Last December we issued our first-annual Honors Program Newsletter – we are excited to build upon that with this year’s edition. We conceive of the Honors Program Newsletter as a means of communication with:

• Current OBU Faculty and Staff;
• Current OBU Honors Students;
• Alumni of the OBU Honors Program; and
• External Friends of OBU & OBU Honors

Inside this year’s Newsletter, you will learn about:

• Our new freshman Honors class, the largest in OBU Honors history
• Student experiences in the Honors core classes
• Honors thesis projects
• Honors student presentations at regional conferences
• Semester abroad experiences of two students in Ghana and the Czech Republic
• Our first-ever faculty-led corporate study abroad in London, England
• Service-learning experiences
• Honors Colloquia from 2018
• The Spring 2018 Honors Graduation Banquet and Awards Ceremony
• Post-OBU experiences of two Honors Program Alumni

As you will see, it has been a busy and successful year in OBU Honors! Enjoy reading about the endeavors and accomplishments of our outstanding Honors Program students.

Now, a more personal note.

In May 2014, I had the privilege of being appointed as Director of the Honors Program at OBU. In the four and a half years since, we have witnessed tremendous growth in the Honors Program. The programming and initiatives within Honors have blossomed.
We have launched a Spring Honors-wide retreat, an Honors recruitment and enrollment dinner, a Welcome Week Honors dinner, and a Life of Pi movie/snack night. We have begun and built upon an Honors corporate study abroad model, and led our first faculty-led trip to London with fifteen students. We spent a year working through the Purpose, Vision, and Mission of the Honors Program, and are now nearing the end of a two-year process working toward a revision of the Honors Program Core Curriculum.

In addition to growth within the Honors Program itself, the student body of the Honors Program has grown. The past three academic years have seen the largest incoming Honors freshmen classes in the history of the Program: 40, 31, and 45 respectively. In August, the total Honors student population exceeded 100 for the first time in Program history.

In combination with my other academic, professional, ecclesiastical, and family commitments, endeavors, and responsibilities, the growth in the Honors Program has made it increasingly difficult to fulfill my duties as Honors Director with the excellence for which I strive. I love and cherish absolutely every aspect of my Honors role (with the single exception of preparing and defending the annual Honors budget), but the role has just become too large for me to balance.

Accordingly, I have indicated to Dr. Susan DeWoody (Chief Academic Officer) that this will be my last academic year as Director of Honors at OBU. I will be stepping down as Director effective May 31, 2019. I will continue to serve with diligence and excellence in every aspect of my role as Honors Director this year. At that point, it will be time for someone else to have the responsibility and privilege of leading OBU’s Honors Program.

OBU’s upper administration have been exceedingly responsive and gracious. We all desire to navigate this transition as smoothly as possible, to enable stability and continued growth along the trajectory that has been established over the past twenty-five years. As a result, I am tremendously excited and pleased to announce that OBU has approved a new position of Assistant Director of the Honors Program, beginning in the Spring 2019 semester. Whoever is selected to serve as Assistant Director will transition into the role of Director of the Honors Program in June 2019. I will then transition into the role of Assistant Director, and work underneath the new Honors Director for 2019-2020 and, Lord willing, beyond. The Spring semester, then, would allow the incoming Honors Director to work alongside me to “learn the ropes,” before transitioning into full Program leadership in June.

I believe that a new Honors Director will be able to bring some new ideas, new initiative, and even new energy to the Program. I am confident that these moves will serve the best interests of the Honors Program and the University as a whole, and I am excited to see who God will bring to a new position of leadership on campus, and how He will continue to bless and grow the Program in the years to come.

I hope that you enjoy the gift of this Honors newsletter, and are encouraged and edified by what OBU’s Honors students are accomplishing. More importantly, I pray that you continue to rejoice in the meaning of the Advent of the Son of God – peace with God and fellow humanity; hope for a full earthly life and eternal life hereafter; love of God and neighbor; and abounding unquenchable joy in the Lord. Merry Christmas to you and yours.

Blessings,
Tawa J. Anderson
Director of OBU Honors Program

New Growth: 2018 Honors Freshman Class

Honors Freshmen Class of 2018 with HON 1013 instructors Dr. Randy Ridenour (front left), Dr. Benjamin Myers (front right), and Dr. Tawa Anderson (middle left)

Every cohort of OBU Honors students has a unique personality and identity. This fall, the Honors Program welcomed its largest-ever class of incoming freshmen – an astounding 45 new Honors students. The past three academic years have seen the three largest incoming Honors freshman classes in the history of the Program (40 in 2016, 31 in 2017, now 45 in 2018). Even better, the Program is not sacrificing quality for the sake of quantity. ACT scores for incoming Honors freshmen have remained remarkably consistent over the past four years (31.0, 31.0, 31.1, and 30.7).

The majority (30) of our new Honors students hail from Oklahoma, with others from Texas, Colorado, Missouri, Kansas, and Nicaragua. The incoming class represents remarkable disciplinary diversity, with large numbers of majors in Biology (7), Computer Science (5), Nursing (6), and Physics (6). All told, there are 15 Honors students in the College of Math and Science (including two double degree seekers), 10 from Business, 8 from Humanities and Social Science, 6 from Theology and Ministry, 5 from Nursing, and 3 from Fine Arts. For the first time in recent memory, there are more young men (24) than young women (21), and a large number (7) of students from the Greater Shawnee area (including Tecumseh, Bethel, and Harrah).

