited to our reception, honoring all submitters.
Each Freshman’s career at the PLHC begins with Cultural Traditions I and II, courses that introduce and examine the intellectual traditions of Eastern and Western cultures, from ancient times up until the modern era. But one of the most valuable aspects of the Honors College is that it also features a rotating array of unique and consistently topical seminar style classes. In addition to shared-experience classes like CT I and II and Freshman Composition, students also choose from a wide selection of special topic classes that fulfill different requirements. Below are some notable and popular classes that have been offered in the past, are currently meeting, or will available in upcoming semesters.

**COURSE: BEYOND THE BUILDINGS**

**WITH ROB WILSON**

**Description:** This course, last offered in Fall 2015, is unique in that it gives students a chance to participate in service-oriented projects in the St. Louis area. Its objective is to facilitate students’ contribution to ongoing preservation efforts in historically notable neighborhoods and communities. The “reuse of space” is one of the course’s driving themes, as is the effort to “help preserve the memories of the urban cultural landscape.” The assignments and projects that make up the course include oral histories, filmed historical documentaries, and presentation of research to community members looking to make a difference in St. Louis. Check out the documentary films that premiered at the Missouri History Museum: The People of St. Louis (2013), Preservation Matters (2014), and Sustainability (2015).

**What the Students Say:** Tim Deposki, currently a graduate student seeking a Master’s in Education, says, “Beyond the Buildings class was one of the most powerful learning experiences I had in college.” It gave him “the chance to connect with Saint Louis history in an integrative, hands-on, service learning approach that is seldom seen while doing historical inquiry.” Deposki says, “Professor Wilson directed the class with expert guidance and powerful discussions about the development of Saint Louis. He is a phenomenal teacher that challenges you to elevate your thinking and helps you develop exponentially as a writer.” He also urges “any student looking for a novel, exciting discourse on Saint Louis to join this eye-opening class that brings historical knowledge and events onto a new, intimate level.”

**COURSE: HISTORY OF SEX AND SEXUALITY IN NON-WESTERN CULTURES**

**WITH KATHRYN WEBER**

**Description:** Fulfilling the campus Cultural Diversity requirement, this course is meeting this semester and examines modern views regarding sexuality around the world, including how people from different cultures came to feel the way they did about various hot-button issues, such as prostitution, homosexuality, reproductive rights, and extramarital sex.

**What the Students Say:** Alyssa Ward says she chose this course because she is “planning on going into the field of sex health and sexology” and has recently “been taking classes related to this, as well as gender studies” She hasn’t had a class with Professor Weber prior to this, but one day while Ward was working in the tech support center on campus, Weber came in and they began to talk. When Ward discovered what classes she was teaching, she “decided to enroll in both.” She appreciates the fact that “UMSL offers classes like these because she feels they will give her “a leg up” for when she applies to graduate school.
COURSE: DEATH, MOURNING, AND BURIAL: A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE WITH MARY VERMILLION

Description: Meeting for the second time in Spring 2018, this course focuses on analyzing and interpreting mortuary remains from archaeological sites, as well as contemporary burial practices. For most students, this is likely the first time they have heard of the concept of “mortuary studies,” but this field plays a very important role in studying human belief systems and has in fact provided a battleground for competing ideas of how to interpret the past and how the practices of the past inform the practices of the present. Students learn how to use ethnographic and bio-anthropological resources to interpret data. Sorry, but no field trips!

What Students Are Saying: Corinne Anselm, a senior law student, says: “this was by far one of the best classes I have taken at the Honors College.” Marco Pipoly, a senior psychology major, says that he “learned about death practices in native cultures and their perspectives on topics like cannibalism, miscarriages, and magic.” He “was surprised to learn that certain Native American cultures had perspectives as complex as ours on abortion.” He has high praise for Dr. Vermillion as well, saying that “she was a fantastic teacher who enriched the classroom with personal stories involving her research as well as views on the field.”

COURSE: MONSTERS AND METAPHORS WITH DAN GERTH

Description: Meeting during the Fall 2017 semester, this class has been running off and on since 2007. “Lurking beneath our fear of vampires, werewolves, demons, and machete-wielding killers in hockey masks is an even darker and more disturbing unease with aspects of society that are far more realistic,” writes Geth in the official course description. “Horror fiction and films often act as social and political critiques, morality plays, as well as avenues of psychological catharsis; they offer the imaginary as a substitute for the reality that we do not wish to examine.”

