

CO-DIRECTOR
UPDATE:

- Professor VanDieren presented at Leadership Pittsburgh TEDx Conference on November 14 on harnessing children's mathematical creativity
- Professor Harold presented his research in Philadelphia on November 21 at the Northeastern Political Science Association.

Junto Editorial Board

Thanksto the following individuals for your contributions to this newsletter:

Alena Landon

Jean Kalevitch

Sara Meier

Sheila Strong

Professor VanDieren

Professor Harold

If you would like to contribute to upcoming Junto publications, please contact honors@rmu.edu

Portz Grant Awarded!

The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) has awarded a \$1000 Portz Grant to the RMU Honors Program for the development of the Undergraduate Research Conference that will be held this spring! Portz Grants are "made to Honors programs/colleges to help them engage in program innovation." This year innovation has been added to the honors program with the implementation of video conferencing at the Undergraduate Research Conference. Originally, a grant of only \$500 was applied for. The NCHC found the URC video conferencing idea to be so innovative, that they doubled the grant to \$1000! The addition of video conferencing will allow universities from the entirety of the Northeast Regional Honors Council to participate in the URC. This video conferencing will allow for a low cost solution to traveling to RMU to take part in the conference.



REP. CHRISTIANA AND
HONORS STUDENTS

The November Honors Networking Lunch focused on the theme of civic engagement. The keynote address was given by **State Representative Jim Christiana**. Rep. Christiana represents the 15th Legislative District of the PA House of Representatives. Also in attendance at the networking lunch were several RMU faculty who are active in local government, including Prof. Ken LaSota who not only teaches the honors section of Geology, but also is the mayor of Heidelberg, Pennsylvania. Rep. Christiana also met with honors students at a dessert after the lunch, where he talked about the importance of public service and young people being aware of current issues and involved in politics.

“Lunch with a Prof”

Honors students do breakfast with Prof. Pinson



“Lunch with a Prof” is a way for honors students to choose their favorite professors, and then have lunch (or breakfast or dinner) with them in an informal setting. This gives students the chance to hear about all the cool stuff they are doing, how events and strategies have impacted their careers, and ask them about their research, or really anything they want to talk about.

Prof. Heather Pinson Prof. Connie Ruzich

Lunch with Professor Pinson was a learning experience. Amid the sandwiches and iced teas a much needed connection was forged. To sit at a table with a professor, as equals, whether with Professor Pinson or any other professor, presents a side of the professor outside of the classroom. Face-to-face, the student and professor learn details about their lives that would have previously never been understood. Thus, it creates a mutual bond as individuals who call Robert Morris their offices, classrooms, and homes away from home. Professor Pinson was no exception. With her vibrant wit and easygoing attitude, I learned not only the dynamics of the academic sphere but also details regarding her journey to the current position she holds. I felt that I made a new friend and mentor who will help guide me through the rest of my university career. I extend a most appreciative thanks to the Honors Program for letting me get up close and personal with my professor.

--Jean Kalevitch

Wednesday December 2nd was this semester’s final “Lunch With a Professor,” this time featuring Professor Connie Ruzich. Students enjoyed free meals from Bruegger’s Restaurant and entertaining conversation with the professor. Ruzich brought a light-hearted yet intellectual spirit to the event, asking students about their future plans and fields of interest as well as expounding on her recent research in linguistics. She also explained why she believes that goofiness is the best way to get students interested in their studies. Honors students should definitely keep an eye out for these great opportunities to get to know their professors better.

--Alena Landon

Study Break!

To celebrate the end of the semester and to relieve some of the stress from studying for finals, writing term papers, preparing presentations and completing projects, honors students took a few breaks during finals week.

Saturday night, students met

at the RMU Island Sports Center for ice skating organized by the Honors Student Advisory Council.

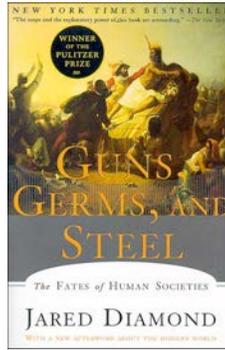
Another break was scheduled in middle of finals week. Students and honors faculty met in the Honors Student Center for pizza, Monopoly, Chess and card games



and an iTunes raffle.

In the spirit of the season, honors students also organized a food drive. Collections were donated to the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank.

The RMU Bookshelf



About the Series:

“The RMU Bookshelf” is a column devoted to books hand-picked by RMU honors professors that Patriot Scholars should read. The books are fascinating, readable, and will expand your horizons—exactly what an honors education is all about!

Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* is one of those once-in-a-generation books. Winner of the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction, as well as the Aventis Prize for Science,

Guns, Germs, and Steel offers a great deal between its covers, but ultimately it is a book about why western civilization has dominated the world since 1400. Combining geography, evolutionary biology, and

By Prof. Daniel Barr

history, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* provides a thought-provoking and compelling thesis: western Europeans and their descendants conquered the world not because of racial, social, or political superiority, but rather because of advantages afforded their civilizations by the natural environment.

Geography, and the role it played in the evolution of western civilization throughout history, allowed the West to survive when other civilizations perished, to become strong, and ultimately, to subjugate most of the known world. This is the story of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, and anyone who wants to understand the roots of inequality in the modern world will want to check it out.

**“Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* is one of those once-in-a-generation books.”
—Prof. Barr**

Profile: Dr. Daniel Barr

Daniel Barr is Associate Professor of History at RMU. He holds a doctorate in American History from Kent State University, and his research interests

include the following: Colonial North America, the Civil War, Pennsylvania History, and Native American History. Prof. Barr is teaching a Civil War study tour

class, which takes students on a trip to significant Civil War sites next May. He is interested in advising honors theses.

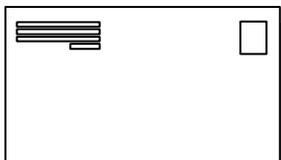
A Conversation with Paul O’Neill and Henry Kissinger

On October 5th, some RMU Patriot Scholars attended “A Conversation With Paul O’Neill and Henry Kissinger” at Heinz Hall. Kissinger discussed topics from ancient British relations with China to our current relations with Afghanistan. He also took questions from the audience and lightened the tone with several jokes. When asked to discuss the tumultuous situations in Iran and Iraq, he quipped, “Are they serving breakfast here?” In their own gesture of détente, the RMU Honors Program invited honors students from other local colleges involved in the Western PA Honors Consortium.



Students wait outside Heinz Hall before the start of the Henry Kissinger and Paul O’Neill conversation.

Postcards from Abroad



Hello from Roma!

I can't believe I've already been studying in Rome, Italy for nine weeks. Time has flown by and I've been able to travel all over Europe and experience the Italian culture and taste the delicious food here. On my first night in Rome, I saw the Colosseum lit up at night- what an amazing sight! Also, I've been to typical tourist destinations, including the Trevi Fountain, the Spanish Steps, Pantheon, Roman Forum, Piazza Navona (where Tom Hanks filmed *Angels and Demons*), and Vatican City. I've also been to see an opera performance for my Masterpieces of Italian Opera class.

Within Italy, I've traveled to Pompeii, Naples, the island of Capri, Florence, Pisa, the region of Tuscany for a wine-tasting, and Perugia for a chocolate festival. As for traveling within Europe, I've been to Copenhagen, Denmark to visit my Danish RMU friend, Maria, who had just graduated, London for a Coldplay concert, Prague, which is a beautiful city, and now I've just returned from my weeklong fall break in Greece. Have I mentioned that trying new international foods is one of my favorite parts of studying abroad? Also, two of my friends were backpacking through Europe and stayed with me for several days, so I was able to show them around Rome. I'm having a great study abroad experience and I will continue to travel and experience new cultures over my remaining nine weeks here.

Ciao!

Sara Meier



Report from the NCHC Annual Meeting

Prof VanDieren travelled to Washington, D.C. to attend the 44th annual National Collegiate Honors Council Annual Meeting: Honors in the Global City. She participated in four days of roundtable discussions and workshops. By far her favorite workshop was (not surprisingly) Honors Math and Science Courses: Techniques that Work. There she learned of a bacteria that can shatter glass (ask her about it sometime), and she gathered several ideas for her Honors Statistics class that will be offered for the first time at RMU this spring. Another popular event was the screening of the documentary *The Linguists* followed by a discussion with the linguist Dr. Harrison and the filmmaker Seth Kramer.

Representing RMU at the Small College Honors Committee Meeting and the regional NCHC meeting, Prof VanDieren advertised Intersections: the Undergraduate Research Conference hosted by RMU and the California University of Pennsylvania on April 16, 2010. This year's conference is open to submissions from honors students at all local universities, and is popular enough to other honors students via video-conferencing.

Stop by the Honors Student Center to check out literature that Prof VanDieren picked up at the conference about DCInternships, The Euro-Scholars Program and AustraLearn/AsiaLearn/EuroLearn study abroad programs.

In addition to spending countless hours in meetings and presentations, Prof VanDieren found time to jog around the Washington Mall, see the Capitol Steps (both kinds) and sneak into the International Spy Museum where she picked up a few ideas for her Cryptography and Steganography Workshops.