We are tremendously excited to see what God will do in and through our new Honors students in the exciting new “Class of 2022.”
Building the Body (Romans 12:5)

by Jonathan Soder
Sophomore, English & Biblical Studies

At the outset of freshman year, Honors students are usually either vaguely aware of what awaits them in the coming years of the Honors Program or completely blind to the path they have chosen. However, the Honors Program isn’t without bumpers for the freshmen as they bowl down the alley of their college education. The first of these bumpers is the Fall Honors Freshman Retreat.

The Fall Retreat is primarily a time for the freshmen to learn more about the expectations of the Honors Program and to mingle with the rest of their Honors class as well as older Honors students serving as peer mentors. Students and professors make their way to Sullivant Retreat Center outside Norman on a Friday afternoon and spend the next 24 hours together in fellowship.

Sophomore Julianne Ford remembers her Fall Retreat experience fondly.

“[It is] a wonderful time for Honors students to bond and build lasting relationships!” she said. “I stayed up until 4 AM at my Freshman Honors Retreat and made friendships that I have kept since then.”

Freshman Liam Larson also found it a good time for engagement with those students typically outside of his circle.

"The retreat was the first time I really interacted with some individuals outside of my honors community," he said. “Now, I find myself spending lots of time hanging around with people who I barely knew before the retreat. Finding new friends with whom I share common interests was definitely a highlight.”

Of course, on top of the fun, the Fall Retreat is centered on explaining the requirements for graduating from the Honors Program. This is where the peer mentors come in.

“The part of orientation that was most helpful for me was when the older honors students came and talked about aspects of honors from their point of view and explained things in more detail,” freshman Katie Krempl said.

While all the new information is sometimes overwhelming, it often helps students to conceptualize the path they will need to take in the coming years to proceed successfully. Freshman Grace Hill was one of those students.

“I found it very helpful that we went through each aspect of the Honors curriculum in detail, which will make planning my next few years at OBU easier,” she said.

Come spring, all Honors students have the opportunity to congregate at the Spring Honors Retreat, which is more heavily geared toward promoting community between the Honors classes. OBU Honors launched the Spring Retreat in 2016 as an initiative to foster an intimate community of committed Christian scholars.

“Spring Retreat was a reprieve from the more difficult spring semester. The reunion of my freshman compatriots was fun, but I particularly enjoyed the intermingling of the different classes,” junior Sierra Davis said. “Also, pancakes for breakfast is always a good time.”

Both Davis and senior Stephanie Zackery remember the Spring Retreat as a time of rest and relaxation that doesn’t keep up a quick pace quite like the Fall Retreat does.

Davis and Zackery have also both served as peer mentors at the Fall Retreat in years past. Each reported that, much like the Spring Retreat, returning as an upperclassman allows for some added fun in comparison to freshman year.

“As a freshman, there was an unease that automatically came with new surroundings and people,” Davis said. “While those feelings quickly converted to more pleasant ones, attending retreats as an upperclassman promises a weekend away from school with old and new friends as you fellowship with one another and deepen your friendships with one another.”
Scholar’s Studio: Honors Thesis Projects

by Jana Satzler
Sophomore, English & Biblical Studies

The Honors Thesis is one of the most respected components of an Honors education, and is likely the most difficult yet rewarding of the Honors capstones. The Honors Thesis requires the student to choose a topic that interests them within their major and academically explore it through rigorous research and original thinking. For most, the Thesis writing process spans three semesters, beginning with a Contracted Study in the spring of junior year and ending with the presentation of a completed Thesis at the end of the senior spring semester. The time and hard work put into completing the Honors Thesis speaks volumes to the desire and ability of the student to go above and beyond what is required to graduate, and instead “pursue academic excellence” and “engage diverse intellectual perspectives,” making the most of the time and resources available to them during their time at OBU.

During the spring of 2018, five students in the OBU Honors Program presented senior theses as capstones while two additional OBU students wrote senior theses to graduate with honors in their discipline. William (Patrick) Browne, an Honors student majoring in Biochemistry, wrote a thesis titled “Exploring Physicochemical Interactions between Perovskite-Type Quantum Dots and Simple Membrane Models,” supervised by Dr. Yvonne Mbote, Assistant Professor of Chemistry. Patrick utilized model membranes for experimentation and research into the physical and chemical properties of membranes, as well as computers and open-source software to allow for easy application of intensive computational models to experimental schemes. His thesis sought to provide information which could be developed into biosensing applications and live-cell fluorescent labeling.

Anna Dellinger (nee Brewster), an Honors News and Information major and Cross-Cultural Ministries minor, wrote a thesis over orality and memory. She analyzed the way oral and literate learners use memory, the neurology behind memory, the history of oral tradition, challenges of memory in oral cultures, and ways of overcoming challenges for oral cultures and how they can be used in the teaching of the Bible. The research she did included a literature review and interviews of experts in the field of orality. Her thesis, titled “When an Old Man Dies, a Library Burns to the Ground: Orality and Memory,” was focused on creating awareness about orality and memory and exploring ways to use this awareness for enhanced evangelism and discipleship in oral cultures. The project was supervised by Dr. Bruce Carlton, Professor of Cross-Cultural Ministry.

Rebekah McPheeters, a Communication Studies major and Cross-Cultural Ministries minor, studied how training for short-term missionaries affected mission team development and unity. Her research began with a two-phase study that examined the unity-related communication acts in short-term mission trip training programs and within the short-term missions teams themselves from three different religiously-affiliated universities. Her thesis, titled “One Hope, One Faith, One Lord: An Analysis of Unity Among Short-Term Missionaries,” was supervised by Dr. Vickie Ellis, Professor of Communication Arts.

