When Dr. Nancy Cirillo began teaching her Honors Core course last fall, Readings in the Atlantic Slave Trade, she “hadn’t dreamed of” the collaborative class project that would emerge from it. Honors Core courses are meant to enrich and broaden foundational critical thinking skills that prepare Honors College students for the rest of their educational careers. Cirillo’s discussion-based class focuses on reading, evaluating, and analyzing primary sources to gain a greater understanding of the long-lasting impact of slavery in contemporary American society. The creation of the course was inspired by three rare collections that focus on the Atlantic Slave Trade housed at UIC’s Daley Library. Primary sources such as these are key to understanding and analyzing history. Unfortunately, they are often missing in high school education.

The class from the fall of 2016 was a particularly memorable class for Cirillo. The students were especially passionate during one post-presidential debate class discussion, where they could not help but link current events to their readings. Cirillo was “both delighted and astounded by the thoughtfulness of their comments and the passions with which they spoke of the issues.” She was able to see the intricate web that connects the devaluation of debate in high school to the lack of the kind of critical thinking that emerges from examining and consuming primary sources. These primary sources are truly key to understanding and analyzing the immense impact of significant parts of history such as slavery, which was another component missing in high school education. She proposed that for their third essay assignment, students “could write their case for the teaching of evidence based, analytic history in high school instead of their original assignment,” a prompt for which every student chose to construct an argument.

Cirillo took different quotes and excerpts from the students’ essays, as well as her own thoughts, and composed an article about this collaborative class project. One of the quotes Cirillo included from her student, “Why am I only learning about this now?” was a familiar sentiment expressed by the class as a whole. “These first semester freshmen [expressed] emotions that [ran] from disappointment to rage that they were lied to and infantilized in their AP history courses,” she recalls. She, joined by the voices of her students, argues eloquently for a broader inclusion and discussion of slavery and its immense impact on America in the high school curriculum. Through the essay, and through teaching her class, Cirillo also wants to demonstrate that “the value of the liberal arts lies in its capacity to train the mind largely through critical thinking to negotiate complex interrelated and often ambiguous areas.” The essay has been accepted for publication at UIC. Hopefully, it will be able to enact a concrete change in how the topic of slavery is taught in high school while impressing upon readers the importance of a facts-based liberal arts education.
Dear Honors Community:

It’s not all academics: the Honors College lives outside the classroom. The annual Ball and the activities that take place in the residence halls are parts of the life of our community. During the past year the Diversity Committee, HCAB, and numerous student organizations worked hard to create an environment where everyone feels welcome. In this issue we have photos from the Ball, an interview with a Peer Mentor in Honors Housing, and a report about our four student publications (one of which is the *Ampersand*). These are just glimpses into what makes the Honors College fun and lively.

When it comes to academics, Honors College students continue to amaze: read about Kaitlynn Richardson and Brandon Garcia, whose work in Dean Bette Bottoms’s lab earned them awards under the Access Path to Psychology and Law program. Meet Sarita Deshpande, *Ampersand* Editor-in-Chief, who received a Gates Cambridge Scholarship to study clinical neuroscience in Cambridge next year. Another leader among her peers is Liz Stark, recipient of this year’s HCAB scholarship, who will be giving back to the city as a math teacher. Few things are more valuable than new insights into a historic narrative, and we read about Nancy Cirillo’s class discovering sources that give detail to the history of slavery.

It’s been a busy year, and I hope a good one for all. Have a great summer!

Cordially,

Ralph Keen

---

**Honors College student wins Goldwater Scholarship!**

Juliana Theorell has received the prestigious Goldwater Scholarship, a nationally competitive $7,500 award for students interested in pursuing a career in science, math, or engineering. Juliana is a junior studying neuroscience at UIC. After attaining a Ph.D in Microbiology, she plans to research the gut or lung microbiome in determining the metabolism of drugs and xenobiotics in addition to teaching at the university level.

