PROVENANCE

Provenance: from the French “provenant”: the place of origin, a verification of origin

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 Spring 2018 Provenance staff:

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Lindsey Hoyer, English, class of 2017
Adam Berger, English, class of 2019
JoHannah McDonald, English, class of 2018
Lori Dresner, Psychology, class of 2018
Robert Nickel, Political Science, class of 2018

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PIERRE LACLEDE HONORS COLLEGE

University of Missouri-St. Louis

Honors 4900-010: Independent Study in Honors: Provenance ARR

1-3 credit hours
Gerth, D.

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 Fall 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 fall, depending on your availability. Non-credit volunteer positions are also available. Contact Dan for more information: gerthd@umsl.edu.
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI - ST. LOUIS
8th ANNUAL PIERRE LACLEDE HONORS COLLEGE

TRIVIA NIGHT
SATURDAY, MARCH 3, 2018

One of St. Louis’ most challenging trivia competitions

ARE YOU SMARTER THAN AN UMSL PIERRE LACLEDE HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT?
Network across disciplines | Meet other UMSL Alumni | Attempt to outsmart your friends

Honors Trivia Night is an informal, fun competition where teams battle to see who has the greatest knowledge of today's popular culture and other trivial matters.

Silent Auction | 50-50 Drawing | 1st Place Cash Prize
Mulligans For Sale | Bring Your Own Food & Snacks | Complimentary Beer & Soda Provided
Prize for best decorated table. Theme: Favorite Books

Time: 6:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.
Doors open at 6:00 p.m. First question called at 7:00 p.m.
Location: St. Ann of Normandy Catholic Church
7530 Natural Bridge Road
Normandy, MO 63121
Cost: $250 Per Table of 10 or $25 Per Person
REGISTER

Host: Charlie Bright
Honors College Leadership Council

REGISTER NOW: www.umslalumni.org/honorstrivia2018
BECOME A SPONSOR: Contact Dan Gerth at 314-516-7197 or gerthd@umsl.edu.
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Net proceeds will benefit the Pierre Laclede Honors College at the University of Missouri-St. Louis
MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN: FRED FLASHBACK

For this semester’s Provenance, Interim Dean Dan Gerth steps aside for a guest editorial from “Dean Fred” – aka Fred Fausz, dean of the college from 1991-1996.

In this age of cynicism and insensitivity, of pervasive electronic intrusion and anonymous global communication, professors could alleviate many problems that students face when they are lost on cold, corporate campuses by becoming as caring as they are challenging. Thank you notes from grateful graduates can refocus our attention on the collegiate adventure as a meaningful frontier where the lives of faculty and students, separated by generational differences, intersect and mutually enrich one another. Students who author those tangible written reminders usually rate personal intervention on their behalf above academic erudition, often indicating that it is the quality that they remember and appreciate most about their former professors.

A grateful mother wrote to inform me that her son had received both a JD degree and an MBA from the University of Illinois on the same weekend, knowing that, as a true friend, I would share her pride in his accomplishments. A non-traditional graduate sent her “blessings” for the desperately needed scholarship I had awarded her—a poignant reminder that I had been the first educator to recognize her talents. A professor at Northwestern University, whom I have never met, wrote me just hours after one of my former students had successfully defended her dissertation, thanking me for convincing him to admit her six years earlier, despite her poor GRE scores from a small unknown college. He had kept my three-page letter of recommendation in his desk drawer all those years and quoted it back to me when that student fully justified our faith in her abilities.

Such touching gratitude, such meaningful gestures, are neither recorded in tenure and promotion files, nor quantified for the rankings of the "best colleges," but they are rather are important validations of the most meaningful aspects of good teaching. To know students as fully-dimensional individuals with complex, often tragic, lives outside of the classroom—and to show them that professors can be warm, engaging, and equally complex—are the rare, fulfilling rewards of professorial mentoring. The undergraduates of today are more educationally-deprived and emotionally-needy than ever before, and many who flounder on large lonely campuses could be helped through faculty caring and intervening on their behalf. We need to realize that personal indifference to students and maintaining distance from them are more damaging to the educational process than any loss of professional objectivity or challenge to academic "infallibility" in the classroom.

