The MCHP Newsletter: Volume 10 Issue 1

- Feature Story: Border Awareness
- Student Spotlights: Hailee Maiorano Kevin Schneider
- Trials of an HPY Student
- Honors Course Spotlight: World History III
- And More!
Student Spotlight:
Hailee Maiorano
By Megan Cody

For those of us who have ever despairingly shrunk under the burden of juggling too many activities at once, take heart: Junior Hailee Maiorano proves that it is possible to have your cake and eat it too!

Hailee, who hails from Mississauga, Ontario, is not only an active member of MCHP and an exceptional student, but she is an outstanding athlete as well. She is successfully double majoring in Accounting and Finance and—at the same time—skillfully competing on the women’s soccer team.

She spends more than ten hours a week at practice and plays 18 games in the span of just two months: September and October. Hailee, who plays right midfield, says that balancing a heavy academic load with a strict soccer regimen can sometimes be stressful. Yet she enjoys the challenge and admits, “I like contradicting people’s expectations that athletes can’t be smart enough, or have enough time, to handle both their sport and a challenging academic environment.”

Hailee boldly defies all jock stereotypes. She is a beautiful blend of both athlete and scholar, and she possesses qualities, including dedication and good interpersonal skills, that serve her well in the classroom and on the field. Hailee says that dedication to life’s pursuits is surely essential: “You can’t just quit when something gets hard.” To stay focused, Hailee recommends avoiding procrastination and making to-do lists. She adds, “Find a good balance between work and play.” (And don’t forget to come out and support the women’s soccer team!)

President’s Address

Every year, members of the MCHP elect an Honors Council to represent all members of the program and organize various events in order to enrich the Honors experience for everyone involved. My name is Jess Kocent, I’m a Senior Social Studies Education major, and it is my pleasure to have been elected the President of this council for the 2007-2008 school year.

I follow in the footsteps of Ashley Hermann, the current Graduate Assistant in the Honors Office. I feel very fortunate because all aspects of the program continue to be extremely well-organized and efficient, but I know I have very big shoes to fill. However, I feel I am up to the challenge, and I am extremely excited for the coming year.

The Council has had one meeting so far, during which we discussed a few new ideas and a new spin on some old ones. We noticed that “Lunch in Lounge” was a successful event, and it will be returning this year. Dinner and Discourse, a number of service opportunities, and social events will also return to continue to make the experience in the Honors program more enjoyable. There will also be a number of exciting changes. Academic Celebration will be completely revamped, and so will some of the conference opportunities. There will be more information on the changes to come.

The Council is also proud to report that, because of recently acquired funds, the office of Treasurer has been added, a job which will be undertook by a talented, extremely able MCHP sophomore from Texas, Dinorah Sanchez.

In short, I have the privilege of working with Council members who continue to amaze me with their enthusiasm and ingenuity, and I anticipate a great year for the program. As always the Council is in place to represent you: the student body. If there are any suggestions you have for the Council, please feel free to stop by the Honors Office and let us know.

To all HPY students, I extend a warm welcome to a program I believe is both academically beneficial and a great deal of fun. I enthusiastically welcome back all returning MCHP students: keep up the good work. And, as always, I wish everyone at Mercyhurst College a great year!

Jess Kocent
Honors Council President
The Trials of an HPY Student
By Caitlin Ross

I can’t say I wasn’t nervous the morning all the HPY students met for breakfast the first week of college. I felt very small and insignificant. There were so many intelligent, competitive and interesting people sitting all around me, all wanting the same thing: to get into the Honors Program. I immediately wondered if I should even bother applying at the end of the year. However, after hearing about the successes of students who’ve graduated from the program, especially the 100% acceptance rate into graduate schools, I’ve decided to try my hardest to get accepted at the end of my freshman year.

The Honors Program solicited me shortly after I was accepted to Mercyhurst. I’m from Maine and I’m here for the Applied Forensic Science program. The Honors Preparation Year seems like a good idea for me, because as much as I want to succeed in my field, I don’t want to become a science-fiend. Being a “well-rounded student” is important to me, and I’m hoping this program will help me stay balanced. I’m excited to spend time volunteering and going to honors events. I’ve signed up to do service with the House of Healing in Erie, where I’ll spend time with children whose mothers are just getting out of prison. I haven’t gone to many events yet, but I did watch the film Away From Her on September 19th and it was truly amazing.

