The big question that I asked in our last Newsletter — whether we should increase the size of the Honors Program at Clarkson — has not been definitively answered, but we have received lots of valuable feedback from students, faculty, staff, parents and alumni. The Strategic Planning Committee is considering if we can indeed grow Honors without compromising the quality of our programs and our vital sense of community. Whether or not we grow, our conversations with stakeholders suggest we need to increase disciplinary diversity and improve visibility of Honors. To help us with these goals, I have appointed an Advisory Council made up of distinguished alumni, both from Honors and from Clarkson University before the program began in Fall 1997. We met to brainstorm during Alumni Weekend in July and generated some great ideas about improving our “brand.” Already, we have introduced an “Honors Co-op” to attract more business and industry-oriented students and next year we will be running a special study abroad experience in the Dominican Republic.

We are increasing visibility on campus by taking over the organization of the Symposium of Undergraduate Research Experiences (SURE), the bi-annual student conference at Clarkson.

One way of increasing our national visibility is by sending more students to national conferences. Generating financial support for such travel and other forms of educational enhancement, such as study abroad and summer research, is the goal of our current fundraising campaign led by the Advisory Council. Our goal is to provide each student support for one opportunity, and at the current program size this means about $25,000 per year. I am very pleased to say that so far this year we have raised $10,000, which means we are almost halfway there. Thank you to all alumni and parents who have so generously contributed. If you would like to help us reach our goal, please see the instructions on the back page.

The Honors Newsletter shows the myriad ways students respond to educational opportunities offered by the Honors Program at Clarkson, and catches you up on the lives of some of our alumni. Please keep sending us regular updates of your whereabouts and activities, and provide suggestions for stories. For alumni and parents, there are many ways to be involved: You can mentor current students, give a talk on campus, or attend or even judge presentations at SURE. Just let us know how you would like to participate!
Goldwater Scholars
by Jon Goss

Yorang Lin ’14, a chemical engineering and applied mathematics & statistics double major and Pingguang Yang ’14, a biomolecular science and applied mathematics & statistics double major, were awarded Goldwater Scholarships last spring. Kyle Z. Hancock ’14, a chemical engineering, was awarded honorable mention. Yang and Lin grew up in the same region in China and immigrated to New York City several years ago. They met while attending the Manhattan Comprehensive [Lin] plans to pursue a Ph.D. in chemical engineering and conduct NANO MATERIAL RESEARCH in an industrial R&D department.

Lin & Day High School, in New York City, and they have been together since. They started at Clarkson in 2010 and both are Ronald E. McNair Scholars. Lin has conducted research at Clarkson with Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering Professor Sitaraman Krishnan on the calorimetric determination of degree of hydration of zwitterionic polymers. She completed a National Science Foundation (NSF) Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) on Modulation of Graphene at Columbia University. She has also completed a research & development internship at Procter & Gamble, where she worked on the whitening of the dental products, and an engineering co-op, also at P&G, in dentifrice processing. Lin proposes to do research into electronic properties of large grain size nitrogen doped monolayer graphene under the mentorship of Prof. Abhay Pasupathy at Columbia University. She plans to pursue a Ph.D. in chemical engineering and to conduct nanomaterial research in an industrial R&D department.

A few highlights of the 2012-2013 competition season from the Honors Program Varsity Athletes: Enrika Chin ‘14 had her third consecutive appearance in the NCAA Division III Volleyball Tournament. The Women’s Volleyball team won the NY Regional Finals in 2012, with Chin as a key player. She was a Capital One/Goldman Sachs Academic All-American and was named to both the NCAA NY Region All-Tournament Team and the Liberty League All-Academic team.

The best way to explain it is to say that running is my social life. Instead of meeting friends for dinner or at a bar, we meet for a run. My husband is also an ultra-runner, so we run in 7:24 for 15 miles, sponsoring an okay run. My last race of the season will be the World Long Distance Mountain Running Championships in North Wales, completing the 45-mile run in 7:24 for 15th place. She was the first American woman and earned an invitation to the World Long Distance Mountain Running Championships in Poland a month later (on her 24th birthday). Amy finished 29th and was the second U.S. woman. When Amy is not running, she is Assistant Superintendent of Operations at Amherst Public Works in Western Massachusetts. At Clarkson, she was a civil engineering major with an environmental engineering concentration and was in the Honors Program’s inaugural class.

Kelly Woodworth and proposes to investigate the susceptibility of the cervical transformation zone to HPV-16. “Most cervical cancer comes from this tiny region,” says Yang. “We’re really interested in finding out why.” Yang plans to obtain an M.D. in oncology and a Ph.D. in cancer research, and pursue a career as a medical research scientist. “Winning this prestigious award gave me the confidence I needed to apply to medical school,” says Yang. “The Goldwater will definitely help me to stand apart.”