---

**Upcoming Events and Scholarship Deadlines**

- **Chicago Signature Honors Program: Ma, Thile, and Meyer: Bach Trios Tour**
  Apr. 24, 8:00pm • Chicago Symphony Orchestra

- **HCAB: De-Stress before Finals Event**
  Apr. 26, 5:00pm • Honors College Student Lounge

- **Capstone Progress Reports and Completion Forms Due**
  Apr. 28, 4:00pm • Honors College Front Desk

- **Honors College Convocation**
  May 3, 7:00pm • UIC Forum

- **Honors Activity Completion Forms Due**
  May 5, 4:00pm • Honors College Front Desk

---

**HCAB Update**

The 24th Annual Honors College Ball was a huge success! It was a pleasure witnessing 200 of our students, faculty, and staff gathered together on a rare occasion for a night of dancing and fun games. For more pictures from the event, you can go to our Facebook page at [https://www.facebook.com/UICHCAB/](https://www.facebook.com/UICHCAB/). HCAB also planned the annual Faculty-Student Luncheon. The event took place on Wednesday, April 12th from 11:30-1:30 with catering from Tropical Smoothie Café on Halsted Street. Our very last Wednesdays with HCAB will be a De-Stress event, where students can take a quick break from finals week by sipping on tea and getting massages for free! Don’t miss out on this great opportunity; stop by the Honors College from 5:00-7:00PM on April 28th. It has been a great honor serving as President for HCAB and representing the Honors College this past school year. I wish everyone the best of luck during the last few weeks of classes and during finals! –Celine Dalde, HCAB President
Peer Mentor Describes Experience in Honors Housing

A large component of the traditional college experience stems from residential life. Campus housing provides a space for students to make new friends and experience a connectedness to the university. Such an example is James Stukel Towers (JST), where a large portion of Honors students live in an Honors Special Interest Area located in the C-Tower. Throughout JST, there are students who work as Peer Mentors to help residents, particularly academically, as they transition to UIC and to campus housing.

Mohan Chennakesavalu, a sophomore majoring in biological sciences, currently works as a Peer Mentor in JST. I recently sat down with Chennakesavalu to discuss his experiences as a Peer Mentor in Honors housing.

Q: Describe the role of a Peer Mentor in housing.
MC: In a sense, we're kind of like academic RAs. We work with freshmen from the day they move in and learn what classes they're taking, what their majors are, and future goals. We keep tabs on them throughout the year and get alerts during midterms if they're not doing well. If they are doing well, we help them connect with resources such as research or scholarship opportunities. We tutor three hours a week at JST. We're there to help residents transition to college and to ensure their academic success and wellbeing.

Q: What has been your most memorable experience this year as a PM?
MC: I loved move-in day. Getting to know residents from the beginning, when no one was around, and going on trips with them during New Student Days was a lot of fun. That's when they come in and they don't have any work to do, so you actually get to know them before the stress kicks in.

Q: What makes Honors housing a special environment in contrast to other Special Interest Areas?
MC: What's nice is that there are a lot of freshmen and sophomores who are all in the same classes. On my floors, the residents are in the same Honors Core and they're all taking calculus, so they always work together. In other towers, you may have that, but it's a lot more variable. As a PM in the Honors tower, we do Honors programming, so one thing we're working on is having faculty who teach Honors Core classes come and have dinner with Honors students in the dining hall. As a community, we're very collaborative and welcoming. Being surrounded by people who are like you and the programming really distinguish Honors housing from the rest of the SIAs.

Q: Why did you choose to become a PM?
MC: It's a great leadership experience, and you meet a lot of people. I have 60 residents and 30 freshmen, and I know all of their names and talk to half of them regularly. And working at the front desk, you constantly see people in and out, four hours a week. You get to develop a lot of relationships, which is definitely rewarding.

Q: So you're finishing up your first year as a PM. What has been the biggest lesson you've learned?
MC: It's important to form relationships with residents at the beginning of the year. If you don't reach them at the beginning, then they don't know who you are, and if you check in with them later, it'll be awkward. [It's all about] putting yourself out there and not being afraid to talk to new people. At first, it's definitely a transition, but it's probably the most important part.

There is also an Honors Special Interest Area in Commons West. For more information on Honors housing visit www.honors.uic.edu/housing.
24th Annual Honors College Ball
March 11, 2017
Pinstripes, Chicago

Photo credits: Srinivasan Iyer, Ramon Robles
Gates Cambridge Scholarship Recipient: Sarita Deshpande

Sarita Deshpande, an Honors College senior majoring in bioengineering, has been named a Gates Cambridge Scholar. The Gates Cambridge Scholarship was established by Bill and Melinda Gates as a $210 million endowment in order to enable exceptional students to complete a postgraduate degree at the University of Cambridge in the UK. Sarita will be pursuing an MPhil in Medical Sciences at the Department of Clinical Neurosciences for a year.