Sierra Roller, an Honors Studio Art major, combined her thesis with her senior art show. Her thesis, titled “Star Wars and Art Nouveau: A Study in the Art Nouveau Movement,” was supervised by Julie Blackstone, Assistant Professor of Art. Her thesis included a written paper along with the multiple art pieces that made up her senior art show. The written aspect of her thesis reflected a study in the Art Nouveau Movement, focusing on artists Aubrey Beardsley, Alphonse Mucha, and Gustav Klimt. The pieces in her show used techniques inspired by these artists to depict different characters and scenes from the popular movie series Star Wars. Her show included four pieces in Much’s style, two in Klimt’s, multiple illustrations in the style of Beardsley, and a futuristic landscape. She used different art mediums such as ink and oils to create her pieces, and her show was opened to the OBU community for viewing.

Victoria Daugherty (nee Groce), a Philosophy major with an Apologetics emphasis, wrote a thesis under the supervision of Dr. Tawa Anderson, Assistant Professor of Philosophy. Her thesis, titled “An Investigation and Evaluation of Bart Ehrman’s Reasons for Rejecting Christianity,” looks at Ehrman’s...
three main arguments for abandoning his faith and evaluates them for accuracy and persuasiveness. Tori’s research included a study of what other leading Christian scholars have written about on similar topics or in response to his arguments, as well as an in-depth analysis of Ehrman’s own works. The purpose of her thesis is to present a strong, rational, and comprehensive apologetic response to Ehrman’s argument.

Chancellor Stillwell, an Honors Biblical Languages major and Pastoral Ministries minor, pursued a thesis that examined the book of Acts through the context of witness in a juridical context in order to better understand the text itself as well as identify a working model for the modern Christian in their own act of testimony. Chancellor’s thesis, entitled “What’s Your Testimony? The Witness Motif in the Book of Acts,” was supervised by Dr. Alan Bandy, Associate Professor of Bible.

Morgan Smith, an Honors English major, pursued an Honors Thesis under the supervision of Dr. Jonathan Callis, Assistant Professor of English. Her thesis, titled “Love and Friendship: Female Friendship in Jane Austen’s Novels,” shows the impact female friendships had on the eighteenth century heroines’ abilities to view themselves and their societies more clearly. Morgan analyzed three of Jane Austen’s novels, Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, and Emma, as well as other ‘courtesy books’ and philosophical texts relevant to Austen’s era. Morgan’s thesis was recognized at the Spring Honors graduation banquet as the most outstanding senior thesis project, and she received the Tom Dowdy Memorial Thesis Award.

Each honors thesis was the result of numerous hours of writing and research, as well as feedback from faculty supervisors, an external reader, and the Honors Committee. The purpose of the Honors Thesis is not only to give the students an advantage over other graduate school applicants, but to give them practical experience that helps them grow as academics and as individuals.

After recognizing the accomplishments of last year’s thesis-writing students, the honors program is excited to have eleven thesis projects in the works for the 2018-2019 academic year:

Payton Clark, supervised by Dr. Vicki Ellis, Professor of Communication Arts, is writing a thesis titled “A Narrative that Matters: A Pentadic Analysis of Testimony.”

Lauren Dean is writing over love, the senses, and illness in Spencer’s Faerie Queen, and is supervised by Dr. Jonathan Callis, Assistant Professor of English.

Hannah Durkee is writing about the purposes and methods for mathematics education in Oklahoma under the supervision of Dr. Sarah Marsh, Associate Professor of Mathematics.

John Ellis, supervised by Dr. Tawa Anderson, Associate Professor of Philosophy, is writing a thesis titled “The Compatibility of Evolution and Christian Theism.”

Kelsi Guleserian is writing about links in the three-sphere, and is supervised by Dr. Cherith Tucker, Assistant Professor of Mathematics.

Chloe Harrison is writing a thesis under the supervision of Dr. Brent Newson, Associate Professor of English. Her thesis is titled “The Editor in American Book Publishing: Fitzgerald and Perkins.”

Noah Jones, supervised by Dr. Randy Ridenour, Associate Professor of Philosophy, is writing a thesis titled “The Mereology of God Incarnate: An Analysis of Part-Whole Approaches to Christ’s Attributes.”

Jonathan Knox is writing a thesis titled “The Nature of Sin: Outward, Inward, and Ultimate” supervised by Dr. Bobby Kelly, Professor of Bible.

Matthew Shively is writing about predestination, election, and encouragement to Christlikeness, and is supervised by Dr. Alan Bandy, Associate Professor of Bible.

Rebecca Ward (nee Cobb), supervised by Dr. Brian Camp, Professor of Family Science, is writing about sex and the American church.

Finally, Chandler Warren is writing a thesis titled “The God of Hell: An Exploration of the Relationship Between the Divine and the Damned Regarding Space, Time, and the Character and Attributes of God,” supervised by Dr. Matthew Emerson, Associate Professor of Bible.

These students will conclude their writing by the end of January, and we look forward to seeing what they have accomplished. These students will see, like those before them, that writing an Honors Thesis is a daunting task, but the finished result is well worth the labor.
Popping the Bubble: Students Present Research at 2018 Conferences

by Chloe Harrison
Senior, English

While research done in service of a class requirement is important for showcasing a student’s grasp on the subject matter and developing his or her writing skills, it can often be a lonely task. Usually, it is only the professor who has assigned the paper or research project that will read the student’s findings, and it can sometimes feel like writing in a bubble, cut off from the outside world. Getting to share research with like-minded peers and scholars can be a great way to pop that bubble. Presenting at a conference can be a validating and rewarding experience, as many current Honors students can attest to.