From 1991 to 1996, I was fortunate to be in a position to encourage just that sort of nurturing, when I served as the first dean of the Pierre Laclede Honors College at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Housed in a serene old convent just a mile distant, but worlds away, from the main metropolitan campus, the Pierre Laclede Honors College offered small, writing-intensive seminars in the humanities, staffed by talented teachers who were committed to traditional face-to-face learning in discussion classes of 5 to 15 students. Although the Honors College was modeled on Oxbridge roots, its 260 students did not generally fit the stereotype of privileged pampered graduates from elite high schools. They were a microcosm of the ethnically- and economically-diverse undergraduate population on the main campus. Many were first generation, most worked (often full-time), and many were non-traditional, with an age range from 16-60.

Bucking the national trend to recruit honors students "only by the numbers," I paid little attention to standardized test scores and was wary of the grade inflation that could produce dozens of 4.00 GPAs. In addition to outstanding writing ability, a required one- to two-hour interview or "conversation" with me was the main criterion for admission. Meeting each candidate myself sent a meaningful message about the personal attention students could expect to receive throughout their college careers and gave me the opportunity to learn about their special needs, exceptional talents, and commitment to an "impractical" curriculum separate from their major field coursework. My all-student office staff further communicated the friendly supportive atmosphere at Pierre Laclede when giving tours of our campus, one family at a time.
New students quickly embraced and forever valued the camaraderie of a helpful fun-loving community with a common purpose and a special space. The Honors College "family" or "team of academic all-stars" was committed to individual achievement within a true community of learning, so that selfishness or over-competitiveness never became problematic. Upon being admitted, each incoming student was assigned a veteran student mentor, and after a summer of getting to know one another, everyone attended a day-long honors orientation, swim party, and barbecue. In a ceremony symbolic of new group identity, entering students received Pierre Laclede shirts and posed for a class photo. On the first day of classes, new students were guests of honor at the Dean's Luncheon, where they socialized with department heads and faculty mentors in every field.

New students needed an especially supportive environment if they were to excel in academics and stay in college. As "Dean Fred," I relished the opportunity to be an accessible helpful mentor, rather than an aloof administrator, as I came to know every student through personally interviewing and advising each one, while teaching many. I also maintained regular contact with their parents, guardians, siblings, and spouses, in order to comprehend the impact that illness, unemployment, financial problems, family crises, and a host of other outside pressures had on their academic vitality and viability. The most talented and ambitious undergraduates, given their greater sensitivity regarding a troubled world and heightened concern about academic success, are particularly vulnerable to depression, anxiety, and a more exaggerated sense of failure.

In a five year period, the Pierre Laclede experiment in a nurturing education was successful beyond my expectations. The Honors College consistently recorded retention rates in the 90 percent range, and those who did leave usually did so to transfer to prestigious institutions after they realized their full academic potential and gained confidence in their abilities. Over 70 percent of Pierre Laclede graduates attained Magna Cum Laude or Summa Cum Laude honors based on all university coursework, and three quarters of them went on to postgraduate study, again many at prestigious institutions. Over a four-year period, our graduates achieved a 100 percent acceptance rate at Washington University School of Law. With its students excelling in extracurricular activities as well, the Pierre Laclede Honors College won the university's "Outstanding Student Organization Award" for four consecutive years, was praised for fundraising and volunteer efforts on behalf of local charities, and consistently defeated the College of Arts and Sciences in softball!