As a bioengineering major, Deshpande has research experience in modeling physiological cell and tissue interactions in the Department of Mechanical Engineering and in the Department of Bioengineering where she conducts image processing and segmentation of optical coherence tomography angiography images. She participated in the Clinical Immersion Program through UIC's Department of Bioengineering, which allowed her to explore the close relationship between bioengineering and medicine by conducting needs assessments and identifying medical device problems in the healthcare setting. She also serves as the editor-in-chief of the Ampersand and the UIC Bioengineering Student Journal.

At Cambridge, Deshpande will be studying mechanisms of retinal ganglion cell death in glaucomatous models, which can provide insight into the development of novel therapeutic options. Deshpande is “humbled and honored to have received this opportunity and to be a part of such a diverse and dynamic group of scholars,” and she is excited to join the vibrant community of Gates Cambridge Scholars as she takes the next step in her education.

HCAB Scholarship Recipient: Liz Stark

Every year, the Honors College Advisory Board (HCAB) awards a $1,000 scholarship to current Honors College students who demonstrate significant involvement in Honors College activities and student organizations.

Liz Stark, a current senior majoring in the Teaching of Mathematics Secondary Education, was this year's recipient. Stark's goal after graduation is to work for Chicago Public Schools as a high school math teacher, and ultimately teach at her alma mater, Lane Tech High School. Stark is not only an exceptional student, but also has been an active member in many Honors College organizations, such as the Honors College Ambassadors, the student representative for the Honors Council, and the Honors College Student Leadership Council. Stark was also a member of the Honors College Advisory Board for three years, where she served as the Freshman Representative, Secretary, and President.

When asked about her favorite Honors activity, Stark mentions that joining HCAB during freshman year and eventually serving as President of the organization was a truly memorable experience. As President, she was able to "fundraise for scholarships, organize the Honors College Ball, and plan student social events throughout the year" The leadership roles Stark has taken on during her time in the Honors College “helped [her] become more organized, creative, and collaborative.” Stark hopes to utilize the skills she has gained in her future career as a math teacher.

Stark values her relationships with Honors College students, staff, and professors, and appreciates that the Honors community provided her “a small liberal arts college environment inside a large research university.”

The Honors College congratulates Stark once again for her accomplishments!
UIC’s National Recipients of the Access Path to Psychology and Law Program

Given the highly competitive nature of the Access Path to Psychology and Law (AP) program, only five awards are distributed nationally every year. This year, two recipients, Kaitlynn Richardson and Brandon Garcia, are Honors College students and currently work in the lab of Honors College Dean Emerita Dr. Bette Bottoms. The AP program aims to diversify the fields of psychology and law by encouraging faculty members to recruit underrepresented graduate school applicants in their research labs. The program provides financial support for the recipients to garner research experience and opportunities for mentoring and professional development.

Kaitlynn Richardson, a sophomore majoring in psychology and biological sciences, was recruited by Bottoms and applied to the AP program because it intersected with her interest in psychology as a pre-med student. Richardson has been working in Bottoms’ lab, where she has learned common research methods in psychology, such as coding transcripts and data entry. Through the AP program, Richardson hopes to complete her Capstone project, which will examine the correlation between race and animal abuse.

Brandon Garcia, a first-generation college junior majoring in psychology and criminology, law, and justice, was also recruited by Bottoms and applied to the AP program. Garcia hopes to use the AP grant to fund an ongoing study in the lab regarding juries and their reaction to animal abuse. Working alongside Richardson for an average of 10 hours a week, Garcia’s tasks involve data collection and analyses.

Garcia and Richardson both attended the American Psychology-Law Society (AP-LS) national conference in Seattle in March. Both students plan to use their time in the AP program to develop their Capstone projects. Students interested in developing and implementing their research projects in psychology or law can apply for the AP program by December 2017.