In the Spring 2018 semester, senior Psychology major Stephanie Zackery attended the Southwestern Psychological Association (SWPA) conference in Houston, Texas. Zackery had attended the conference the previous year to watch the upperclassmen present, but this was the first year that she took on the challenge herself. Zackery gave a poster presentation on The Influence of Cosmetics on Perceptions of Women.

“What I found was that there was no difference between perceptions of women wearing light or no makeup, but that women wearing heavy makeup were perceived more negatively in professional settings,” said Zackery.

OBU hosted its own conference, The Southwest Conference on Christianity and Literature, this Fall, where several Honors students had the opportunity to present their research. One of these students was junior Biblical Languages major, Luke Fornea, who presented his paper titled, “Prophecy and Possibility: An Examination of Romantic Themes in Prufrock.”

“I enjoyed getting to encounter the work of other undergraduate students, and to see how literature has a level of ubiquity to it,” Fornea said. “By that I mean that my paper was not the only one that had to do with the works of T.S. Eliot, and the themes that I looked at were also present elsewhere.”

Senior English major Lauren Dean also presented a paper at the conference. Dean admitted that she was nervous about presenting, but she had some experience with reading in front of an audience when she was asked to read a paper at the monthly English department meeting, Half-Past Three. Her research focused on the themes of mutability and immortality in the writing of Edmund Spenser and John Keats.

“They each view mutability and change as part of the nature of life on earth, but seek to transcend it in different ways—Keats internally through imagination and poetry and Spenser externally through interaction with the divine,” said Dean.

Like Fornea, Dean enjoyed the intellectual discussions and getting to engage with other scholars and peers. She attended other panels at the conference, including one on various topics surrounding the writing of C. S. Lewis.

“It was so fun! I enjoyed the combination of peers and proper scholars because it made me more comfortable yet still very challenged by the range of presentation,” Dean said. “I loved the conference setting because I was able to discuss works and authors that I am passionate about with other like-minded scholars. This was especially true considering the Christian nature of the conference and many of the presentations.”

Attending conferences can also be a great way for students to connect with people in their prospective field and make connections for the future. Zackery felt her presentation went over well, and she was grateful for the positive reaction it garnered from her audience, including a woman from a graduate program giving Zackery her card.

Attending a conference can often spark interest in further research and a desire to present on new topics. Fornea said that after his experience, he would like to return to his topic and deepen his research. Zackery hopes to attend the SWPA conference again in the Spring, this time presenting on the effect of model size and race on women’s body esteem. Dean found the conference particularly validating because it confirmed her desire to pursue academia further after graduation.

“I already knew that I wanted to go to graduate school, but now the opportunity to attend more conferences is another reason that I can add to the list,” she said.

Zackery, Fornea, and Dean all agree that other Honors students should submit to conferences.

When asked if she would encourage underclassmen who are intimidated by the idea of presenting, Dean responded, “Yes. Always. Even if you don’t get in, you tried. If you do have the opportunity to present, it may help clarify some things in your life as well. You’ll be able to meet people further along a path you could take and consult them for advice while also discussing some of your favorite things. It’s a humbling experience as well because it makes you realize that though you may be an expert in a small sliver of scholarship on a certain author or work, there is SO much more to learn. And even if all else fails and you don’t enjoy the conference itself, it’s something good to put on a résumé.”

Honors students’ conference involvement can be rewarding in a plethora of ways, and it is a wonderful fulfillment of the Honors vision to promote independent study and engage diverse intellectual perspectives.
Learning at the Core – Honors Core Classes

by Lauren Dean
Senior, English

The honors core is comprised of four classes:

**Critical skills for the Liberal Arts** (HON 1013), which students take typically their first semester on campus;

**English Composition and Classical Literature** (HON 1163) second semester;

**Honors Arts and Western Culture** (HON 2063) taught by Dr. Hinson the fall of their sophomore year; and

**Honors Biblical Ethics** (HON 3073) with Dr. Arbo the spring of their junior or senior years.

This combination of core classes offers an enriching but challenging environment in which Honors seeks to “cultivate and build upon a Christian intellectual heritage,” starting with Augustine’s *Confessions* first semester and closing with how to apply those principles to one’s own life. Freshman Biology major *Emma Greathouse* has enjoyed and been challenged by class discussions, commenting that “This class has forced me to ask questions of my faith that I had never thought of.” Freshman Business Management major *Micah Hinson* agrees, “As a follower of Christ, HON 1013 has challenged me to think about how I view God and how He views me. It makes me ask the question, ‘What should my relationship with God and others look like in a secular world?’”

The class focuses on interaction with works through composition and discussion. Freshman Biochemistry major *Mataeo Anderson* reiterates the difficulty and worth of his experience in Honors thus far: “Grasping the concepts and displaying a knowledge of them in the writing we do has been quite difficult, but being pushed towards doing so has been a very beneficial experience for me as a writer and scholar.”

Honors 1163 engages the Greek and Roman great texts while also focusing on writing, specifically in-class essays in preparation for Western Civ. Learning to integrate the strands of what you are learning is an integral skill which builds on the critical thinking skills emphasized in the first semester. Sophomore Biology major *Rachel Von Dollen* comments how she had to work harder for her grades than before and that “this course challenged [her] writing abilities and matured them in ways that [she] hadn’t expected.” Writing is emphasized in and out the classroom with several argumentative essays and in class essay exams. Sophomore Political Science major *Dannie Deason* says “1163 challenges the Honors student to analyze the world around them through worldviews other than their own and helps to prepare the student to really stop and think about how the world around them has been shaped by early civilizations [when they get to Western Civ].”