Traditionalism, in terms of small classes and caring teachers that encourage a sense of community as well as a love of learning, may become the most innovative educational development in the new millennium. If we are teaching the humanities, perhaps we could demonstrate how they have inspired us to become more compassionate. Faculty members need to be as passionate about how students are treated and taught at their institutions as they are about changes to the curriculum. Both determine the quality of the learning process, but whereas curricular issues are often driven by or defended against administrative initiatives, each professor can positively influence the educational atmosphere in his or her classroom and office. If we examine and reevaluate the impact of our decisions and demeanor, our actions and attitudes, we may soon be inundated with thank you notes.

Prof. J. Frederick Fausz retired in August 2017 from the Department of History after authoring four books and receiving multiple awards for research and teaching.
Spring is a time of renewal, growth, and change. The biggest change for students is probably the transition to...well, not being a student anymore (or at least an undergraduate student). Employment? Travel? Graduate school? Other? The options are suddenly open and endless. For some, this will be first time in memory that they exist outside the label of "student," and for others, it will be the end of one step in a path towards even higher education. No matter the situation, Honors graduates have made a great accomplishment. And unsurprisingly, the future looks bright for graduates of the Pierre Laclede Honors College.

Unsurprisingly, Honors College alumni enjoy school and are gearing up for additional educational experiences. Within the 32 percent of graduates who are moving immediately into the workforce, more than one-third of those graduates said that they still planned to pursue additional higher education in the future. One interesting example in this category is fall 2017 graduate Braxton Perry, who is the Honors College’s first physical education graduate in many years. This former Homecoming King and Big Man on Campus award winner plans to still pursue a PhD after first beginning his career as a high school teacher.

Some of the diverse employment opportunities these recent graduates are pursuing include job offers from film companies, diplomatic work in Europe, and entrepreneurship—including one graduate who is starting a multimedia entertainment company in the gaming industry. The choices for graduate and professional programs are diverse, with a strong local emphasis among the Honors College’s pre-med graduates, including students admitted into medical programs in the UM System (both UMKC and Mizzou), the Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences, A.T. Still University, and St. Louis University. The Honors College’s pre-optometry graduates over the past five semesters have a 100 percent success rate in matriculating to O.D. programs, with the vast majority choosing to remain at UMSL in the university’s College of Optometry.

Though graduation brings students’ time at the Honors College to an end, there will always be pleasant memories of the past, the knowledge that the faculty and staff will support them in their endeavors, and the fact that there are future students who will be able to have similar rewarding experiences.
“The Honors College was by far the best part about my experience at UMSL. It encouraged open thinking, problem solving, and self-learning. Learning and mastering these skills will help you more than any applied skill. They teach you to learn and use the world as a classroom. It was a valuable experience that I very much enjoyed.”

“I found my home and identity in Honors. The Honors College is a beautiful community of amazing friends and equally awesome staff.”

“I liked how the small classroom sizes allowed me to feel like a contributing member rather than just a number.”

“I am thankful for the opportunity and am proud to call myself a graduate of the Pierre Laclede Honors College at the University of Missouri—St. Louis.”

“The requirement for research/internship ensured that I was prepared for grad school/work after graduation.”

“The Honors College was the best part of my experience at UMSL. The small classroom sizes and one-on-one time with professors really helped me grow as a student. Discussion and collaboration encourages peer-to-peer and student-to-professor interaction. The writing intensive work gave me a chance to expand my knowledge and improve my writing skills. I can honestly say that Pierre Laclede has prepared me for any grad program or career I pursue. These skills I earned here will give me an advantage that many other students don’t have. I would recommend this program to anyone who is willing to put in the work necessary to earn the reward. Lastly, everyone at the college is helpful, friendly, and genuine. That’s the icing on the cake! Thanks!”
Pierre Laclede Honors College Presents
The 18th Issue Of *Bellerive*:

**'71 IT TILL THE GROUND**

Recent Issues Available:
$7 each
or
$12 for two

$5 Alumni Special on Previous Issues

for additional information about *Bellerive* or to purchase copies, contact Geri Friedline at friedlineg@umsl.edu