Eric Mallery ’16 was on the Nordic relay team that placed third at USCSA Collegiate Nationals. Nick Marshall ’14 earned a Liberty League All-Academic Honors in Cross Country and ranked 13th overall at USCSA Collegiate Nationals for Nordic Skiing. Eleanor Vane ’14 earned a Liberty League All-Academic Honors in Cross Country and ranked 26th overall at USCSA Collegiate Nationals for Nordic Skiing.

One Summer, Two World Championships: Amy (Lane) Rusiecki ’01 (CE) by Jenny Townsend

Other Liberty League All-Academic Honors went to Conor Cullinan ’13 (cross country), Kelly Mulvehill ’16 (swimming), and Russ Seidel ’13 (cross country and Nordic Skiing). It is worth noting that in Fall 2013, 16% of Honors students are playing one or more varsity sports. The campus-wide average is 15%. Seven first-year students (22%) are playing a varsity sport this year.
Kimberly Buckin ’16 (EE, Ph) wrote a paper for her first-year Honors course about the ethics of using robots to treat children with disabilities. When she mentioned this to her academic advisor, Professor James Carroll, he asked if she would be interested in exploring the use of Clarkson’s recently acquired Nao robot to treat autistic children. Many children with autism seem implicitly attracted to robotic technology which provides a potential intermediary between the child and the human social world. Kim leapt at the chance and signed up for summer research with the goal of customizing Nao’s programs to fit requirements of therapists in Potsdam Central School.

During the summer, Kim worked on several projects in which students match Nao’s verbal statements and physical gestures to cue cards. In the Animal Recognition game, Nao plays an animal sound and asks the student to show a card with a picture of the animal — including a cat, dog, elephant and horse — giving praise for correct answers and encouragement for wrong ones. In Kim’s Count to Three exercise, students match a card with the number that Nao counts off, and Nao claps its hands and plays an accompanying sound effect, or shakes its head and tells the student that the answer is not right. In Weather Recognition, Nao describes a weather situation and asks the student to show the card with a picture matching its description. Once the correct response is given, Nao describes a need corresponding to the description. Once the correct response is given, Nao describes a need corresponding to the description. A new request from therapists is for Nao to lead students through a yoga routine and Kim is working on programming the appropriate movements and timing.

Zhan Li ’13 (GSCEM) found her summer research project by emailing and then meeting with faculty in the School of Business. She was fascinated by Professor Chen Xiang’s research on the distribution of digital goods in the motion picture field. She found him to be encouraging and easy to communicate with. The project goal is to use data mining techniques with Python to investigate the date gap between theatrical release and DVD release to determine online auction and price matching behavior of consumers and businesses. Findings may be applied in strategies for marketing and revenue management in the motion picture industry. Zhan says she “really appreciates that Honors summer research affords [her] such an opportunity to conduct research and learn about research that other Honors students are conducting. During the summer, she learned how to work under a faculty mentor, how to keep in touch with friends and family while doing research, and how to write a proposal. “More importantly,” she says, “I am more aware now of what I am really capable of doing.”

Honors Program

This year, students in the Sophomore Project class are investigating a breached weir on the Grasse River and waterfront development in the town of Massena. Scotoyne Rieder, a biology major, believes that “getting to work on a real-world project is different from what other students do at Clarkson, especially as sophomores, and each of our classmates understands the importance of it. It is great to know that the mayor and village of Massena trust us with such a task.”

The Honors Program is taking a different approach this year. The lead teacher, Professor Issen, is not an expert on the topic. As he admits, “I don’t know anything about building a dam!” However, his project management experience allows him to effectively coordinate student teams and five faculty consultants in ecology, economics, politics, water quality and GIS. It is a challenge for students to work across these fields, of course, but for mechanical and aeronautical engineer Skyler Canute, “The lesson that I have taken away from this class is that to be effective in the real world, you can’t pigeon hole yourself into just one particular role, you have to be able to branch out and learn about many different subjects.”

This is Issen’s first involvement with Honors and he is impressed. “I’m amazed. There’s a significant difference between Honors students and typical Clarkson students. They have a level of engagement and reliability that you don’t regularly find.”

**HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW?**

This may be a question that you have never encountered before. In the Clarkson Honors Program, third-year students know that this concept is called epistemology. It requires the collaboration of different fields of study to investigate theoretical applications.