Honors Arts and Western Culture examines visual and musical art from the inception of Western culture through the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and modern era to today. Students spend the first half of the semester discussing painting, sculpture, architecture, and photography. They focus the second half of the semester on music and learning the terminology to discuss it as an art form. *Dannie Deason* says “I think that A&WC challenges the Honors Student to look beyond facts in order to try to comprehend the more abstract truths of the world found in goodness and beauty….It has helped enrich my imagination, and it has pushed me to see the world beyond things that are set in stone. There is an entire other dimension to our world represented by art that is deeper than any measurements or structures that we can set upon it.”

Biblical Ethics gives students a space to struggle with issues they have encountered in reconciling biblical doctrine with their morality in order to form a coherent worldview. Senior Family and Community Services major *Rebecca Ward* says it is one of her favorite Honors classes, and that “It was important for [her] because it was a chance to think through and wrestle with issues that affect us as Christians,” whether those are things she has already grappled with in other classes or new subjects. Senior Philosophy major *Noah Jones* comments “Honors Biblical Ethics is a training ground for living The Good Life. It provides a conversational context in which to critically explore questions about how Christians should act and be in the world. The course provided me a helpful framework for moral decision-making in general, and also guided me in thinking through some of the most challenging issues in contemporary applied ethics.” The timing of this class as the last an Honors cohort will take together makes for discussion between friends which does not shirk away from the contentious issues but addresses them graciously and respectfully.
by Lauren Dean
Senior, English

Though many students went on the corporate Honors study abroad trip this year, that has not been an option in the past. In order to complete their study abroad capstone, some students choose to set up their own individual trips, sometimes through organizations like ISA’s Veritas program. The aim of the Study Abroad capstone is to enable students to pursue learning in nontraditional ways, “engag[ing] the diverse world” as they do so. Whether studying at another university or working with an orphanage, these alternative atmospheres allow students to apply what they have learned thus far.

Lauren Shipman is a sophomore Communication Studies major with a minor in International Church Planting. She studied abroad for four and a half months in Ghana, Africa, from January to May of 2018. Shipman worked with Pearl House, “an organization which strives to protect, educate and disciple at-risk young women in underserved communities around the world.” They do so by providing physical care, emotional and spiritual support, and academic opportunities, “empower[ing] girls to discover their unique identity and purpose in Christ.”

Shipman’s study abroad experience was particularly hands-on, as she was able to practice the things she has been learning in her cross-cultural ministry classes. “Rather than learning in a classroom in preparation for field work, I was learning through trial and error in the field and I believe that was an invaluable experience,” Shipman said.

Much of her time was spent working with the Pearl House Director, Courtney, to maintain daily operations by managing social media, researching for projects, and going to market for office and house supplies. The rest of her time was spent directly with the Pearl House girls, the “Pearls,” helping them with schoolwork and just hanging out. Experientially, it was fascinating to live in another culture for so long. “The most impactful thing was
how much I learned about the power of the Holy Spirit through immersion in a culture which views the Spirit differently than the United States,” says Shipman. She misses Ghana but looks forward to returning in the future.

Junior Alexis Besch is a Psychology Pre-Counseling major with Family Community Service and Business Administration minors. She studied abroad in Prague, Czech Republic, from early September to mid-December 2018. Unlike Shipman, Besch studied at an international university. She had a full semester, though it was shorter than ours at OBU, taking Psychology and Sociology in the Workplace, International Finance, Global Business and International Trade, International Strategy, and Elementary Czech. Though her classes are less academically rigorous than at home, they have been taught with a unique international mindset that makes them especially practical for her business minor.

The social atmosphere of Prague took some warming up to. Besch has made friends with her fellow classmates and roommates, but says “the Czech locals are not openly friendly like the majority of Americans. It takes quite a bit of time to get to know someone before they feel comfortable sharing personal information. This has been a big adjustment for me but it has taught me a new way of approaching people, generally and with the gospel.” Besch meets weekly with her fellow Veritas students to discuss issues like these, including “cultural barriers to the gospel, what life is like as a missionary, culture shock, etc.”

When she is not in class, Besch has been able to spend time traveling due to the proximity of European countries. “On the weekends, after Thursday for me, I will either travel to a nearby country or take part in a local Czech market or festivity. There is always something new to do here!” Besch says.

The Study Abroad capstone allows students to travel and make memories and friends in fun new places, yes, but it also pushes them outside their comfort zone to encounter different ways of learning and knowing, different cultures, and see the Lord work in unexpected ways.
This past summer, OBU faculty Dr. Tawa Anderson and Dr. Lindsey Panxhi (Brother Tawa and Lindsey, as they became known) took fifteen OBU Honors students on a corporate study abroad trip to London. The group stayed in the heart of London for four weeks sightseeing and learning about British history and culture.

The group consisted of the following OBU Honors students and faculty: Emma Berry, Rachel Birchfield, Sierra Davis, Lauren Dean, Allison Foster, Rachel Froebe, Anna Harmon, Katie Harmon, Chloe Harrison, Kalyne Henrichsen, Casey House, Noah Jones, Saydi Loewer, Sydney Luskey, Stephanie Zackery, Dr. Anderson and his wife Vanessa, and Dr. Panxhi and her husband Arsid.

A typical day in London consisted of class in the morning (often times outside in the park), lunch, and then an excursion in the afternoon. Among our excursion destinations were: Westminster Abbey, Big Ben, Parliament, the Tower of London, the British Museum, Hampton Court, the British Library, Kensington Palace, Kew Gardens, Windsor Castle, St. Paul's Cathedral, and Buckingham Palace. The group also traveled around England to Cambridge, Oxford, Canterbury, Dover, Salisbury, Wells, and Bath. A few groups even took weekend trips to Wales, Scotland, France, and Ireland. On Sundays, the “London 15” worshiped at Holy Trinity Brompton, St. Paul’s Cathedral, Grace Life Church, Hillsong London, St. George's Holborn, and Aberlady Parish.
The classes offered during the trip were Honors Biblical Ethics taught by Dr. Anderson, Literature of the Western World taught by Dr. Panxhi, and a 20th Century British Mystery Novels Colloquium co-taught by both professors. Many students enjoyed being able to take these classes while abroad. Senior Rachel Birchfield explains that “[she] was able to fulfill two Honors requirements as well as take an additional class that [she] needed.”