What Students Are Saying: This is a course that I personally took during the Fall 2014 semester, and it has definitely been one of the highlights of my undergrad experience at UMSL so far. I’ve always been a huge fan of horror films and fiction, so when I saw that there was a chance for me to receive credit for watching horror movies and reading horror novels (the two novels we read were American Psycho and Dracula) and writing about them, I leapt at the opportunity to do so. The atmosphere in this class was great. I really looked forward to going to it every Friday afternoon. The days when we watched films in class felt like going to a matinée showing of classic movies with my friends and then having a big, lively discussion about it after the show.

COURSE: NAZI GERMANY AND THE HOLOCAUST IN AMERICAN MEMORY WITH CHRISTOPH SCHIESSL

Description: Meeting for the very first time this fall, Dr. Schiessl’s course “provides a systematic introduction not to the history of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust as such, but these events’ perception and discussion surrounding them in the United States from the beginning of World War II to the current day.” It promises to “delve into the striking evolution of Holocaust consciousness in the United States since the end of World War II,” and to attempt to “elucidate how Americans have tried to understand this inexplicable disaster, and how they came to use the Holocaust as a way to gain meaning for their own past.” Along with scholarly texts, students will examine popular cultural texts such as the television show Hogan’s Heroes, Chaplin’s The Great Dictator, and Spielberg’s Schindler’s List.

What Students Are Saying: Amy Hawkins, a social work major with plans to become a family counselor, says that she has “a personal interest in gaining deeper insight on German and Nazi history.” Her “ancestors came from Germany to the States over 200 years ago” and is interested to learn how German history has shaped “values and belief systems,” including in her personal family history. For comments from past students on Professor Schiessl’s study abroad course in Germany this past summer, please see pages 12-13.
Venturing outside the confines of a textbook, Charles Dimercurio, Abby Froidl, Ariel Hur, Samantha R. Johnson, Madeline Mikes, Sami Rishmawi, and Zachary Weber—Honors students enrolled in Honors 2030 with Professor Christoph Schiessl—gained new perspectives on Nazi-era and post-Cold War Germany during a two-week trip abroad to cities like Nuremberg, Dresden, Munich, and of course Berlin. In addition to reflecting on the past, students also had the opportunity to explore and absorb the vibrant culture of modern Germany. Here’s what they had to say about their unique and unparalleled learning experience:

“After we began our tour for the day, I was drawn to the different art forms that cover the city [Berlin]. First, promotional stickers covered just about any surface possible, and at one point we saw a street sign completely encased in bright colorful stickers. What was more beautiful was the graffiti painted across the city. Large elaborate murals covered that majority of the city from the Berlin Wall to the smaller neighborhoods. I was very interested to find that the city of Berlin does not penalize these artists for vandalism, but I learned that the city holds more liberal views, and other cities, such as Munich, will not encourage such behavior at all.”
— Samantha R. Johnson

When we arrived to the city yesterday, we got to explore, and I walked to the Imperial Castle. It had a very nice view, and I was able to see the whole city from the castle walls. During our walking tour this morning, I was able to hear about the history of the places I had visited the night before. Our tour guide was excellent, and I was so impressed by the architecture and history of this place. Having a tour guide allowed us to learn about the value and historic story behind the places we were going. The Documentation Centre and Nuremberg Rally Grounds, the place where the rallies were held, was humongous. I did not realize how big this place was until I walked up to the top of the podium where Hitler stood in 1933. After physically seeing this place, and after going through the Documentation Centre Museum, I realized just how many people would gather to show their support to the Nazi Party.”
— Ariel Hur
“I was surprised to learn that the majority of teens hated the Communist rule, despite being raised with it. The government tried really hard to develop Party pride in the youth, but very few adolescents were actually committed to it. Sixty percent of the music radio stations played had to be Party approved, so DJs would just wait until the late shows to play the pop music teens wanted to hear. A dance called the Lipsi was created as an alternative to the Elvis-inspired rock ‘n roll dancing, which the government found too sexual, but no one ever did it.”—Abby Froidl

Location: Zwinger (Dresden)

“As we got to the Eagle’s Nest, I was unsure of what it would be like. I thought it would be more like a museum. But once we got out of the elevator, it turned out to be a restaurant. I did notice that there was a trail that led up higher on the mountains. So I began to take the trip up. About halfway up, I started to question if it was worth the walk because I was getting pretty tired. But then I realized that this was a once in a lifetime trip and that it would not be right of me to not get to the top. Once I got to the top, the view wasn’t great; I just saw rocks and snow. But once I turned, the view was breathtaking. It is almost a metaphor for the trip. I was tired the whole trip and wondering if being this exhausted was worth the trip. But now that the trip is over and I look back, it is just as beautiful as the pictures.”—Zachary Weber