Join us at the Launch Celebration:

February 23rd, 2018
Noon to Two
South Campus Provincial House Museum Room

Guest Speaker:
Dr. Minsoo Kang
Historian, Writer, and Educator
Translator of *The Story of Hong Gildong*, A Penguin Classics Novel
The Pierre Laclede Honors College Student Association

Presents

The Pierre Laclede Honors Ball

An evening bringing together students, alumni, faculty, & staff

For a night of dinner, dancing, music, & charity

Saturday, April 14th, 2018
At 7:00pm
Carpenter’s Union Hall
1401 Hampton Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63139

All proceeds benefit Gateway Pet Guardians

Ticket Information
Alumni: $20.00

TinyURL.com/Pierre-Laclede-Honors-Ball

Follow the link to complete the RSVP form. After completing the form, please send cash payment to the address listed below or drop off your payment directly in the Honors College main office before April 1st.

PLHCSA
Pierre Laclede Honors College
1 University Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63121

If you would like to use an alternate form of payment or have any questions, please contact Nicole Gevers at nmgtzc@mail.ums.edu
This recurring feature *Provenance* helps showcase the outstanding Honors College faculty, but in a format that is more creative than a traditional interview. Inspired by a long-running series conducted by the BBC, we asked Ken Wolfe what eight items he would bring with him to a desert island. The charming and very funny professor who teaches classes such as *Storytelling, Speculative Fiction*, and *Bread and Circus: A History of Mass Entertainment* did not disappoint. Ken also teaches at Nipher Middle School and is known affectionately to his students as Uncle Murdoch. Ken was the featured speaker at the launch party for the 16th issue of *Bellerive.*

Imagine you are going to be stranded on a deserted isle for an indeterminate length of time. You have been barred from bringing anything survival-related—no tents, matches, or anything of the like. In lieu of more practical luggage, you have instead been permitted to bring eight items that hold more meaning to you as an intellectual and scholar rather than a castaway; these items could be novels, songs, films, or even especially entertaining tweets. What are your eight items?

In lieu of survival items (and also to enjoy using “in lieu” contextually), I would bring the following eight items, in no particular hierarchy:

*The Bonfire of the Vanities* by Thomas Wolfe (no relation). An exceptionally well-crafted story as I perceive it, and continually more relevant to our day and age as each day passes. It’s a novel I enjoy reading over and over (which, as I understand it, would be valuable in this scenario). It ought to be required reading for this collegiate generation, I think. And don’t go see the film. It stinks.

My own fledgling novel, *Wun*. It’s a spy novel, kinda, about a boy who finds the ruins of a Bond-esque-villain’s lair undestroyed and viable decades after a self-destruct glitch (demonstrated in the first half). The villain’s plan for world domination could still work, ending all strife and evil on the planet. The boy has to decide if he’ll push the button, but little does he know there’s a global sinister consequence if he does. I’ve been working on it for years now, chapter by chapter (38 so far) and I’d like to finish soon. A desert island might be just the thing! (I just have to finish, self-publish, and then send it to the children of movie producers. That’s how it gets made and I pay off my house).

I’d bring a small stack of clawhammer banjo instruction books that I have (of course, they must count as one item ‘cause of the common topic). I play a little and I’m not half bad, but I ought to be much better this far down the road from beginning. Again, this island situation may afford me the time (the humidity would make this a limited viability).

My clawhammer banjo and extra strings. The antithesis of intellectual, perhaps, and maybe prohibited under the terms of my seclusion. (Still, if I’m by myself, I figure no one would likely mind not hearing me). The simplicity and melodious, syncopated nature of that instrument and its mountain style charms and soothes my mind to hear, more so to play.