Highlights of the trip many varied from student to student. For some, it was a specific location. Rachel Birchfield loved the Cliffs of Dover as it was an escape to the calm seaside from the busy city atmosphere of London. For senior Casey House, staying in Paris was one of his favorite experiences: “We sat on the lawn in front of the Eiffel Tower and watched the sun set with people of all ethnicities surrounding us. It was surreal seeing such a beautiful sight while listening to numerous languages being spoken around me. The highlight of that weekend trip was when the entire tower lit up with thousands of twinkling lights.”

For others, their highlight was the enriched educational experience. Senior Allison Foster recalls, “I [had] never had a class with Dr. Panxhi [before], but it was honestly one of my favorite courses I have ever taken . . . We got to read some amazing literature and learn really cool things that correlated with the sites we were visiting. One of my favorite things was how invested our class got into the lives of the characters in Pride and Prejudice.” Senior Lauren Dean shares, “I loved [visiting] Oxford. Everything about it—the Eagle and Child, the Bodleian Library, the architecture, the history, academia, Magdalen College, Addison’s Walk, and the visiting Tolkien exhibit. It truly is a scholar’s paradise.”

Comparing to a typical study abroad program, students enjoyed being with peers and professors from their university. According to junior Sydney Luskey, “The ability to interact with OBU students and professors in both a classroom and social atmosphere was a great benefit of this study abroad. Not only was I able to comfortably participate in class discussion, but I was also able to interact with both students and professors in a more one-on-one scenario during each of our daily outings. I enjoyed the sense of community we had while abroad; traveling overseas with a group of people I had already established relationships with was truly invaluable.”

While abroad, students learned academically, but also culturally. Perhaps one of the biggest realizations about the city of London was the wonderful mixture of diversity. Casey House explains, “I was surprised with the number of people and the presence of massive trees. I was also impressed with the walking culture of the city, with smaller convenient stores always nearby, and the efficient and inexpensive metro that allowed for travel to almost anywhere in the city.” Senior Stephanie Zackery recalls, “I learned that Dr. Pepper is apparently a rarity in England, and that Welsh people are friendly and have wonderful accents. I also learned that when you’re driving in the middle of nowhere, even in another country, most traffic jams will be due to tractors.”

All the students agree that their time abroad was simply remarkable. Casey House expresses that “in addition to visiting so many cool places, many days included going to the park, coffee shops, or gelato shops. It was fun to go out and experience London with others from OBU. This trip was a great opportunity to take time away from the demands of work and school to tour amazing sights, read, and learn about British literature and history.” Lauren Dean explains that studying abroad was a dream come true: “I’ve always dreamed of studying abroad in England, but never thought it would happen . . . [This trip] has definitely made me long to travel more . . . The diversity in London, specifically in the churches, filled me with joy and anticipation for worship in heaven.”

Overall, the OBU Honors corporate study abroad was a fantastic experience. The Honors program is planning to take another group of students back to London next summer in 2019. Students should consider taking the opportunity to study abroad while in college for the invaluable experiences, learning opportunities, and life-long memories.

Stonehenge

London skyline, with Tower Bridge in background

The Union Jack flying at Windsor Castle
One of the purposes of the Honors service practicum capstone is to encourage Honor students to use the abilities given to them by God to serve others. Through this capstone, the Honors Program seeks to develop students not only into more intelligent people, but also into Christians who are able and willing to serve the least of these wherever they may be currently. Students become more servant-hearted leaders and are then able to take that attitude with them into their lives after the practicum and after graduation. A service practicum can look many different ways as all of the students who complete them are different and have varied interests. From feeding the hungry to showing the love of Christ to the children who need it most, the service practicums completed this year all serve as examples of ways to serve others wherever you may be.

Junior Sociology and Spanish double major Andrew Joyce completed his service practicum by working at Owasso Community Resources, a small food pantry in his hometown. He states that his service practicum was a “lesson in humility” as he realized that in order to impact others, he must be humble. Rather than simply attempting to complete the hours necessary for his service practicum, Andrew sought to complete his work to a high standard. Through this he says that he was able to both serve the clients and glorify God as he worked.

Junior Family and Community Service major Jana Saltzer also worked over J-Term at Feed the Children in Oklahoma City. She sorted and entered data into a computer and packed boxes for those in need. Through her service practicum she was reminded that “all people have dignity and all people are loved and cared for by God, so we as Christians should love and care for them and preserve their dignity as well.” Jana also states that she learned the importance of doing something and not just passing by even if doing something is uncomfortable.

Senior Secondary Math Education major Hannah Durkee completed her service practicum through volunteering as co-chair of Mission Center, a student organization that works with underprivileged students in the Oklahoma City Stockyards. Hannah had been involved with this ministry since her freshman year and so it seemed a natural fit to complete her service practicum through a ministry she already cared about. Her service practicum also helped her gain skills in working with impoverished students, something she plans to use in her future career as a teacher. Hannah believes that her service practicum has helped her to grow in both her leadership skills and her prayer life.

