

HONORS PROGRAM NEWS

SPRING 2009

HONORS STUDENT REFLECTS ON PATH TO PHARMACY SCHOOL BY JUSTIN JACKSON AND KAYLA MCGAHEY



Submitted by Kayla McGahey

Senior Kayla McGahey recently made the next hurdle in her journey to reach her dream career: she was accepted to Oregon State University's pharmacy school. Kayla was willing to discuss how her choices in her undergraduate years helped to prepare her for pharmacy school, as well as offer some tips for the application process.

Q: What aspects of your undergraduate program best prepared you for your acceptance into pharmacy school?

A: First of all, the pre-professional committee of professors spread throughout the biology and chemistry departments are an excellent resource, and have helped me pick the correct sequence of classes and have offered pointers on how to do well in the classes. In order to get into any kind of professional program (medical school, pharmacy school, dental school, etc.), you not only have to consistently take rigorous classes, but also be able to excel in them.

The pre-professional committee helps you pick these classes and tries to make sure that they are hard, yet reasonable enough so that you can maintain a sterling GPA. Second, Brockport is a perfectly sized university for a student like me. The school is large enough to offer a variety of interesting classes and has the facilities needed in order to participate in research and valuable lab experiences, but not so large that I am just a number to the school. The professors here are so approachable and most actually love it when you visit them during office hours for help! I think this is one thing that many students are scared to do, but honestly, they teach the class and are the best resource for seeking help when necessary. Visit your professors; they don't bite! Finally, as much as I hate to admit it, the general education requirements helped me get into pharmacy school. I, like any other student here, dreaded taking some of the general education courses, but when I started looking at pharmacy schools, I realized that they required all of those courses too! Now I have to say thank you to Brockport because I didn't have to scramble to take art classes or social sciences when I decided to apply; I already had them done!

(Continued on page 3)

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

FROM THE DIRECTOR 2

GRADUATE REFLECTIONS 3

AMERICA READS OPENS DOORS 4

NEW NEWSLETTER STAFF 5

POSTSECRET SUCCESS 6

ART AND POETRY 8

ALPHA CHI INDUCTEES 9

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY DR. KENNETH O'BRIEN

Ah, spring, the season of renewal, with budding trees, annuals pushing their way warily through mulch covered gardens, and grasses slowly turning from wintry browns to ever-lusher green. For students it's a dangerous time, since lurking bouts of spring fever can turn February and March's good works into a slowly sinking May GPA. Seniors are fighting their own battles, struggling to finish their courses well and then move on with their lives, principally by entering the world of full-time employment. This year, however, that passage is certainly more harrowing given the recent economic problems. As for faculty, this is always an enjoyable, albeit hectic, time of year, as we look forward to the change of pace that comes with the end of each spring semester and the renewal of our pursuit of scholarship during summer. Before that happens, however, we have the numerous satisfying ceremonies that mark our students' successes: Scholar's Day, the Honors and Awards Ceremony, honorary society inductions, and commencement itself.

But for Dr. Kowal and me, spring is also the season during which we complete the admissions processes for next year's class, reading the last applications carefully and crafting individual acceptance letters, each tailored to a student's record and essay. This year, an unusually high number of essays have told stories of 'student success', in which students have triumphed over adversity through teamwork, great effort and careful planning. The lesson, they say, is that anything can be accomplished with enough work.

Whenever I read this, I hear an all-too-familiar voice in the back of my head say, "Not so fast". Admittedly, focused effort is often a critical, even essential, element of successful outcomes, but it is only one. There are many more, some of which are clearly beyond our control, which is why I remind you that life offers surprises, not all of which are good; that our decisions, even "good decisions" based on careful thought and real information, can have unintended results, and that hard work and good intentions are no guarantors of success.

What else except our own effort affects outcomes? A good deal actually. There is luck, for one example. Sometimes it's lousy, turning a tight timeline into a nightmare by an unexpected illness or family crisis or... you fill in the blank. When it's good, we call it 'serendipity,' the unexpected alignment of the stars in our favor, but when it's bad, it can be devastating, despite our good intentions or even our best efforts. Obvious examples of uncontrollable forces include natural disasters, such as the destructive force of Hurricane Katrina that left shattered lives in her sodden wake, or an unexpected death of someone to whom you were close. Or, it could be something as mundane (and infuriating) as a faculty member who refuses to return to the library those three books you need for your research paper.