This junior-level course is taught by Professor Karen Buckle. Professor Buckle is a social historian of science, technology and medicine. For the past three years, she has been involved in Clarkson’s Humanities Department, the Honors Program, and the Engineering Department as its only historian faculty member. Professor Buckle has also been the Clarkson Theatre Company advisor for two years.

Professor Issen came to Clarkson in 2009. He is faculty advisor of the business fraternity, Alpha Kappa Psi, and lead instructor in the new Engineering Management master’s program. Issen is also an avid scuba diver and a volunteer for the crisis hotline Reachout of St. Lawrence County.

When she accepted the opportunity to teach an Honors course, the Program had been trying different strategies and Professor Buckle shaped the course structure into a discussion/seminar styled course in modernity called “Ways of Knowing.” Since the students are normally absorbed in their field of study, stepping back and asking “What is it these fields really do? And how do they create sources of reliable, dependable knowledge?” is a worthwhile exercise. From teaching the Honors students, Professor Buckle comments that “they enable you to take sophisticated readings and grapple with difficult ideas.” Throughout the semester, she hopes that students discover that, although sometimes you don’t agree, “debate and slight antipathy are quite constructive.” The students become more familiar and are “quite willing to jump in and have discussions in an arena where there are fewer certainties and a lot of the time
Gary Kelly on Teaching Honors Classes

Gary Kelly

I first came to Clarkson in the fall of 1973 to become director of the first counseling center. So, this is my 40th year here. I’ve served in various roles for the University, including Associate Dean of Students and VP for Student Affairs. I helped found The Clarkson School in 1978 and was Headmaster from 1982-2004. I chaired the committee that formed the Honors Program in Fall 1997, and was chair of the Honors Council for several years after that. So, both of these programs are close to my heart.

In 2005 I retired from my administrative responsibilities, but I wanted to spend time doing more teaching and writing. I had been teaching the human sexuality course in the Department of Psychology for several years, and this is a field in which I’ve written a college textbook. I now teach three psychology courses each semester — all of my favorite college textbook. I now teach three psychology courses each semester — all of my favorite college textbook.

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Gary Kelly

Co-ops, REU’s and Internships

Other college classes ask questions that have single correct answers, but the HONORS CLASS MAKES YOU FIND YOUR OWN and the challenge is then defending your reasoning against PK.” — Adam Scott ’17 (SE)

Gary Kelly

Amanda Borok ’15 (ME) spent the second semester of her sophomore year at GE Aviation in Lynn, Mass., as part of the Life Management engineering team. She worked on stress analysis of rotating engine parts in military helicopters, finding ways to improve longevity while maintaining the safety, quality and function. She lived on the shore 30 minutes from Boston and she enjoyed kayaking in the Charles River, hiking in New Hampshire, and white water rafting in Maine. She ended her summer with a bang, riding the longest zip line in the continental United States and soaring down Gunstock Mountain for a mile and a half through the thick fog and forest canopy.

Between his junior and senior years, Devin Vargo ’14 (ME) took a year off of school to participate in a co-op program at the Milton, Vt., facility of Husky Injection Molding Systems, a Canadian manufacturer specializing in medical, closure and automotive applications. He worked as a power lab technician performing electrical and thermal testing of products. Most of Devin’s time at Husky was working on addressing the fundamental causes of imbalance and inconsistencies in a hot runner. He was technical lead for a project to better integrate a thermocouple into an injection nozzle/tip assembly, for the purpose of improving accuracy and consistency of the temperature readings. He oversaw scheduling and budgeting, as well as designing and testing of prototypes. Devin presented his findings to the engineering department, which is working to integrate the results into a new product line. He is the first student in several years to do an “Honors Co-op,” using this project as the basis for his Honors thesis.

Ervin Derishti ’14 (CE) arrived in Denmark at the end of January, when it was cold and dark, but by the time he left, he experienced 20 hours of daylight which was quite amazing. Once the winter is over, Copenhagen comes alive and at the end of spring there are two of the best week-long concerts in Europe — Distortion and Roskilde — where about 13,000 college students participate. Studying and living in Denmark has many benefits, after all, the Danish are said to be the happiest people in the world! “Universities in Europe require you to be more independent and responsible, and DTU emphasizes practical group work rather than theoretical knowledge,” said Ervin. At the same time, he explored many different countries and since his residence was full of international students, he now has friends all around the world.