I’m in an honors class this term: Academic Discourse, a writing class with Dr. McGurk. Thus far it’s been very interesting and thought-provoking. We’ll discuss everything from sociobiology to Zen Buddhism in a single class period. It’s quickly becoming my favorite class.

From the Director’s Desk

On August 28th, I had the pleasure of meeting this year’s class of Honors Preparation Year Students at the Honors Program Orientation Breakfast. The meeting provided HPY students the opportunity to meet their classmates. It gave me the opportunity to introduce the program, explain its goals, and answer questions about its requirements. Since this meeting, I have received numerous e-mails and telephone calls from students seeking additional information about what it takes to graduate from the program. Given the recent changes to the program’s requirements, I want to take this opportunity to review what the MCHP expects of its students.

The Mercyhurst College Honors Program handbook is available on the program’s Blackboard site. This publication explains in detail all of the requirements and procedures related to the program, and it includes samples of all the documents that honors students may be required to submit. The handbook is well-organized, includes a detailed table of contents and provides readers with a comprehensive overview of the program. If you have questions about anything related to the Honors Program, the easiest and quickest way to find an answer is by taking a look at this resource.

With this in mind, here are the program’s basic requirements: To be admitted to the MCHP you must complete the Honors Preparation Year. This requires students to (1) complete at least one honors course by the end of winter term with a grade of C+ or higher; (2) have a cumulative GPA not lower than 3.0 at the time of application; (3) submit an application portfolio that includes a variety of documents (see the handbook for details). Since meeting these requirements does not guarantee admission, it is up to you persuade the six-member Honors Selection Committee that you are dedicated to realizing the goals of the honors program. The best way to do this is by earning activity cards. The Honors Program Timeline, which is available in the Honors Staff Office, specifies due dates and mandatory meetings; so, make sure you pick up a copy.

For those students who have been admitted to the program, remember that you, too, are required to submit a portfolio each year. Although the contents of this portfolio vary depending on the number of credits you have earned, each student must submit three activity cards per year. At the time of graduation, you are required to have completed no less than nine activity cards (collected between your sophomore and junior year). Of these nine activity cards, four must be from different areas. In addition, at the time of graduation you are required to have (1) a 3.5 GPA; (2) completed a senior thesis and; (3) earned a C+ or higher in nine honors courses (three may be contracts).

Whether you are an HPY or MCHP student, the honors program expects that you will demonstrate a commitment to the mission of Mercyhurst College and to academic honesty.

As always, I wish you the very best as you begin the academic year.

Dr. Joseph M. Morris
During Spring Break 2007, the students in Dr. Peter Benekos’s Contemporary Social Problems course traveled to the U.S./Mexico border. The course focused on the immigration issues that face the U.S. These students saw the situation firsthand, attended lectures, and came back to Mercyhurst uncertain about their position on the issue. In class, they discussed what they had seen and concluded with a presentation for Academic Celebration incorporating the many perspectives on the issue.

The trip, which preceded the course, took the students and Dr. Benekos to El Paso, then Juarez, Mexico, where they stayed with families. Often the houses were made of cinder blocks without air conditioners or heaters, insulated only by thin styrofoam sheeting. Running water was sporadic. Leanne Magestro, a sophomore, said that the Mexican government had ignored the letters from the people of Juarez, who are trying to improve their situation. Magestro and Sara Fredette, also a sophomore, noted that the Women’s Center was active in trying to improve the community through projects concerning better water management and trash cleanup.

Dr. Benekos was pleased with the students’ uncertain responses after the trip, the most common being "I don’t know what to think." To him, this showed that the students had discovered the complexity of the issue.

Fredette said, "We were all a little burnt out. It’s an emotionally charged subject matter." The class was a comprehensive survey of the issue, from history to law enforcement to the human aspect.

Fredette and Magestro felt the experience was incredibly positive and beneficial. "The students are much more aware of why this is such a political issue," Dr. Benekos said.

"We can see how [immigration policy] needs to be strict, but we realize the system needs to be reformed," Magestro said, reflecting the varied perspectives she encountered.

Both students recommend the experience to others. Fredette said, "People in the U.S. our age need to get out of the U.S. a little bit...to increase their world identity."

The trip created a camaraderie that is rare in other courses. After the class was over, Dr. Benekos said, "I felt like I was saying good-bye to my family."
Honors Class Spotlight: 
*World History III*  
By Kyle King

In order to help Honors students make more educated choices about which Honors courses to take each term, *Quest* staff has decided to preview one course in advance. Our inaugural spotlight shines on Dr. Christine Colin’s “World History III,” to be offered MWF 9:30-10:50 during winter term.