In some ways, the identification of what is within our control – and distinguishing it from what is beyond – is one of the hallmarks of maturity, for with it comes a recognition of our lack of sovereignty. Understanding our limits compels us to examine both the results of our efforts or behaviors, and the processes by which they were achieved. In doing so, we accept the appropriate responsibility for our lives, even with so many uncertainties.

In this season, then, of congratulation, completion, and promising maturation, acknowledge your fine efforts and all your good work, but remember that often, good works, like good intentions, may not be enough. And, so I'll close with the old Irish blessing, especially for seniors, "May the road rise to meet you, may the wind be ever at your back." Or, in more contemporary lingo, may "the Force be with you."



Photo from Georgia Southern University

HONORS STUDENT REFLECTS ON PATH TO PHARMACY SCHOOL

BY JUSTIN JACKSON AND KAYLA MCGAHEY

(continued from page 1)

Q: How has the Honors Program helped you in your endeavors? Do you have any particular Honors Program memory you would like to share?

A: The Honors Program has been especially helpful to me over the past three years. I am from Spokane, Washington (yes, all the way across the country) and I was terrified when I started classes in the fall of my freshman year. I honestly think that my Honors peer mentor group had a huge impact in getting me through that first semester. The kids in my group were so much fun and my mentors were awesome. Just having that group of people made me feel like I was not alone here at Brockport. I knew so little about Brockport when I got here [that] I even asked my mentors if you could swim in the canal! How gross! Even after my first semester, I stayed in touch with my mentors and a lot of that original group. Of course the Honors Program helped because I always got the class schedule I wanted and needed, which is especially helpful when you are trying to schedule multiple science labs. Finally, the Honors Program offered me some really unique and exciting class experiences that I never would have gotten if I weren't in the program: we get to enjoy smaller classes with like-minded students. I remember when I registered for Honors Improv Theatre, I was so scared because I am not that outgoing of a person. There were only 16 people in my class (as opposed to about 30 to 35 in the regular class) and we all had a great time and I never felt uncomfortable; it was purely fun!

Q: What difficulties have come your way, and how did you get past them?

A: I have had to make some difficult decisions over the past few years. In my freshman year, I competed on the gymnastics team and it was fun being part of a college team; we even went to Nationals in Wisconsin that year! Gymnastics has been a part of my life since I was about nine years old and [then] there came a time during my college years in which I had to decide whether to focus my attention on school or sports, and of course I had to choose school. I decided to hang up my leotard and focus on my schoolwork; what a hard decision it was, but it was for the best! After I stopped competing, I was able to join Alpha Phi Omega (a co-ed national service fraternity) and participate in many community service projects. I tutored Organic Chemistry (one of my favorite classes here), and I got a job at the Rite-Aid on Main Street, which really helped me solidify my decision to go to pharmacy school. All in all, gymnastics was a wonderful experience, but retiring gave me the opportunity to participate in so many other things here at Brockport.

Q: Do you have any tips for others applying to pharmacy school or simply graduate school in general?

A: My advice for people trying to get into a professional program or graduate school or really anything at all is to pick something that you are truly passionate about and then take some time to dream. Make sure to try it out too; if you think you want to be a dentist, go to a dentist's office and ask if you can observe them for a day. Most will say "yes", and then you can get a first hand sense if that career is truly for you (this is one of the most important things anyone can do!). Once you think you know what you want, figure out what you need to do now and what you need to do in the future to get there. Try not to listen to what other people think because, ultimately, that will not make you happy! The admissions committee of any program (or an employer) can sense when you are truly passionate about something. I applied to one pharmacy school all the way across the country (Oregon State University). There were 14 of us invited to interview, and I was the youngest and one of two people not from Oregon. All odds were against me. If you are passionate enough the admissions committee will sense that and can't help but offer you a seat. Two days after my interview, I was accepted and the rest is history.

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-Kayla McGahey

AMERICA READS OPENS DOORS FOR ELEMENTARY AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

BY JESSICA GERACI

The America Reads program, begun in 1996 by the Clinton administration, aims to unite parents, elementary school students, educators, and community members in the common goal of providing literacy to elementary school students. Students at over 1100 colleges and universities, including The College at Brockport, take part in the program, working in area schools to promote literacy. Students may volunteer or participate in the initiative through work-study programs.

