The Promethean: Spring 2018

April Quattlebaum
The College at Brockport

Catherine Esposito
The College at Brockport

Caitlyn Koch
The College at Brockport

Makenzie Grube
The College at Brockport, makenziej96@gmail.com

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Dr. Amanda Schepis graduated from The College at Brockport, where she was a member of the Honors College, in 2006 with a Bachelor’s in biological sciences. Dr. Schepis is now a veterinarian at the Sheridan Animal Hospital in Buffalo, NY, where she is also the Hospital and Medical Director.

Despite the heavy workload of her major course requirements at Brockport, Dr. Schepis still found time for extracurricular activities. She was a member of the pre-professional club, tennis team, and was a Resident Assistant. On top of all this, Dr. Schepis worked at the Brockport Small Animal Hospital! Taking on all of these roles was time consuming, but Dr. Schepis is glad that she got involved. “I definitely got busy,” she said, “but... it really got me out there and involved on campus.”

Dr. Schepis advised students to know what their purpose is, but also to live in the moment and ‘see where life takes you.’

Being a member of the Honors College was something that Dr. Schepis felt was highly valuable. The aspect of the program that she enjoyed most was “having a group of other Honors students that [she] could relate to and talk to.” In her first year, she lived with other Honors students, and this, combined with smaller Honors classes, helped her to build meaningful relationships with like-minded students.

According to Dr. Schepis, the most challenging aspect of the Honors program was her senior thesis: “An Evaluation of Caenorhabditis elegans as a Model System for Enterobacter Sakazakii Pathogenesis.” In preparation for her career in veterinary medicine, Dr. Schepis used her thesis as an opportunity to conduct research in her field, then present a high quality written project on an area of particular interest to her. As you can surmise from the title, the thesis was difficult, but Dr. Schepis found it invaluable. In her own words, the “caliber and level of work got me ready for the intensity of vet school.” Even now, Dr. Schepis applies the research skills she developed while working on her thesis to her career as a veterinarian.

A major skill that Dr. Schepis took away from her college experience was time management. Everything she was involved in on campus helped prepare her for further education and her career. “I learned to triage and prioritize what was important,” she said, “so that I could get everything done.” Ultimately, her main advice for students now is “don’t feel like you have to plan everything out.” She stressed how important it is to know that “it’s okay if your plans don’t work out the way you thought they would.” Dr. Schepis advised students to know what their purpose is, but also to live in the moment and “see where life takes you.”

–April Quattlebaum
The Honors College attracted Umaima in a few major ways. The first would be the small classes with no more than 20 students. The fact that Brockport is relatively small was also important to Umaima, and she found that dedicated attention would be given to her from the very beginning of her experience with the Honors College.

Professor Austin Busch, Associate Professor of English and Associate Director of the Honors College, reached out to Umaima and helped her adjust to the Honors College.

For Umaima, the opportunity to have her own research is one of the biggest appeals of the Honors College.

Dr. Busch helped her registration process go smoothly, and facilitated her transition to a method of schooling that differs from her experience in Pakistan.

Umaima is excited about the prospect of completing a thesis in her undergraduate studies. She knows that she will be pursuing graduate studies and believes that “having experience really counts.” For Umaima, the opportunity to conduct her own research is one of the biggest appeals of the Honors College.

The Peer Mentoring Program of the Honors College has been a helpful part of Umaima’s first year experience as well. Peer Mentors are Honors students, sophomores to seniors, who meet once a week with new Honors students to help them adjust to life at Brockport and meet fellow students in their major. Umaima has found that her peer mentors have helped the most with registering for classes and curating her academic plan.

Reflecting on her transition to college life, Umaima feels that she has done well with her first year. Her high school experience in Pakistan was very challenging, and this made it much easier to come into a college setting where more independence is required.

Umaima was nervous in coming to a new place, especially in the current political climate, but she has found people at Brockport to be accepting. She especially feels welcomed by the administrators of the Honors College. In the broader scope of The College at Brockport, Umaima has found people she can relate to and develop friendships with, including members of the Muslim Student Association.