This past summer, Nicole Traphagen ’14 (Biomolecular Science) performed research in biochemistry at a teaching hospital in Paris. She found that the education system and the lab structure are different from the U.S. and while science was discussed in French, everything else was in French so the language barrier was always an interesting challenge! Although she loved the research, the best part of the summer was the traveling and sightseeing. Nicole visited Geneva, Rome, Nice, London, Monaco and Dublin, and she was awed by buildings and monuments that were over five times the age of the U.S. She climbed to the top of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, ate gelato and pizza in Rome, and swam in the Mediterranean ocean.

On his co-op at GE Transportation, Nathan North ’15 (ME) could be found sitting in the cab of a multimillion dollar locomotive, with one hand on the throttle, and the other operating a laptop collecting vital stats on its operation. He had started out in the test lab reducing data for other engineers to use and then began helping collect the data, but eventually he was assigned as head engineer on several different tests, collecting and processing data, and presenting results to requesting engineers.

The pace was terrifically fast, but it made for an incredible experience and coming back to school Nate feels that he has a huge advantage. He has already seen real-world applications of much of the new material discussed in current classes and labs.
2013 Graduate Updates

After graduation in the spring, Joe Camilo ’13 (EE) was looking for something different to bridge his undergraduate and graduate school experiences. So, Joe went to a Catholic service camp in West Virginia, called Nazareth Farm where he led high school students repairing houses in the local area. For Joe, it was a refreshing break from his studies and it provided some perspective on his life choices. In August, Joe started a Ph.D. program in electrical engineering at Duke University where he is working on a variety of problems in advanced pattern recognition and machine learning techniques. His decision to go to graduate school was made only toward the end of his junior year, and he found that the Honors Program and his thesis mentor were valuable resources as he prepared his applications. Through his mentor, for example, he made contact with the lab director at Duke. Joe is excited to be meeting cool new people and visiting new places at Duke, but he never anticipated missing Clarkon and the Honors Program quite as much as he does. Joe is glad for what we have given him and is excited to see where it will take him.

Conor Cullinane ’13 (AE) is working towards a Ph.D. in medical engineering and medical physics in a joint program at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The Harvard-MIT Health Sciences and Technology (HST) Program provides special training in bioastronautics, a new field that involves the study and support of life in space. Conor prepared for this field with his majors in biology and aeronautical engineering and his Honors thesis on prosthetic devices. Conor feels that Honors Program staff “emphasizes what kinds of effort there will be” and encourages them to “tailor your experience to your ambitions.”

For the past three years, Conor has worked at University of California, San Francisco with Dr. Levi Thompson where he did a year-long postdoc at NOAA’s earth systems research lab working on data assimilation techniques. After a few years at a startup venture Precision Wind, which did wind energy forecasting, I decided to stabilize my life a little. I am now working at Vasicus as a research scientist.

Corinne (Otmeyer) O’Leary ’13 My husband, Tim, and I welcomed our first child, John Timothy, in March. I’m taking a year sabbatical from Rockwell Collins in Binghamton as a software engineer in aircraft simulation to spend time with them. We’re living in Owego, N.Y.

Amy (Lane) Rusiecki ’01 I had the incredible honor this summer of getting to represent the USA at two World Championship events. First, my husband and I were both selected as part of the USA team for the World Trail Championships — a 50-mile trail race in Wales. I finished 15th female, and top American in this race. Based on that successful race, I was asked to represent the USA at the World Long-Distance Mountain Running Championship — a ‘mountain marathon’ race in Poland. I finished 29th female, and 2nd American in the race. While my husband and I were in Wales, we climbed the highest peak in England and the highest peak in Wales. I guess you could say that I had some grand adventures and got to travel a lot this year! I was just honored to represent my country, a dream come true for me.

Beth (Lachut) Frisch ’01 My husband, Greg, and I had our first child in March (Mia June) and we’re greatly enjoying our new role as parents. Since graduating from Caltech in 2004 with an M.S. in Applied Physics & Materials Science, I have been working at Northrop Grumman’s Space Park in Redondo Beach, Calif. There I get to lead technical teams to ensure various payloads will be successfully accommodated on host spacecraft. I never thought I would end up in this field when I began my career — but I can’t say I would wish anything different! Even as a project manager I get daily opportunities to grow my technical knowledge of mechanical, thermal and electrical subsystems, as well as spacecraft mission ops — so it never gets boring!

Matt Braun ’03 and Kira Thomas (Gifford) Braun ’03 We are happy to announce the birth of our daughter, Margaret Eileen. She was born August 30, 2013.

2013 Alumni Updates

Lauren Crandell in Lake Placid, N.Y. After graduating, I moved to central New York to join the Olean Medical Group and practice Family Medicine with Obstetrics. I continue to run and ski, and I plan to run the Disney Marathon.