The America Reads program at The College at Brockport is run by Mr. Rob DiCarlo. In class, the tutors discuss their experiences, practice reading aloud, become more informed about learning disabilities and literacy levels, and develop resumes. Each tutor is assigned to one or more teachers at their desired grade level in the Brockport Central School District, just up the road from campus.

Even in just the four short weeks I have participated in the program, I can see the positive results of the program for myself and the students and teachers I work with. Almost immediately, the 50 or so sixth graders at Oliver Middle School I see twelve hours a week were excited to see me when I returned after my Tuesdays and Thursdays of absence from their classroom. They were quick to regard me as someone who was there to help, someone to look up to, and someone to relate to. One of my students even asked me to “play hooky” and come to the school every day because “we’re more important than college”.

The description of the America Reads tutors’ duties on The College at Brockport website cites grading papers, assisting students with academic assignments, maintaining discipline, and completing clerical duties. Although the position surely sounds as though it would be most interesting and beneficial for prospective teachers, the program really is for anyone. The clerical duties and relationships you build with your participating teacher have much further-reaching benefits than working in a school. Participating in a professional environment, building your resume, and obtaining professional references are important aspects of the program that can improve any student’s college experience.

Above all, anyone who enjoys working with children will enjoy this position. As always, serving the community is a positive experience in any environment, and this environment is most positive. Consider giving yourself to the American Reads program and see just how much the program can give back to you.



ALUMNI PERSPECTIVE: GRADUATING EARLY

BY STEPHANIE CUMMINGS

By taking college courses in high school, squeezing classes into summer vacations, and staying at full-time status consistently, I was able to graduate a semester early from Brockport. Truthfully, I didn’t have to think very long and hard about this decision. My choice was, if it was probable (without having a panic attack my last semester), I would absolutely do it.

Preparing and researching for my thesis was the sole drawback of graduating early, but with a quickly approaching graduation date, I knew I had no other option but to get it done as fast as possible. I ended up researching for about six weeks, writing for another six, and eventually completing it all in one semester.

Although it is not an option available to everyone, I recommend graduating a semester early for other students who, like me, are eager to get back to a “real life” schedule, make a full-time salary, and begin career searching before the rush of new graduates in May!

INTRODUCING YOUR NEWSLETTER STAFF

It's hard to believe, but it is once again time for the newsletter to switch hands as editor Stephanie Cummings has graduated in December of 2008 and Melissa Broderick will be graduating in May of this year. We could not be more honored to hand over the production of the newsletter to three dedicated and exemplary honors students: Danielle Barthel, Jessica Geraci, and Justin Jackson. Read on to learn a little bit about your new staff!

Name: Jessica Geraci

Year: Freshman

Major: Math and Secondary Education

Fun Fact: My America Reads sixth graders think my name is Penelope.

Food I Could Eat for the Rest of my Life: Chinese Fried Rice

Favorite Quote: "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit." - Aristotle



Name: Justin Jackson

Year: Freshman

Major: History and Elementary Education; Minor in Art

Fun Fact: I was once lost in a Spanish subway during a hailstorm in Madrid.

Food I Could Eat for the Rest of my Life: Oatmeal Crème Pies

Favorite Quote: "History will be kind to me for I intend to write it."
- Sir Winston Churchill



Name: Danielle Barthel

Year: Sophomore

Major: English; Minor in Psychology

Fun Fact: I have a bizarre phobia about throwing up.