Undergraduate Research Conference

The Undergraduate Research Conference is getting closer! If you would like to submit a research paper to the conference, now is a good time to start generating ideas. The paper submission deadline will be March 16, 2010.

Write for The Junto!

The Junto is looking for Editorial Board members. If you are interested in writing articles, editorials, or cartoons for the newsletter, you can do so! Opportunities to review local venues (restaurants, theaters, etc.) are available, and the Honors Program will, within reason, pick up the tab! Reviews, articles, editorials, and cartoons can be submitted to honors@rmu.edu and will be featured in the next edition of the Junto. Special SET recognition will be given.

Student Advisory Council Formed

The 2009-2010 Student Advisory Council (SAC) has been formed. Members of the SAC organize events for the Honors program, help coordinate the Undergraduate Research Conference, and serve as links to other members of the Western PA Honors Consortium. This year's officers of the SAC includes: Sheila Strong – President; Michelle Beamer – Vice President; Jean Kalevitch – Treasurer; Alexandria Antonacci – Secretary. Currently the SAC is waiting for approval from the Student Government Association to become a recognized organization on campus. Gaining recognition would increase funds for the SAC. Thus far, the SAC has organized a Race for the Cure fundraiser, met to discuss partnerships with area universities, created a call for papers for the Undergraduate research conference, and generated several ideas for Honors outings.

Race for the Cure Update

This year the RMU Honors program participated in Race for the Cure. Race for the Cure raises money for the Susan G. Komen Foundation to support breast cancer research. Students took turns selling pink feet. The feet were hung on display in the Food Court. Each foot sold put RMU one step further in the "race" against Honors programs from CCAC, Duquesne, and Point Park. Each university participated in the fundraiser to see who could make the most sales. Duquesne sold the most feet and won the race; they will be awarded with a trophy that will exchange between winning universities each year. RMU raised \$205! Great work RMU!

Alumni Profile

Mario Waldt

Graduated: 2000

Major: BSBA Human Relations

**Employment: ThyssenKrupp Steel Europe
in Duisburg, Germany**

Title: Manager in HR Controlling

"While the major in HR prepared me to some degree for my professional career ... the Honors Program left a more lasting impression personally. The close knit group, the mutual courses, the discussions that could be carried forth through the various courses and activities meant that topics could be dealt with more comprehensively. Studying alongside the same people for several years can be trying at times, however, it is a wonderful experience to grow together through university. Make the most of it [the Honors Program] and you will not regret it."



Sam Koch and Michelle Beamer were two of many great volunteers who helped sell feet during Race for the Cure.

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, January 13, 2010

Mandatory Honors Semester Meeting

Monday, January 25, 2010

January Networking Lunch, Sewall Dining Room C

Tuesday, February 2, 2010 4:00 p.m.

Bill Strickland's lecture on "Making the Impossible Possible."
Massey Theater

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

Deadline for submissions to the Undergraduate Research Conference

Friday, April 16, 2010

Undergraduate Research Conference, Sewall Center

Wednesday, April 7, 2010

Pundit David Brooks to speak on campus

Monday, April 11, 2010

Author Greg Mortensen to speak on campus

Pre-Session Success!

This summer incoming Honors freshman completed their FYSP course during a pre-session. A typical FYSP course meets twice a week for eight weeks, but the Honors program condensed the material to a few days the week before regular classes began. Students learned about university services and policies, completed a service activity, and discussed their summer reading assignment. The pre-session included a walking tour of Pittsburgh, a Pirates baseball game, and a board game night.

Western PA Honors Consortium

This year the RMU Honors program has joined the Western PA Honors Consortium. Universities represented in the Consortium include California University of Pennsylvania, Carlow University, Community College of Allegheny County, Point Park University, and Robert Morris University. It is the Consortium's objective to link the honors programs of colleges and universities in Western Pennsylvania for purposes of social and intellectual community. Members of RMU's SAC met with the Consortium to discuss ideas for future activities that will bring the various honors programs together. The Race for the Cure fundraiser was the first event hosted by the Consortium.

Study Abroad Scholarship Doubled



There is a \$1,000 scholarship for the first seven RMU students who register and deposit, bringing the cost of the trip down to a low \$2,495.

More at <http://rmuisrael.blogspot.com/>

RMU Students from the 2009 Israel class say:

"The trip to Israel was more than a study abroad trip.... this place was jaw-dropping!"

"There was never a time where I did not feel safe. Everyone is so friendly, polite, and welcoming in Israel.... The Israeli people made me feel right at home."

**ROBERT
MORRIS
UNIVERSITY**



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