The collected works of DeVotchka, that “dark cabaret” band from Denver that mixes Slavic tones with mariachi. I’ve been listening to them for years as inspiration in writing “Wun” and I’m not sure I could finish the project without them. (They’ll be on the acknowledgements page, and will provide the end credits soundtrack for the film version when it inevitably happens).

My boxed set of *The West Wing* television series. I run those during marathon grading sessions, and when I’m feeling poorly. So cinematic, well-produced, and written without insulting my sense of realism.

My Bible. The inspired word of the one living God. Can’t leave that behind. I’d be foolish to try to live wisely without it. It’s the cake to the rest of the icing on this list. I understand how it may be that, in saying so, I have just received the approval from some readers to reside on this island permanently. So be it. It’s interesting, too, that in my life I find Scripture so crucial to read and study, but struggle so mightily to do so regularly. All the more evidence of its importance, as well as my need for and reliance on it.

The West Wing credits soundtrack for the film version when it inevitably happens).
Do you teach any of these items?
I’ve not had the opportunity to teach any of these works. I’d love to create class around Bonfire, though I don’t know if it would actually be viable or “acceptable” in our current socio-academic climate. I taught a class a while ago called Bread & Circus in which juggling came into play, as did the principles of Dancey’s book.

Do you have a favorite quotation from any of these works you’d like to share with us?
As for a quote, there’s a lyric in DeVotchka’s song “The Clockwise Witness” that sticks with me, though you can decide how profound it is: “If you win the rat race, if you come in first place, then a rat is all you will be.”

If you, and only you, found out the world was ending tomorrow, what would you do?
If I, singly, found out that the world would end tomorrow, I don’t think I’d try to warn the world. I know that sounds selfish and wrong, but I picture myself in a Body Snatchers-esque scene wild-eyed, shouting myself hoarse and banging on the hoods of oncoming traffic to no avail. I really don’t think anything I’d say would register with the public. It’s a double-edged sword, this information age: one can verify an event through all manner of channels and sources, but if you can’t verify it through them all (or your chosen trustworthy ones), you might not believe even the smallest thing. Ooo. There’s a premise... Rather, I would try to ensure that my family came back together from wherever they are, and then I would visit my close friends to warn them of danger of the next day, and share my faith with them, tell them the truth of the gospel. As it’s a possibly offensive message, it’s hard to muster the courage on any normal day to do so, for fear of losing a friend. But, if we’re truly down to the wire, my love for my friends would overwhelm my worry. Letting them in on the truth before our entire end is the kindest thing I can do. (I really should do so today, apocalypse or no). Then my family and I would go to a high place with sandwiches, some icy cold Coca-Colas, maybe an ice cream pie, and wait for it.

If you could take a road trip with one fictional character, who would it be and why?
My first thought of a fictional character along for a road trip would be ALF from the 1980s television show. Something about him is endearing to me, but the puns would get old quickly. I think instead I’d go with John Candy’s Buck Russell from the 1989 John Hughes film Uncle Buck. Or Baloo, the bear. Or The Tick. Can I rent a van?

If you could bring one person back from the dead, who would it be and why?
Were I to bring a person back from the dead, I think I’d chose Ryan Dunn from Johnny Knoxville’s venerated show Jackass.

Dunn died in a car crash in 2011 and, for some reason, it breaks my heart a little to see how low it brought Knoxville and his band of dangerous idiots. I’d like to see that reunion. Then again, have we not all read (or seen) Pet Semetary? Maybe it’s not a good idea, after all.

If you could travel back in time to any moment, what would it be?
Were I to go back into a moment in time, I think I would have enjoyed some experience in 1966 when British disc jockeys broadcast the early days of rock n’ roll from ships anchored off the coast and outside of British waters. I’d have liked to have had a show from one of those boats. Sometimes I feel like I was born just a little behind the curve of a culture that I would have carefully relished.