Senior Biology major Allison Foster worked as a camp counselor at Our Father’s Children, a camp for children in foster care, for her service practicum. She spent time with one eight-year-old girl who soaked up every minute of her attention.

Allison stated that this experience helped open her eyes to the suffering in the world beyond the OBU bubble and that her time at the camp has furthered her desire to work with foster children in the future. She also stated that she believes this service experience has helped prepare her “eyes and heart for the medical field.”

Through each of their service practicums, these students were able to take time from their lives to serve others. The service practicum allows students to go beyond the OBU bubble and learn how to work with and help others who may be vastly different from themselves. Additionally, through their service practicums these students were able to gain skills and a servant heart which will they will carry with them as they leave OBU and move on to new communities and people.
Colloquial Thoughts: Bison Honors Dialogues

by Lauren Dean
Senior, English

Honors colloquia are a special opportunity for faculty to teach on specific subjects they otherwise would be unable to cover in class, and for students to branch out and take short, unintimidating classes on topics outside their major course of study. Sometimes colloquia are expanded into full courses when a professor or pair of faculty love teaching a topic and find that they have enough content to fill a semester. Since the courses are only open to Honors students, they allow students to get to know people in other years and majors, fostering the Honors community. Colloquia may be taken for one or zero hours and are pass-fail, which allows students to really enjoy the content of the class instead of worrying about how it will add to their workload.

Junior Spanish and Sociology double major Andrew Joyce says that his favorite colloquium was “Seven Capital Vices” with Dr. Glenn Sanders. “I loved it because it transformed how I view my own sin. There are still days where I do or think something and am reminded of the vice behind it, be it pusillanimity or pride. And while that sounds depressing (who would take a class to examine their own sin?), it was an incredible experience to meditate on my behavior,” Joyce says.

Senior Biology major Allison Foster studied abroad in London, England, over the summer of 2018. While there, Honors students took a colloquium called “20th Century British Mystery,” co-taught by Dr. Tawa Anderson and Dr. Lindsey Panxhi, which Foster cites as her favorite. She says, “It was so easy for me to stay engaged and have fun conversations about [the reading].” Foster loves reading, but struggles to find time for it during the semester, so she enjoyed having a class which introduced her to some classics.

Senior Natural Science major Rachel Birchfield most enjoyed “Alexander Hamilton,” taught by Dr. Christopher McMillion. Birchfield has been a fan of the musical for a while. “I love the Hamilton musical so much I went to Chicago to experience it for myself. I was so excited when I saw that OBU was offering a colloquium,” she says. It was a unique opportunity to be able to take a class on a popular phenomenon like Hamilton.

Junior Nursing major Megan Kalinowski’s favorite colloquium was “Plagues, Pandemics, and Biowarfare” with Dr. Brad Jett. “It was awesome because we actually learned a lot of microbiology in a short time period, but also got to investigate historical instances where biology changed the course of human history. Also, who doesn’t love a colloquium that ends with a movie?” Kalinowski says. The class is unique because it meets over the course of one weekend over J-Term. On Friday students go to Dr. Jett’s house for several hours of discussion and lecture, then work on a presentation over the weekend, and present and watch a movie on Monday.

Other colloquia in the past year include:

“The Myth of the American West” with Dr. Carol Humphrey

“J. S. Bach: Music as Hidden Theology” with Dr. Benjamin Shute

“The Musical Setting of the Psalms” with Dr. Kathy Scherler

“The Use and Abuse of Scripture” with Dr. Alan Bandy

“Humility” with Dr. Glenn Sanders

“Science & God” with Dr. John McWilliams and Dr. Tawa Anderson

“Logical Paradoxes” with Dr. Cherith Tucker and Dr. Randy Ridenour

When professors are passionate about a subject it often translates to the students, and then students are interested as well, class discussions are much more free-flowing and stimulating than otherwise. Honors colloquia are fun for all involved, and students often end up taking more than the required four.
On May 18, 2018, the Honors Graduation Banquet recognized 13 grads – eleven graduating “With College Honors,” and two more graduating “With Honors In” their respective disciplines. After graduates, family, friends, and faculty shared a sumptuous lunch together, Dr. Alan Bandy, Associate Professor of Bible, shared an imaginative and inspiring exhortation for graduates as they embark on the journey of post-OBU life. Graduating seniors were then recognized and hooded:

Megan Bowlin, Healthy and Human Performance, With College Honors. Megan is now pursuing a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) at Kansas University.

William “Patrick” Browne, Biochemistry, With College Honors. Patrick married his fiancé, Jordan, over the summer, and is attending The University of Oklahoma College of Medicine.

Abigail Chadwick, Creative Writing, With College Honors. Abigail is currently working and volunteering in her hometown of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Victoria “Tori” Daugherty (nee Groce), With Honors in Philosophy. Tori is working in Shawnee and anticipates graduate work in Philosophy in the near future.

Anna Dellinger (nee Brewster), News and Information, With College Honors. Anna is now working with the Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma, and hopes to serve overseas eventually.

Will Engle, International Business, With College Honors. Will and his wife Morgan are teaching English in Nicaragua, and hope to serve with the U.S. Foreign Service.

Jantzen Faulkner, Biochemistry, With College Honors. Jantzen is working as a research assistant at the OU Health Sciences Center, preparing for medical school.

Amy Lashar (nee Harden), Early Childhood Education, With College Honors. Amy is teaching kindergarten at Tinker Elementary School in Midwest City, OK.

Rebekah McPheeters, with Honors in Communication Studies. Rebekah is serving with the International Mission Board as a Journeyman missionary in East Asia.

Troy Officer, Biochemistry, With College Honors. Troy is attending law school at Baylor University.

