

THE SPOUTER

April 2012 – Volume 1, Issue 1

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS DARTMOUTH

Message from the Directors

We are very pleased to report that the state of the Honors Program is very strong. Here are some highlights:

2012 Commonwealth Scholars

This semester, a record 44 students completed all of the requirements of the Honors Program and graduated (or will soon graduate) as Commonwealth Scholars from UMass Dartmouth. Congratulations to all of you!

2012 Honors Convocation

This year's Honors Convocation was a great success. For the first time, the format was changed to a sit-down banquet, which was very ceremonial indeed. The winner of the Margaret Mullany Panos Essay Contest was Psychology major Martin Cotti, who very movingly described his experience volunteering with the mentally ill. We also added a new essay contest, the Louise Habicht Thesis Journey Award. The winner of the Habicht prize was English major Jess Andreason, who spoke about her efforts to remove the stigma attached to graphic novels. Honors Program Service Awards were presented to former Student Director Elise DePlanche, outgoing Chancellor Jean MacCormack, outgoing Dean of Arts & Sciences William Hogan, and (to our very great and publicly entertaining surprise) outgoing Honors Directors Robert Darst and Jennifer Mulnix. As always, we are deeply indebted to Honors Secretary and Convocation organizer-in-chief Cindy Pisapia, without whom this ceremony would not be possible.

Honors Student Council

The Honors Student Council has been an active presence at UMD, creating a wide variety of student events both on and off

campus, as well as a Distinguished Members Program to recognize the hard work and dedication of our honors students. Recipients of the Distinguished Member Awards were treated to dinner and a night of fun at Fire and Ice in Providence at the end of the semester. The Honors Student Council is also busy preparing a new Peer Mentoring Program that will begin in the Fall, in which upper class honors students will provide a support system for incoming Freshman, both socially as well as academically, by offering the guidance and experience of older Honors students.

We would like to express our thanks to Erin Cournoyer for her service as the Associate Student Director of the Honors Program this past Spring. Erin was integral in coordinating our honors community service and she provided important leadership over the many and varied honors student activities. Erin will be leaving us in the Fall for an internship in Washington DC. Our best wishes to you Erin for a wonderful semester! We welcome our new Honors Associate Student Director who will join us in the Fall 2012, Paula Cruz who is a sophomore Nursing Major. Paula will be a great addition to the staff as the Honors Program continues to grow and strengthen our honors student community.

Honors Student Research

Two of our graduating Commonwealth Scholars, Justina Andonian and Timothy Boardman, published their Honors project work in collaboration with their faculty supervisors (Nora Ganim Barnes and Erin Bromage, respectively). Several other students are revising their projects for submission to scholarly journals. We are very proud of you! We also sent 42

of our UMD students to the Massachusetts Statewide Undergraduate Research Conference at UMass Amherst in April. The conference was a great success! And this year, the Honors Program was able to fund over a dozen summer research grants to our honors students pursuing research on their thesis projects over the summer. Good luck to all of you!

New Honors Director

We are very pleased to announce that Political Science Professor Avery Plaw will take over as Honors Director in September. After more than four years as the Honors Directors, we will step down to pursue new interests and challenges.

Our Farewell

Our tenure at the helm of the Honors Program has been challenging and extremely rewarding. The past four years witnessed the revamping of the Honors curriculum, including the introduction of Honors 101 and 301; the creation of the Honors Student Council; the introduction of the Honors Bookstore Award; the expansion of Honors Housing to Hickory Hall; and a fourfold increase in the number of Commonwealth Scholars, from 11 in 2008 to 44 in 2012—all without any increase in the number of students in the Honors Program. None of this would have been possible without the enthusiastic participation of the Honors students and the unstinting support from faculty, staff, and administrators across the university. We are deeply grateful to all of you.

Robert G. Darst and Jennifer W. Mulnix

Honors students make furry friends

By Kiley Alpaugh and Erin Cournoyer

Since October 2011, honors students have been volunteering their time weekly at the Center for Animal Rescue and Education (C.A.R.E. SouthCoast) in New Bedford. They have spent most of their Monday nights scooping litter, changing food and water, doing laundry, and socializing the animals to help them find “forever” homes. C.A.R.E. is located on Hathaway Road in a uniquely transformed house that serves as a home for 40+ free-roaming cats and dogs. C.A.R.E. was formed by concerned community members to provide sheltering, spay/neuter assistance, education and referral resources. C.A.R.E. relies solely on contributions from the community, and the hard work of its volunteers. It also distinguishes itself by being a “no kill” shelter.