Location: Augustiner Beergarden (Munich)

“We visited the Augustiner Beergarden, the third largest one in Munich with a capacity of 5,000 people. We enjoyed Schweinebraten, Leberkäs, and potato salad, among other things. Everyone enjoyed the trip thoroughly, from the chaotic Berlin, to the Baroque downtown of Dresden, to the medieval downtown of Nuremberg, to the Bavarian capital of Munich with its 19th century monuments.” —Christoph Schiessl
The Honors College’s seminar curriculum and writing program do not just produce academically impressive students. Did you know Honors has also produced the last three sets of homecoming king and queen? Most recently, in 2017, Nicholas Domescik and Sara Hilpert were awarded the honor; the year before, in 2016, the crowns went to Braxton Perry and Riann Rikard; and in 2015, the year that kicked off the trend of Honors College royal dominion, Michael Weaver and Kelsi Ream (nee Schlundt) were made the presiding king and queen. (Women from Honors actually won Homecoming Queen in 2014 and 2013 too, but we’re trying not to embarrass the gentlemen, who have some catching up to do!)

Such a trend should not be shocking—after all, students and alumni of the Honors College have definitely at one time or another felt they should rule the university, right? And with an Honors College king and queen ruling gracefully over the homecoming court, it raises the question: what if these kings and queens, for a moment, were actually the monarchs that they were voted to be? These members of royalty thought long and hard about the changes they would implement in their college kingdom. Based on their answers, it would seem that these rulers have a somewhat united front—calling for more celebrations, shorter commutes from car to class, and a plethora of tacos for all their subjects.

Nick Domescik:
If I was the king of UMSL, I would provide more parking on campus, build another food court (because who doesn’t love food?), and have golden retriever puppies on campus at all times.

Sara Hilpert:
I’d probably make the Mirthweek celebrations go year-round instead of once per year, because who doesn’t want a carnival every week?

Braxton Perry:
The nearest parking spot is 1.52 miles away from my class … I would love to be able to park and then walk to the building without having to stretch first, in fear I might pull a muscle on my extensive hike to class.

Riann Rikard:
If I was queen, I would have brought either a Chick-Fil-A or Chipotle to campus, or both! Also, can’t forget Taco Bell.

Kelsi Ream:
If I was actual Queen, I definitely would add a Taco Bell to the food court. Everyone loves tacos, and the next closest Tbell was way too far away.

Based on the changes these kings and queens of the past would wish upon their loyal subjects, it is unlikely that anyone in the student population would make too much of a fuss if these Honors College students and alumni truly reigned over the campus! Alas, UMSL’s mode of government is unlikely to change to monarchical. So while there will be no puppies or Taco Bell on the campus in the immediate future, students of UMSL can live on knowing that the royal leaders of the Honors College wished them nothing but the best!
One of the distinguishing features of the Honors College is the writing program, founded and still supervised today by Associate Dean Emerita Nancy Gleason. With few tests in Honors, students’ progress is measured by their ability to produce high quality academic essays. One of the main features of the program is the writing portfolio, kept for each student throughout his or her career at the Honors College, in which a select portion of the essays produced each semester are stored for later use, reference, and reflection during the Honors capstone course. Besides having a faculty mentor helping with career documents, such as personal statements and resumes, students in this course are given their portfolio and asked to reflect on the progress they’ve made as writers over their time in Honors. Nancy Gleason personally oversees upkeep of these portfolios. She was inspired to create these portfolios because she wanted Honors students to have something tangible along with their diplomas and certificates at the end of their academic careers. Students also have many opportunities to be a part of writing groups and projects outside of traditional classroom activities. *Bellerive*, for instance, is a literary anthology produced by the Honors College. Students are given the chance to participate in the entire process of assembling the anthology, featuring the work of UMSL students and faculty. In addition to *Bellerive*, there are two other Honors publications written and assembled almost entirely by students: *Brain Stew*, a periodical comprised of humorous editorials and other irreverent student submissions, and *Provenance*, the bi-yearly newsletter for friends and alumni. Established in 2013, The Nancy Gleason Fund is our dedicated source for writing program fundraising – and it is very close to reaching our endowment target. Charitable contributions to this fund would be of great benefit to current and future generations of Honors College writers. To help insure the continued success of this exceptional institution, please consider donating to the [Nancy Gleason Fund](#) today!