Sierra Roller, Art, With College Honors. Sierra is working from home, presenting her work in local galleries, and pursuing jobs in publishing and illustration.

Morgan Smith, English, With College Honors. Morgan is attending Oklahoma City University’s School of Law.

Chancellor Stillwell, Biblical Languages, With College Honors. Chance is pursuing a Masters of Divinity at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC.

In addition to the recognition of all our graduating Honors students, four individual Honors students received individual scholarships and awards. Two Deaton Memorial Scholarships are awarded to a rising junior and rising senior who are among the top three GPAs in their respective classes. This year’s recipients were Alexis Besch, a rising junior from Bonham, Texas majoring in Psychology, Pre-Counseling; and Chandler Warren, a rising senior from Poteau, Oklahoma double majoring in Bible and Philosophy.

The Michael E. Travers Memorial Honors Scholarship was established in honor of Dr. Travers, who passed away in March 2017 after a lengthy battle with prostate cancer. The Travers Memorial Honors Scholarship is awarded to a rising senior in the Honors Program who exemplifies the qualities that marked Dr. Travers’ 40-year career in Christian higher education: (a) deep appreciation for and love of the world of ideas and literature, (b) academic excellence, (c) vibrant personal commitment to evangelical Christian faith, and (d) thorough
Rusty Jones, ‘04

I was at OBU from 2000-04. I double-majored in Philosophy and Biblical Languages. I studied abroad (German) in Vienna for the summer after my junior year, and I wrote an honors thesis on Socratic methodology – specifically on the question whether Socrates’ question-and-answer methodology can yield positive results or is only a test for consistency.

After OBU, I went straight into a PhD program in philosophy at the University of Oklahoma. I was there from 2004-2010. I specialized in classical Greek philosophy and wrote a dissertation on virtue and happiness in Plato’s *Euthydemus*.

I went straight from finishing my PhD to my current job on the philosophy faculty at Harvard. My wife, Emily Jones (a 2005 OBU graduate), finished her PhD two weeks later and joined the nursing faculty at UMass Boston. What is most fulfilling and most challenging about my work are largely the same things: finding ways to effectively teach students, and producing cutting-edge research on a person who died 2400 years ago. (Yes, I’m still hung up on Socrates.) OBU was a good preparation for the work I’m doing now. I’m still working on the puzzles I addressed in my thesis, and I read Greek and philosophy every day as part of my job. People who are still at OBU, like Bobby Kelly and Kevin Hall and Randy Ridenour, put in a lot of effort to prepare me to succeed in my field.

My wife Emily, three-year-old daughter Bea, Scout the schnauzer, and I live in Boston, and Emily’s parents live in a nearby suburb. So, our days are pretty full of activity, mostly pitched at the three-year-old level.

I suppose it’s most likely that I’ll still be teaching and writing about Greek philosophy in ten years, since I mostly enjoy that work and I’ve made good contributions to the field; but even that I’m not sure about. Ten years ago I wouldn’t have expected to end up where I am now, and ten years before that I hadn’t even conceived of what I’d be doing in 2008, so I hesitate to make any projections at all for 2028.
Kevin van der Laan, ‘97

My time at OBU, while obviously divinely ordained in retrospect, was definitely unexpected from start to finish in process. As a Canadian, I had never before heard of OBU prior to investigating the SAT, and while the subsequent offer of a partial scholarship was helpful in directing me there in the beginning, it was very much overshadowed by the opportunities abroad in the business program upon arrival. I graduated from OBU in 1997 with a degree in International Business, the capstone of which was an internship in Tianjin, China, helping a Shawnee-based company set up a factory there. This four-month internship became a twelve-year sojourn. My wife (OBU ‘96/Elementary Ed., emphasis in ESL) and I were involved in fostering about a dozen children from the Tianjin orphanage over a number of years. We actually ended up adopting two children from the same orphanage; though it was very clear to us that while there were several children that we were to foster, there were only two that were ‘ours’ to keep.

My career began in Tianjin, building and then running a production line for Central Plastics, then moved to the establishment of an English-language newspaper, then on to the building and management of the only Western medical facility in that same city. By the time we left in 2008, I had seen a provincial heavy-industry rustbelt city of the command economy metamorphose into a modern megacity with all the accompanying charms and challenges.

Our family had continued to grow during this time, and, upon our return to the West, there were nine of us. As mentioned, we had adopted two Chinese children in addition to our three biological ones, and, eighteen months prior to our departure from China, began the adoption of four Ethiopian brothers, which was completed mere weeks before the start of our new life in Canada. In time, we had three more biological children and adopted one more, to bring the total souls in our home to fifteen. It is never dull, and though I believe that I am prematurely graying, I can think of no more worthwhile reason for the transformation than the constant demands of being a father to thirteen children, though my wife, who homeschools and cares for them all, has not a single silver strand to show for it.

I joined my father in the family investment business and, ten years later, am comfortably ensconced therein. I find that the time that was spent negotiating the twists and turns of the Chinese business world have prepared me well for the fluctuations of the stock market, as the general madness of doing business in the Middle Kingdom makes a major market correction here seem rather mundane. I also find that the nature of the OBU Honors Program and the leadership of my advisor at the time helps to make my job more fulfilling even now, more than a decade later. There was an emphasis on service and the impact of a higher calling that has led to a more panoramic view of the financial world. Though it is not the core of our business, I participate in a lot of debt counselling, especially within the Christian community, that gives much meaning to what can be an otherwise clinical, numbers-only industry.

My dear wife and I hope that we will continue to be able to serve as we are called, as we are yet both able and willing. The truth of it is that the hard, seemingly ‘unprofitable’ things in life have been of the greatest value to us.