As an educator, who was your greatest influence?
My greatest influence in teaching was Mr. Don Moyle, my sixth grade teacher. He was a big guy, towering over us all, and resembled (in my memory) a mix of an clean-shaven Hagrid and, somehow, Alfred Hitchcock. Go figure. His greatest strength as a teacher was his unwavering belief that his classroom was his domain; that he could do whatever he needed to in there to get us to full understanding. A former high school science teacher now working in a grade school, he was unconventional in his teaching. He never gave us information straight out. Always couched it so that we’d have to figure it out. He read the daily menu to us in scientific terms (milk = bovine excretions, hot dogs = extruded macerated bovine muscle). He kept us slightly off-balance at all times. We had to find our feet all the time. Thinking to solve was the norm. I’m not a science fellow, but I like to try to keep my scholars off-balance, too. I’ll do whatever I feel is necessary to help my scholars comprehend.

To continue reading, please click here and say “more Ken please!” Topics include the difference between seventh graders and college students, the purpose of education, and more. Thank you to Ken for entertaining and educating Honors students for the past decade. Have a suggestion for the next faculty desert island interview? Be sure to let us know!
Each spring, UMSL awards select women the Trailblazers Award. The award “recognizes UMSL women who have ‘blazed a trail’ in predominantly male occupations, or made noteworthy contributions to the university and/or their profession.” Unsurprisingly, women of the Honors College—students, and faculty—are not strangers to the UMSL Trailblazers Award. Past winners include Maria Kerford (2006), Olivia Ayes (2007), Antionette Dickens (2008), Lauren Masterson-Rodriguez (2010), and Melissa Alper (2011).

Recently, we were able to sit down and talk with the four most recent award winners to come from the Honors College and talk with them about their achievements, ideas on education, and thoughts on the award itself: Nancy Gleason (2012), associate dean emerita and director of writing at the Honors College; Jessica (Jessie) Bleile (2013), orbit analyst at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and part-time instructor at the Honors College; Eric’el Johnson (2016), electrical engineer at Boeing; and most recently Ellen Vehige-Prinster, (2017), associate engineer at Ameren. Bleile and Johnson also currently serve on the Honors College Leadership Council. These women are an inspiration to us all, and it was a pleasure to learn more about their journeys.

What do you think you won the trailblazer award for?

ELLLEN: I would say it’s definitely for blazing a trail for women who are interested in STEM fields—engineering specifically. I always try to be a good example for younger girls who want to get into the engineering field, or maybe mathematics or the science area of things. People should never be swayed from doing a profession they want, even if they are underrepresented in that profession. I just try to be an example for younger girls who want to do something in engineering or STEM. I have found a lot of success myself in engineering, so I feel like that’s what they saw—the leadership.

NANCY: I think that I bring into my advising situations and class situations...a practical aspect of what we can do in our communities as educated people, as people who want to give time and not just do something to make money but want to do a service. I think there is value in being a female and wanting to contribute a service. The other is that I started Bellerive, which is [the Honors College] publication...back in 1999. Geri Friedline does that now and turned it into a serious publication and something that the students really enjoy. The students that take that class really benefit a lot. The students that take that class really benefit a lot. I certainly have an attitude about people that’s very open, and I think I brought that to the Bellerive experience, and it continues today. I think I did a lot for women. I have been a big supporter of gender studies and working with what classes we have in the Honors College—looking for classes that are cross-listed with gender studies and getting students interested in that subject. And last but not least, I think one of the things that is so important is how we hear about first generation college students and how we should be working with them, and I am a prime example of one. I went to public schools and went to UMSL my junior and senior year of undergrad, and then I did my graduate work here at UMSL. I have a real attachment to this university and the communities that are surrounding it.

JESSIE: I like to think I won it because I put myself out there, and I was working really hard. I was putting myself through school. At the time, I was studying mathematics, and it was at a time when there were few women in that field.