Ryan Turner ’04 I got a full-time tenure track position teaching chemistry at El Camino College in Torrance, Calif.

Danielie (Petka) Frisch ’01 On September 14, 2013, I married Greg Frisch in Hallelot, Penn. We honeymooned in Los Cabos, Mexico.

Mariana Wenczak ’06 In June, I completed my residency and chief residency at Family Practice at UVM/Fletcher Allen. I moved back home in August to WNT to join the Olean Medical Group and practice Family Medicine with Obstetrics. I continue to run and ski, and I plan to run the Disney Marathon.

Bryan Buckingham ’07 After graduating, I moved to central New Jersey for graduate school at Princeton. While there I met and married Lauren Crandell in Lake Placid, N.Y.

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(continued)
This was shortly after Lauren completed her Ph.D. in the civil and environmental engineering department at Princeton in May 2012. I was (finally) able to finish my dissertation on “Mixing Thermodynamics of Black-Random Copolymers” and obtained my Ph.D. in May 2013. Now, we Dr.’s Beckingham live in Berkeley, Calif., where we are both postdoctoral fellows at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and are enjoying the proximity to the many national parks of the west.

Lindsay Hoffman ’07
I just returned from Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, after traveling there with the Syracuse Professional Chapter of Engineers Without Borders for an assessment trip in October. We met with six schools in the rural Palajuno Valley outside Quetzaltenango, and we are planning to work with one school, Las Majadas, to construct latrines and handwashing stations. We will also be installing handwashing stations at some of the other schools and helping bring electricity to another. While we were in Guatemala, we hiked the volcano Santa Maria to watch a minor eruption at the adjacent volcanoes. We also visited markets in Chichicastenango, saw the Arco de Santa Catalina and Cerro de la Cruz in Antigua, and visited San Pedro La Laguna in Lago Atitlán, which is ringed by volcanoes and described as one of the most beautiful lakes in the world.

Melissa Van Kleeck ’09
I spent this year working on my dissertation and passed my preliminary exam. I presented at two conferences last fall and also presented at GLOBAL 2013: International Nuclear Fuel Cycle Conference recently in Salt Lake City, Utah. I’ve also started planning my wedding after finally setting a date! It’s going to be next August and Craig and I are very excited! It has been a busy year, and next year promises to be even busier with my planning to graduate and get married within two weeks of each other!

Angela Dapolite ’10
I moved to New Hampshire in August to start a new job as a chemistry teacher at Winnisquam Regional High School in Tilton, N.H. I’m teaching College Prep Chemistry, Honors Chemistry, and AP Chemistry. I also married Stephen Lyons (Clarkson graduate student in the Physical Therapy program) on December 28. A lot of changes are happening, but they’re all exciting ones!

Christina (Chapman) Caron ’11
I am currently working as a mechanical engineer at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

By Zachary Swank, Honors Class of ‘08

honors commencement speaker: Zach swank

"It is important to remember that there are many ways to interpret the events in your life.
How you choose to react to what happens around you matters more than what actually happens."

Picture this: a remote West African village, grass thatched mud huts, no electricity, no running water, the village chief is still an important figure. Folks live a subsistence lifestyle, dependent on the growing season with very little work rewarded with paper money. What does this bring to mind? Poverty? Paradoxes? I had the opportunity to live in such a place, as a guest of said village chief. It was a world of drastically different circumstances than the cold but comfortable campus I had just graduated from. I can describe the crushing and systemic poverty. I can also describe the ways their lifestyle is highly rewarding and how happy the people are.

By many different measures, my friends in West Africa are worse off than my friends in the States. Yet, the day to day emotions and experience of living in West Africa does not reflect that same disparity. They adapt to their situation just as we adapt to ours. The concern of whether or not last year’s crop will last until the new growing season is obviously more significant than whether or not the store will run out of your favorite candy bar. Yet, we still get upset about the candy bar. In difficult situations, you create a new baseline of emotions because you have to. In easy situations, you create a new baseline of emotions because you can. It is important to remember that there are many ways to interpret the events in your life. How you choose to react to what happens around you matters more than what actually happens.

I wish all of my fellow alumni the best in 2014, may you share my perpetual resolution of cultivating and maintaining a healthy perspective on life. It will serve you well.
Give to the Honors Program

The Honors Program is raising funds to support educational enhancement opportunities for our talented students, particularly study abroad, travel to conferences and our signature summer research experience. Please consider making a tax-deductible gift.

To make a gift online, go to www.clarkson.edu/giveback. Choose “Other” for a gift designation, noting it is a commitment to Honors.

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Thank you for your support!

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