Food I Could Eat for the Rest of my Life: Chocolate

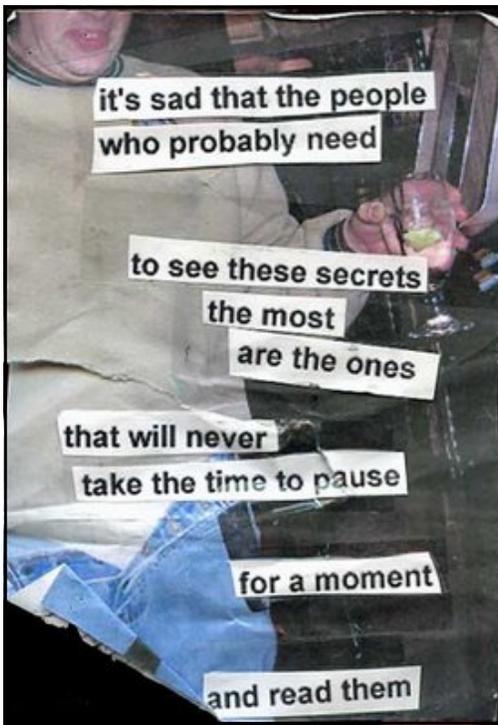
Favorite Quote: "Everything happens for a reason. Every action has a reaction. Always remember that what is meant to be will have a way to come about." -Anonymous



HONORS STUDENTS WELCOME POSTSECRET

BY STEPHANIE CUMMINGS

For most people, Sundays symbolize a day of relaxation, sleeping in until the afternoon, and perhaps catching a game of football or an episode of *Desperate Housewives*. For the rest of us, Sunday is the cherished, anticipated day of the week when new secrets are unveiled on the PostSecret website. PostSecret is an ongoing, community mail art project, in which anonymous people send in their deepest secrets on homemade postcards. Various secrets are then selected and posted on the PostSecret website, or used in PostSecret books or museums. Frank Warren, founder of the art project, has become nationally renowned and the students of Brockport were lucky to have him visit our campus weeks ago. Due to the persistence and dedication of Justine Pruss, Honors Club President, he was willing to visit Brockport to share secrets, conduct an open-mic ceremony, and answer questions and concerns from the crowd. Many Honors students attended the presentation and a few were delighted to share their views:



Source: <http://postsecret.blogspot.com/>

“I was insanely impressed by how many people showed up and the amount of people who participated in the open-mic portion. I felt an overwhelming surge of pride at seeing this nationally renowned man come and speak at our school. This has been a pet project for two years now, between my mother and me, and I was so pleased to see it all come together. I love the idea for PostSecret and hold Frank Warren in high regard for his work and willingness to give back to us all. I love PostSecret especially for the fact that it allows us to be connected emotionally in a day and age where we are so disconnected. He is the confessional for our clergy.”

-JUSTINE PRUSS, Senior

“Having been a PostSecret fan for many years, I thoroughly enjoyed hearing Frank’s stories of the project. I felt a great sense of camaraderie when my fellow students shared their secrets with the audience. Frank’s lecture is a great addition to any college campus. Anyone who chose not to attend surely missed out on a wonderful experience.”

-JESSICA GERACI, Freshman

“Having Frank Warren and his PostSecret phenomenon visit our school was great. His lecture and slideshow were interesting and enjoyable, and he seemed genuinely connected to his work. What made the event most unique, though, was having him allow students come to the microphone and share their own secrets out loud. Some were sad, some were funny, some were very intense. Each secret made an impression on me, and I walked away from the Seymour Union Ballroom feeling like I needed to give everyone a little more leeway in life. Perhaps the person who rushed by me and hit my shoulder with their backpack wasn’t rude and annoying, but instead was harboring a secret that they were too afraid to tell anyone. Who am I to assume things about people that I don’t even know? This event gave me the chance to become less judgmental and this is a powerful lesson to learn.”

-DANIELLE BARTHEL, Sophomore

PEER MENTORING: THE VIEW FROM BOTH SIDES

BY DANIELLE BARTHEL

I completed my first experience with the Honors Peer Mentoring Program during my freshman year, when I was the mentee rather than the mentor. My peer mentors, fellow freshmen, and I met every week to go over different aspects of campus life, registering for classes, becoming organized, and more. It was such a good experience for me that I decided to become a peer mentor during my sophomore year.

I truly enjoy being a mentor. Last semester, I was paired with two other mentors and we were assigned a group of six students to meet with for the first semester of the year. Our mentees were fun, interesting, and inquisitive, which made our job very easy. As is tradition, we met once a week to go over the features of Brockport that the students were unfamiliar with, such as using (and understanding) our online programs Angel and Banner. Meetings like this were informative but also relaxed because every mentor knows what it is like to be a freshman. We were especially sympathetic mentors as sophomores because we remember being freshmen just the year before.