From the Editor’s Desk: Farewell Letters

From my roles as contributing writer to editor-in-chief, I have been involved with The Ampersand over the last three years. It has been my most meaningful experience at the Honors College. We have constantly improved the publication by engaging with a wider and more student-friendly audience. This year, we have increased blogging and photography opportunities by publishing blogs every week and by incorporating photo spreads into every issue.

Firstly, thank you to all of the writers, bloggers, and photographers, who have shown an amazing level of dedication and enthusiasm to making The Ampersand a high-quality publication. Thank you to Dean Keen and Professor Mark Chiang for their guidance and support, and for helping us edit the issues to meet our deadlines. Many thanks to Sarah Lee, the former editor-in-chief, for her advice and ideas. I extend my gratitude to the graduate editorial advisors I’ve worked with over the last two years, Andrea Vaughan and Abby Kindelsperger, for their invaluable advice and thoughts in discussions. They have significantly improved our editing process and the quality of our articles. Thank you to Sara Mehta, our staff advisor, for her endless patience and encouragement in all aspects, especially in guiding me every step of the way as I transitioned into this leadership role.

Finally, I extend my heartfelt thanks to the editorial board: Yuwa for her optimism and commitment, Sanjana for her wit and reliability, and Gaurav for his enthusiasm and dedication. Thank you to Christine Lee, our layout editor for the last three years, who has worked tirelessly to optimize the layout for each issue. I would like to welcome new editors Miguel Castro, Isra Hasnain, Vivian Jin, and Sahana Reddy. I am excited to see how The Ampersand grows under Sanjana’s leadership next year, and I look forward to reading Volume 11!

—Sarita Deshpande, Editor-in-Chief

My involvement in The Ampersand has been a rewarding experience; writing for the publication has taught me how to convey my ideas effectively, and now as editor, I find it humbling to help other writers develop their own communication skills. I have been fortunate to work with dedicated writers, Editorial Board members, and advisors who have made the editing process enjoyable. I look forward to seeing what the future publications of The Ampersand will bring!

—Gaurav Agnihotri, Editor
Honors College Student Publications

The Honors College offers various opportunities for students to get involved in student publications, including *The Ampersand*, *OneWorld*, *Red Shoes Review*, and *The Journal for Pre-Health Affiliated Students*.

*The Ampersand* is the official newsletter of the Honors College that highlights Honors College events, faculty, and students. The goal of the publication is to inform students and faculty about Honors College events, such as the Honors College Ball and the HCAB Faculty-Student Luncheon. Interested students can get involved in blogging and photography opportunities as well. Blog topics have ranged from highlighting Honors Core courses to cultural experiences as a college student. Students do not need to have any writing experience to be involved and can email uicampersand@gmail.com with questions.

*OneWorld* features articles that address socio-economic issues, world events, and study abroad experiences. The overarching goal of the publication is to inform the UIC community of events transpiring around the world and serve as a platform for student voices on global issues. Editors diligently work with writers throughout the year to publish a high-quality journal. This year’s issue includes features on Ilham Tohti, a scholar imprisoned for human rights activism, and the destruction of cultural heritage sites by ISIS and other militants. Interested students can reach out to oneworld.uic@gmail.com for updates.

*The Red Shoes Review* is the Honors College undergraduate literary and arts magazine. It is published once each year. Red Shoes Review members arrange events to fundraise and increase student engagement by having fun and celebrating creativity. During the first semester, members host open mic events, plan for the magazine, and collect pieces. In the second semester, they fundraise through an art show, create the magazine with the pieces they’ve chosen, and publish and distribute the publication during their Quad Day event. Interested students can email uic.redshoes@gmail.com and like them on Facebook via UIC’s Red Shoes Review.

*The Journal of Pre-Health Affiliated Students*, or JPHAS, is a publication that focuses on health topics such as the latest health research findings and recent health news. It serves as a forum for pre-health students to write and read about interesting advancements in health. This year’s issue highlights advances in epigenetics research and the ethical concerns of assistive reproductive technologies. Interested writers can also email jphas.journal@gmail.com for more information.

The Honors College not only emphasizes academic excellence but also offers leadership opportunities through journalism to enhance students’ experiences on campus.

Mission Statement

To highlight the achievements of Honors College students, staff, and faculty, to report on Honors College events, and to provide a forum for students and faculty to share interesting experiences and opinions, all for the purpose of fostering a sense of community and celebrating diversity among the constituents of the Honors College.