ERIC’EL: I think it was my involvement on campus. During my time at UMSL, I was involved with a little bit of everything, because I like to give back, and I’m a busy body. I think the biggest thing was the Undergraduate Research Symposium. I was the president of Golden Key for three years. So, from my sophomore to my senior year, I was in charge of the Undergraduate Research Symposium. I was behind the scenes planning it, evaluating the abstracts, [and] having workshops. There was a lot involved in that. Later on in my college career, I joined the University Program Board, so I got to do more programming. I think it was also my involvement with the Engineering Department. Any job available in the Engineering Department, I had. I averaged about three jobs a semester. I always had several jobs because I liked doing it all. I’d be tutoring, or a lab assistant, or a mentor to about 150 engineering students through the First Year Experience. I was the first engineering student to be a mentor to the Intro to Engineering class. I think those things played into it.
What first made you interested in the field you are in now?

ELLEN: I always wanted to do engineering—civil engineering specifically. I wanted to design structures of some sort. When I was little, I always liked to play with Legos, and I built a replica of Busch Stadium, and I was on the news for that. I always really liked that idea—of building things and seeing really awesome results from something that you did yourself. I never thought I’d be working at Ameren, because it’s a lot of electrical stuff, but once I found out that they do hire civil engineers there and all the work that civil engineers do, I was like, “This is the perfect place to work for.”

NANCY: Oddly enough, it’s that I taught high school for six years and I loved it. I enjoyed watching [students] develop and get ready for college and the role that writing and my role as an English teacher played in that. Studying composition and rhetoric more made me want to continue down that path.

JESSIE: When I started here at UMSL, I was a biology major. I was like a lot of the Honors College students here where I was excited to have the science on the main campus and have the liberal arts at the Honors College. I was a biology major because I wanted to be a veterinarian. I just one day decided it wasn’t what I wanted to do, and it was what I had wanted to do since I was three and could talk. So one day I went to Dan Gerth’s office and said I’d like to enroll in Calculus II and see what happens. I decided if I got an A, I was going to switch my major and decide what to do after that. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my degree if I changed it to mathematics. I started to hear about the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency from people on main campus…and applied. I didn’t get in the first year, but I did the second. And that’s what got me into the intelligence community. I definitely credit all the work I did here at the Honors College—making a resume and cover letter and things like that—with how I was able to get in to that community. You just kind of fall into things, but I really like where I am career-wise.

ERIC'EL: No one in my family is an engineer. My Paw-Paw is the closest things to an engineer. He doesn’t have any formal education. He graduated from high school and then taught himself how to work on any and everything. He’s a local handyman in my hometown, and I would follow him around while he babysat me. I’d be helping him with his job or just watching him if I was too little. I just liked what he was doing. In middle school and high school, I found out I was really good at math and science. I wanted to think critically and teach myself how to do things like my Paw-Paw did, but I also wanted to look at the design aspects, and engineering helped me do that.

Tell me about a project or accomplishment that you consider significant in your career or education.

ELLEN: The number one accomplishment I was awarded when I came to college was the full ride scholarship here at UMSL, the Opportunity Scholars Program. At first I thought...I don’t know if I’m cut out for the Honors College—maybe I want to stick to math and science and not focus so much on reading and writing. But I’m really glad that Dan persuaded me to do the Honors College, because it was a great experience. Winning that Opportunity Scholars Program scholarship was really the greatest award, because it felt like winning the lottery. I didn’t have to pay for books, food, tuition, room—anything. It was all free.

JESSIE: I am really proud of my master’s thesis. I went to Mizzou for graduate school, and if you’re getting your master’s degree, you can do a master’s project or a master’s thesis. Most people did a master’s project, which just meant you would read a couple differ-
ent papers and present your take on them. The thesis is actually original research and writing, and you still have to defend it. So there is lots of extra work. A lot of the people I knew were doing projects, but my advisor thought I should make mine a thesis and make something original. It was an emotional rollercoaster, writing that thesis. But I think taking on that extra work has made me proud of my degree. A lot of people get their master’s degree, and so I’ll think maybe it’s not that special. But then I think back to all the work I put into that thesis. I sent it to my grandma, and she showed it to all her friends just like she would when I was in eighth grade.