Umaima is excited about her future with the Honors College at Brockport, and is already considering topics for her Honors Thesis!

—Catherine Esposito
Over the past two years, the Honors Club has been making strides in connecting with the campus community. In 2017, under the leadership of President Tambria Shroeder, the club put on an enjoyable Scholar’s Day Soirée. The annual event held in April is a celebration of all of the students and faculty that conduct research on campus, and it features hors d’oeuvres catered by Garnishes. It was a great time and a very social event!

For the Fall 2017 semester, the club elected co-presidents Amber Schwartz and Caitlyn Koch, both juniors in the Honors College. In addition, Sophie Nash was elected as Vice President, Sean Regan was elected to be Treasurer, and Katelynn Demskie was elected as Secretary.

The executive team worked together in the beginning of the year to recruit new Honors students to join the club.

With the help of the new recruits, the Honors Club created a successful Homecoming Parade float. The theme of the Homecoming Parade was “Game on!” and the Honors Club chose to put together a Mario Kart themed float. This took form as the club members painted and designed boxes to use as cars, which they wore as they marched in the parade in this past October.

—Caitlyn Koch

The Honors College is on the move! Both the Honors offices and the student lounge will be moving from their current place on the second floor of Holmes Hall to the ground floor of the Albert W. Brown Building. The new Honors College location will be open beginning in the Fall 2018 semester.

The program’s new location will be different in setup from its location in Holmes. The Honors College will be spread between rooms 131 and 139 in the Brown Building. The student lounge and computer lab will be in room 135. There will be a copier and supply room, a conference room, and a student employee office as well. Most importantly, while this set up is more spread out, there is also more space for students and faculty to gather and collaborate. The new space is brighter, more inviting, and located adjacent to the new Academic Success Center, where many Honors students work as tutors and receive tutoring.

On Friday, April 27th at 3:30pm to 5:30pm, the Honors College will host a celebratory event to recognize this milestone in the program’s history. The entire campus community is invited!

—Caitlyn Koch

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Dr. Carter Soles is a professor in the English Department at Brockport, who specializes in Film Studies, and has taught Honors 112, Introduction to Honors, for two years. Dr. Soles is also a member of the Honors Advisory Council, which meets with the Honors College directors to develop initiatives for Honors programming.

“I would say it is different [to teach an Honors class]. One thing that I have noticed … is that the students lean into the material more so. For me, that’s especially lovely when I’m teaching argumentative writing and basic rhetoric. I think Honors students … have a sense that the value you get out of a thing is based on what you put into it.

“My favorite part of teaching Honors classes is the class discussions. With Honors students, I can bring in a reading that is a little more heavy duty and expect them to get it.

“My class structure] pushes students to think on their feet and really exercise good judgment. That’s why I like it… We walk through the various steps of how to analyze arguments, how to assess who your audience might be, and how to address their concerns and not alienate them, and then we eventually get into writing essays that are analyzing texts or analyzing issues that we care about.

“By and large, the Honors students I have worked with so far are really super organized.”

—Caitlyn Koch

“‘The Honors College is a great community to be a part of.’
-Morgan Sherwood

“I loved being a part of the Honors Club Homecoming Float! It was very creative.”
-Tegan Stoddart

“It is very beneficial to be able to register for classes early because it makes scheduling less stressful.”
-Jess Ketzak

“I found it was much easier to meet people with similar interests and goals [through the Honors College].”
-Ethan Bulmahn

“The Honors College was the reason I chose to come to Brockport.”
-Megan Palmowski

“I love the atmosphere and the people.”
-Heather White

New Student Thoughts

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Mia Martelli, an Honors College student in the Dance BFA program. Mia wonders how curators can continue to push the art field forward by choosing different and unique works and voices.