Honors volunteers spend their Monday nights cleaning cages, making sure all of the animals have been fed, and showing love to the animals who are most in need of it. Some of them spend their time walking dogs and giving them a chance to stretch their legs. Others play with cats by getting to know their personalities and helping them realize that they can trust humans to find them a loving home. They build bonds with the animals and give them a chance to feel love and affection. The ever popular “neck rubs” never fail to warm the hearts of both volunteers and our furry friends!



Throughout the course of volunteering, the honors students have also built strong bonds with one another and the community at large. They encounter a strong sense of community and form lasting friendships that extend outside of volunteering. From the minute they step foot into the shelter doors, they never know what they will encounter. Some days it's a distressed cat who has never felt the warmth of a human hand, other days it's an overly-excited dog who can't wait to lick someone's face! Not only do the volunteers interact with each other, they also deal with members of the community who have questions about adopting, need help with their pets, or simply want to learn more about the shelter. They have become masters in crisis-intervention, managing difficult animals, and having the utmost compassion and respect for neglected and abused animals.

The honors students make a huge difference in how presentable the shelter

appears and how the animals “warm up” to humans. It also teaches them a lot about animal welfare in our community and how they can make a difference by doing something they enjoy. To name just a few, some of the life values they have learned are patience, courage and most importantly an unconditional love for all animals. They love watching animals become more social and approachable simply because someone is paying attention to them for once. Taking care of such a large number of animals is really hard work and the amazing people that dedicate their lives to such an enormous task are truly inspiring. Volunteering has expanded their knowledge about animals and has taught them to be more involved in our community. As said by one of the volunteers, “Being a volunteer at C.A.R.E. SouthCoast has allowed me to make new friends, do something that I love, and see the impact that my efforts have on the animals. I will continue going to C.A.R.E. as long as I'm at UMass Dartmouth. I love it there!!!”

If you would like to volunteer at C.A.R.E. SouthCoast in the fall semester of 2012, there will be a group meeting on Monday nights at 4:45 p.m. in lot 5. For more information on the shelter and ways to become involved, please visit <http://www.caresouthcoast.com>.



Distinguished Member Dinner at Fire and Ice in Providence and Distinguished Member Hayley Sylvester.



University Honors Program
UMass Dartmouth
285 Old Westport Road
North Dartmouth, MA 02747-2300

508.999.8820
www.umassd.edu/academics/honors/

Service awards re-named to honor the work of Darst and Mulnix

By Elise DePlanche

At this year's Honors Convocation, Robert Darst and Jennifer Mulnix were shocked to learn that the Honors Program's annual service awards had been re-named after them.

When he realized the award he was about to give had been named after him, Darst said that he "reacted as if I had suddenly discovered that I was holding a rattlesnake: I jumped back, nearly dropped the plaque, and hissed, 'Jesus Christ!' Happily, I recovered and made it through the rest of the ceremony without further blasphemy."

Beginning this year, the faculty service award bears Darst's name, and the student service award bears Mulnix's name.

"I was extremely shocked, humbled, and honored," Mulnix said. "I had no idea that Prof. Darst and I's efforts were appreciated so much by the students in the Honors Program." The Honors Student Council decided to re-name the service awards to honor Darst's and Mulnix's dedication to the Honors Program. A number of other options—including stoles, banners, and the re-naming of the upcoming library honors center—were considered before the group determined that re-naming the service awards would most accurately reflect the professors' service to the program.

Darst and Mulnix have served as Honors Director and Honors Associate Director, respectively, since the spring of 2008, and the end of this academic year marks the conclusion of their work in these positions.

Over the past four years, the duo's efforts have quadrupled the number of honors students completing the program with a senior thesis, established the Honors Student Council, and expanded the selection of honors courses to better cater to students outside the College of Arts and Sciences.

"When Professor Darst and I took over in 2008, most people didn't even know we had an Honors Program, and many of the students thought of the Honors Program as a way to register early for classes," Mulnix said.

Darst specifically focused on measures that increased the number of students who completed a thesis project. These developments included the creation of a thesis prep class, sanctions for students who failed to show progress on their project, and increased involvement of the Director in students' thesis processes.

Darst noted that working with juniors and seniors on their thesis projects has been the most rewarding part of his work as Director.

"The Director gets to be an informal advisor to all of the students working on their projects," he said. "I have learned a great deal about many different disciplines and topics over the past four years. It has been wonderful."

Darst's love of his work was clear to all. "[His] passion and dedication have been immeasurable," Mulnix said. "He was an ideal collaborator to work with over the last four years, and if it wasn't for his hard work, the Honors Program would not be where it is today."