I am glad I chose to begin mentoring for many reasons. If you are unsure about whether or not to become a peer mentor, let me just assure you that it is worthwhile. Not only do you help your mentees, you make lasting friendships with them. You also form bonds with your fellow mentors, people you might never have met if you had not become a peer mentor. This program also looks good on your résumé and earns you one credit on your transcript. I urge each of you to take the chance to become a mentor; the people you meet and the experiences you have will certainly be worth the commitment.

MARKETING INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

BY KELSEY JOHNSON

I always thought that people were exaggerating when they said that internships are great experiences and it's well worth the trouble to find them. I decided to look into them and found an internship that has been a rewarding and great learning experience. I am currently doing an internship at The College at Brockport's Marketing Communications Department. I have been writing statements, press releases to be issued in the RocEd section (which includes the colleges of Greater Rochester) of the *Democrat and Chronicle*, and student profiles that are featured on the Brockport web site. I have attended clientele meetings and am currently working on holding a focus group to obtain student feedback for the Brockport Student Government marketing strategies.

I know it sounds really loaded and scary, but fulfilling the higher expectations of the Honors Program helped me learn time management and cope with stress so that it doesn't become too much to handle. I am currently a junior majoring in Communication Studies with a minor in English. The marketing communications internship is a great opportunity for anyone interested in public relations or enhancing their writing skills overall. Being in the Honors Program is a great prerequisite to experiencing the fast-paced, high stress world of public relations.

ART AND POEMS

Downstairs, By Justin Jackson



NORMAL LIFE

By Amber Karpie

A dream longed for
 Yet as useless as an
 Underground poet's writings
 Or an unfound artist's thumbnails
 Abused by the phrase "unique,"
 A dolled up version of accepted
 Lifestyles or behaviors shunned
 From so many,
 What is right
 Doesn't suit the passing days
 Of a twisting soul, taking greed with
 Blame, fueled by self-torment
 And judging eyes
 Picture perfect is what reflects
 To minds too in denial,
 Underneath is what bubbles out
 With the phases of the moon,
 Truth is deflected from
 One soul to another,
 Who is to say which theory
 Is best to live by?
 How is normalcy achieved by diversity
 Created in memories of a
 Changing present?
 Let it be, let it go

DEPENDENCY

By Amber Karpie

I think about you from time to time
 Only to have your face never escape my mind
 And wonder if the distance is greater than time
 Or how to still call you no longer mine

Run away from the pain of yesterday
 No one to follow yet the hurt still stays
 Knowing you care in your indifferent ways
 Yet when we speak there's nothing to say

The blame never leaves from all regrets
 Try to understand that I'm trying my best
 These circumstances make it easy to regress
 Keep giving more yet keep receiving less

In too deep in my life to ever escape
 Without tearing apart the life you helped shape
 I know it's not easy when dealing with fate
 Stay a while longer till our shadows are shaken

Holding on too tight of your dependency
 Blinded by thoughts to what I can't see
 The dream to become what you wish me to be
 Someday I hope to recover so you can be free

Waiting, By Charity Henderson



HONORS PROGRAM ALPHA CHI INDUCTEES

Megan Bodekor
 Nicole Bower
 Michelle Burke
 Kristen DiPasquale
 Amy Flynn
 Colin Gordon
 Samuel Hickson
 Joshua Hubman
 Lindsay Kerry



Kimberly Mahon
 Felicia McQueen
 Anthony Nicodemi
 Jessica Ouderkirk
 Arielle Rosenfeld
 Jacqueline Scala
 Colleen Vallone
 Anthony Wensel

HONORS STUDENT AWARDS

The Honors Program Outstanding Senior Award for 2009:

LAURA LUETTGER

The Honors Program Scholars for 2009:

CARLEY GUARIGLIA, Arts and Performance

NICOLE KOLCZYNSKI, Professions

MICHAEL STEVES, Letters and Sciences

CONTRIBUTE TO THE HONORS NEWSLETTER!

The Honors Program Newsletter is a publication dedicated to the Honors Program faculty, students, and alumni. Articles are written by Honors students and are designed to provide information to the Honors community. Content will include a variety of topics, including research, Honors program news and events, student and professor spotlights, experiences, and creative work. For submissions or more information, please contact Justin Jackson at jjack4@brockport.edu.