Working on the Guest Artist Committee under the Student Dance Organization (SDO) is what sparked Mia’s interest in curation. The Guest Artist Committee works to bring in relevant dancers and choreographers to work with the Brockport Dance Department. Mia believes that it has been important for her to choose the right artist to move Brockport’s dance program forward.

Because Mia has decided to research a more academic aspect of dance, she chose Tamara Carrasco, an Assistant Professor in the Dance Department as her Faculty Adviser. According to Mia, Professor Carrasco has taught many academic dance classes and has a good sense of dance theory, which is important to her thesis. Mia is also interested in Carrasco’s outside research, which most recently works with multi-media.

Mia’s research process has been difficult so far because there is not a wide berth of literature on dance curation. She has mostly been interviewing curators and reaching out to curators who run their own festivals. She has even spoken with a curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, expanding her research to include other forms of art.

Mia began her thesis project in November of 2017 by pairing choreographers with other visual artists to create site-specific art. With this thesis, she hopes to create a change in the dance world by forcing curators to question their own biases when choosing work. Mia wishes to push boundaries while still staying connected to traditional dance.

–Catherine Esposito

Mia Martelli, an Honors College student in the Dance BFA program.
For students at Brockport, there are a number of specialized requirements and courses that must be fulfilled. One is the Fine Arts with Performance. One Honors course that fulfills this General Education requirement is Improvisational Theatre. According to the course catalog, “Honors Improv” is a class that “covers principles and techniques of improvisation as an art form.” This class teaches students the interactive nature of improvisational theatre, and allows them to have a creative experience in a form with which they may not be familiar. While this class does require active student participation, it also offers a lecture component in which students learn about theatre and the skills of improvisation.

Improv theatre is most commonly taken by Honors students in their first year. While there are many excellent courses that can fulfill the Fine Arts with Performance requirement, Improv Theatre offers a unique approach that successfully reaches students with diverse areas of interest and levels of comfort in theatre.

She has a unique ability to make a very specialized area, such as theatre, interesting to all of her students.

This course acknowledges the differences in student experience and learning style, and offers a unique variety of exercises that can reach all students. One of the most positive aspects of this course is the fact that, no matter their major or lack of experience with theatre, students are able to have a valuable experience and gain expertise that they can apply in their education. While it may be concentrated on theatre, this course enables students to learn performance skills that can be applied to various aspects of life, such as techniques that can be applied in oral presentations.

A major factor that makes this class a success is the professor, Susan Hopkins. Professor Hopkins teaches Improv Theatre at The College at Brockport not only for Honors students, but also for the general student population. She has been teaching this course for more than ten years, and has received positive reviews from many students. In a course that can stretch and challenge students’ comfort zones, she is still regarded as being “hilarious,” “amazing,” and “a lot of fun” by those who have taken her class. She is an exciting professor who provides students with a positive learning experience, even in a class that may cause hesitation for students who are not used to performance. She has a unique ability to make a very specialized area, such as theatre, interesting to all of her students, and this ability is one of the many ways that Professor Hopkins heightens the experience for her students.

–April Quattlebaum
April Quattlebaum

April Quattlebaum is a second year student at The College at Brockport. She has been in the Honors College since her first year. April is an English major with a dual concentration in Literature and Adolescent Education and a minor in Music.

Catherine Esposito

Catherine Esposito is an English and Dance double major, and is a sophomore in the Honors College. She is excited to be writing for The Promethean, and enjoys sharing all the Honors College has to offer.

Caitlyn Koch

Caitlyn Koch is a junior in the Honors College. She is a dual major in English Literature and Finance with a minor in Political Science. She is Co-President of Honors Club, President of Circle K Club, and Vice President of the Swing Dance Society. She intends to pursue a law degree after graduating.

Makenzie Grube

Makenzie Grube is an Art major with a concentration in Graphic Design. She is very happy that Dr. Kowal and Dr. Busch gave her the opportunity to redesign The Promethean and is excited that her design will be a part of the Honors College even after graduating in May 2018.