*World History III* begins with imperialism in the early 1900’s, but the themes tying most readings and discussions together are the evils of war and genocide. The course reaches into the contemporary, with segments about Rwanda, Burundi, and the Kurdish populations in Iraq.

If the content sounds familiar, that is because it is similar to the non-Honors “World History III” course Dr. Colin teaches. Both classes ask how imperialism leads to genocide, how genocide can be prevented if people pay attention to important warning signs, what the role of the international community should be during these events, and how the United Nations could possibly be reformed to react best during these situations; the differences lie in the texts and the teaching style. There will be much more of a reliance on primary as opposed to secondary sources, and there will be less lecturing. Instead, students will have more responsibility in terms of taking leadership roles in the discussions.

This is the first time Dr. Colin will have taught World History III as an Honors course. She received her Ph.D. from Penn State University and has taught at Mercyhurst since 2003. She teaches courses on Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, China, and Historical Methods and Historiography. In examining the themes of the class, and with a nod to those students who want to more actively engage the world surrounding them, Colin said, “[War and genocide] present an appropriate lens for students to look at the 20th Century and also to look at the present.”

Spotlight: Kevin Schneider  
By Rachel Sites

Kevin Schneider is one of those Honors students, the kind you always secretly envy while wondering about their sanity. Not only is he triple majoring in Forensic Science (Chemistry and Toxicology), Biochemistry, and Religious Studies, but he’s also one of the top Honors students at Mercyhurst. Somehow, even with all the academic pressure from such a demanding regimen, he still manages to participate in the forensic science club, the chemistry club, the Anime club, the Honors council, and Phi Eta Sigma while indulging in his love for, in his own words, “bad reality TV.” Not content to merely pull off a rigorous academic schedule while maintaining a social life, Kevin is also going to present his own research later this year. *Quest* takes a look into Kevin’s remarkable achievements.

What exactly is the conference you’re attending? How did you get involved in presenting?

- The conference I am attending is the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) annual conference. This year, it is being held in Denver, CO. I have been involved in undergraduate scientific research with Dr. Jack Williams for the past 3 years and have heard Dr. Morris promote conference presentations in the past. Talking to graduate schools has also fostered my want to present this research because it is something they look for in the acceptance process. In the past, I have presented at the Mercyhurst Research Symposium twice and at the Sigma Xi conference at Penn State Behrend.

What is the topic of your project? What kind of work did it entail?

- The topic of my project is “Synthesis of Novel Thioanhydrides”. The basic aim of this project was to replace an oxygen atom with a sulfur atom in a group of compounds called anhydrides. In looking at past research, we found a method we could use to accomplish this goal. However, when testing it on itaconic anhydride, we did not find the suspected results. Instead of substituting a sulfur for an oxygen, the process rearranged the atoms of the itaconic anhydride. This type of reaction has never been recorded using itaconic anhydride and sulfur. The project entailed monitoring the conversion of itaconic anhydride to the rearranged compound through the use of Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) spectroscopy.

What inspired you to choose your topic? Was presenting your research to a conference your original goal?

- I chose this topic to start researching because my research advisor and I were curious about possible antioxidant properties a thioanhydride might have since other organosulfur compounds (like those found in garlic) have been found to have antioxidant properties. Originally, presenting was not a goal for this project, but after discovering this new reaction, presentation and publication quickly became a goal.

You’re one of the top Honors students in the school. Elaborate on your course choices, study habits, goals you set during the school year, and pretty much anything that comes to mind regarding how you got to where you are.

- Well, when it comes to course choices, scheduling is always a stressful time. I know which courses I have left to take, but getting them to match up in a fashion that will allow me to graduate with 3 degrees in 4 years is sometimes tricky. Being the uber-geek that I am, I have a color-coded spreadsheet that has all the classes I need to take and which terms they are offered. It sounds dorky (and is), but it helps a lot. Also, if you have any free space and there is a class that really interests you, take it on a term with a less desirable class. For me, it helps to look forward to a class when I am doing work for one that is exceptionally boring or difficult. I don’t know that I have any unique study habits. I tend to cram the night before and again in the morning (I know that it’s bad to cram, but it works for me). I also tend to be a visual learner, so sometimes making charts helps.

Summarize your Honors experience.

- My honors experience has definitely been worthwhile. From the more challenging honors courses to the friends I have made, the Honors program opened so many doors and got me involved in things that I really enjoy.