ERIC’EL: I am really into mentoring. I was recently able to have a mentoring program between some Boeing Engineers and UMSL students, as well as Washington University students. Before that, they just had the engineers paired with Wash U students, but after I became the program coordinator, they included UMSL students as well. It’s been going well so far, so they have a Boeing engineer as a mentor, and then every month, they go through some workshops. This month they are doing mock interviews and resume critiques. I do that on my own time, and I really enjoy it.

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Topics include the recipients’ thoughts on the importance of the award on UMSL’s campus, their role models and inspirations, difficulties or obstacles in their respective careers, and women in STEM fields. Have a suggestion for the next faculty or alumni profile interview? Be sure to let us know!

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To make a donation to the Pierre Laclede Honors College, please go to our giving page or contact Interim Dean Dan Gerth for more information. We are profoundly grateful for the support of all our contributors.
With the beginning of spring comes the donning of graduation caps, and a new generation of Honors alums is born. Degrees clutched in nervous hands, they cross over the threshold of Provincial House and into a vast new world. But the door is not locked behind them! The Honors College offers many ways for alumni to stay involved (and we’re always looking for more, so don’t be shy about letting us know your ideas).

First and foremost is the Pierre Laclede Honors College Alumni Network, chaired by Holly Pope, who is an alumna and the current admissions representative in the college. All Honors alumni are part of the network (be sure to follow us on Facebook) and are invited to sponsored events, such as the networking happy hour last fall at Two Plumbers Brewery and Arcade. Alumni can also serve a role on the network’s executive board and help organize and run various alumni events, the largest and most popular being the Alumni Trivia Night. This year’s Alumni Trivia Night happens March 3, with proceeds going to the Gleason Endowment to help support the Honors College writing program. According to Pope, the event is an excellent opportunity “for alumni and current Honors students to meet and work together, creating valuable networking opportunities, and...a meaningful way to support current Honors students!” There are many ways to participate: alumni can sponsor tables, donate baskets to the silent auction, volunteer to work the event itself, or buy a table or ticket and compete. Anyone interested can contact Holly Pope for further information.

For artistically inclined alumni, both Bellerive and Celebrating the Arts are open to, and would love to receive, alumni submissions. According to Bellerive faculty advisor, Gerianne Friedline, the inclusion of alumni submissions will allow the publication to showcase “a full representation of writers of all levels.” In addition to written works, both prose and poetry, alumni are invited to submit music and artwork. Submissions are open from March 1 until October 1, but even those uninterested in being published are invited to the launch party on February 23 at 12 p.m., where the 18th issue will be unveiled. While you’re there, feel free to drop off submissions to Celebrating the Arts, the Honors College’s annual community art show featuring art of all mediums from students, faculty, staff, and, of course, alumni. Submissions can be dropped off at the Main Office of Provincial House before April 5 and will be displayed throughout the Honors College from April 9 to 12. Stop by to check out the submissions and cast your vote for best piece. A reception will be held on April 12 to announce the winners, and all alumni are invited. Anyone interested can contact Kate Votaw for more information.

Alumni who would like to interact directly with students and mentor them on their professional journey through college are invited to participate in the Freshman Professional Development Reception. This event allows undergraduates to engage one-on-one with various alumni from multiple disciplines. The goal is to help undergrads to gain a sense of what they might like to do after graduation – and how to go about preparing for that path. And the students are not the only ones who benefit. Kim Baldus, who supervises the First Year Experience program and organizes the reception every April, reports that the alumni are often just as enthusiastic about the experience as the students because “they love getting the chance to share some of their stories and hear from the students what they’re experiencing along the way.” Anyone interested can contact Kim Baldus for more information. This year’s event happens on April 17.