While Darst tackled thesis-related issues, Mulnix directed her energies toward freshman retention and the creation of an honors community. She created a service-learning class for honors freshmen, consolidated first-year honors housing, resurrected The Spouter, and guided the development of the Honors Student Council.

"The most difficult challenge was rallying the students together to form a strong leadership role in the Honors Program," Mulnix said. "The Honors Student Council [now has] more power to make programmatic and administrative decisions regarding the Honors Program...Our students hold a strong voice in the program, and we have done our best to meet student concerns and incorporate their suggestions."

Darst noted that Mulnix's work led to many dramatic improvements in the Honors Program.

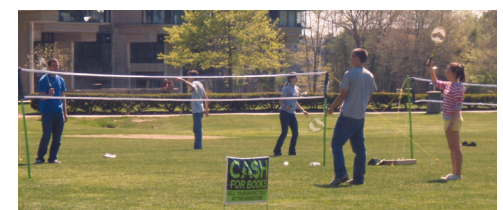
"When we started, there was no first-year Honors course, no Honors student organization of any kind, no peer advising, no Honors social events, no nothing," he said. "Now we have all of

those things, all thanks to Jennifer. She is amazing. Just for the record."

Avery Plaw, an associate professor of political science, will step up to take Darst's place as Honors Director in the fall. A new Associate Director will be determined next semester.

"I would like [the new Directors] to continue to find new and better ways to support the amazing undergraduate research of our honors students," Mulnix said. "I would also like to see our honors student community continue to grow and even perhaps be one of the biggest voices on our campus!"

Darst noted that he hoped to see "the development of partly internal Honors tracks in the Colleges of Business and Engineering, the expansion of the number of sections of Honors 101, the development of a student-led peer mentoring program, and the continued strengthening of the Honors Student Council."



Honors Student Council Year End outdoor event—activities included badminton and tie dying shirts.

A Look into the Rainbow Trout Immune System

By Timothy Boardman

Aquaculture has a devastating problem. About 50% of farmed fish contract some sort of disease and die before they are able to be used for market. Why then is fish so easily available at every grocery store in the United States? Fish farmers overproduce their fish stock in anticipation that half of it will die in order to make their quotas. This overproduction is directly reflected in the price you pay on everything ranging from a can of tuna to fresh salmon. In reality, for every farmed fish you buy at market, you are actually paying for two fish.

The diseases that run rampant through fish farms are not due to neglect or lack of trying on the part of the farmers. We often take the immune system for granted. We get sick, we take medication and then we get better. This is because our immune systems are well studied and the doctors that treat us are well versed in the mechanisms that keep our bodies running. The same is not true for the immune system of fish. In comparison, very little is known about the fish immune system and, as a result, the methods of disease prevention and treatment currently used are not as effective as they could be. My research, along with other research conducted in the Comparative Immu-

nology Lab, looks at the immune system of rainbow trout in an attempt to better understand it and eventually help others develop better veterinary practice for the trout and other related fish species.

My recent project looked at the distribution of immune cells within the rainbow trout in relation to blood flow. Much like humans, rainbow trout have an array of cells that protect their system such as T-Cells and B-cells. In humans we know that T-cells come from the thymus and B-cells come from the bone marrow. We even know how they interact and where in the body they go to fight disease. While some of this information is known for rainbow trout and other fish, it is not very clear and much of it is fairly ambiguous.

To start, my group and I created a map of the vascular system of the rainbow trout. While work describing the blood patterns of fish has been explored, we wanted to create a map of the blood vessels that was directed to the immune organs of the fish. Since immune organs such as the gills and the spleen were described well enough for our purposes, we focused our attention on the kidney. The fish kidney is a complex organ. Like humans, there are two kidneys, but

unlike humans, the fish kidneys are fused together and run along the entire length of the spine. In order to create a detailed blood flow map of the rainbow trout kidney, we decided to inject the vessels with colored latex. We allowed the latex to dry and then meticulously dissected the kidney in order to obtain a clear picture of the flow.

After creating the blood vessel map, my group turned our attention to the cellular components of the aforementioned organs of the rainbow trout immune system. We took the immune cells from these organs and, using cell specific markers, we ran a series of tests and assays in order to determine the cellular makeup of each one. Our results gave us a very interesting picture at the distribution of these cells.

Using both the blood flow pattern and the cellular makeup of the immune organs, my group will present a detailed distribution map of the immune cells in the rainbow trout. This information will add another piece to the puzzle that is the fish immune system. While this research represents only a fraction of the work that needs to be done on the fish immune system, it will hopefully aid in future research endeavors.



Original Student work by Elizabeth Friar, a senior photography major; from her thesis "Song Cycle."

