

# Honors Program

## Spring 2012

# Newsletter

**MIDWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY**  
<http://academics.mwsu.edu/honors/>

## Oh, the Places We'll Go! EDITION

### *A Word from the New Director:*



**HOWDY**, I am Dr. Michael Vandehey, the new Director of the Honors Program as of January 2012, and I would like to introduce myself to those of you who do not know me. I began teaching at MSU in 1999 for the Department of Psychology. Over the last 13 years, I have been active in

Psi Chi (psychology honor society, 11 years), Mortar Board (3 years), Alpha Chi, and was even the key note speaker for two Honors Program Symposiums. I am currently a full professor in psychology, have a modest number of publications including a graduate textbook on career counseling and education, and love the Honors Program (initially taught a week in an Honors Capstone Seminar; recently taught Honors General Psychology). I am originally from Oregon; I attended the University of Oregon (Psychology/German double major) and Indiana State University (MS: Marriage and Family therapy; Ph.D. Counseling Psychology). My wife and kids (fraternal twin boys age 12) have attended one Honors Program Brown Bag event (game night), and the boys went with me on a star gazing field trip. My two dogs take turns coming to the office and love meeting new people. My dream for the Honors Program includes a highly cohesive group of students who share ideas and solutions from across the vast disciplines represented in its members. We are creating a true liberal arts approach to listening, sharing, learning, and living.

## Good-Pi, Dr. Farris



For the past seven years, **DR. MARK FARRIS** served as the Director of the Honors Program where he worked tirelessly to cultivate our long-standing campus program and its students. In the spring of 2012, Dr. Farris returned to the classroom full time to teach mathematics. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, he is helping with the development of a summer bridge program for entering science and engineering students, reviving his interest in the history of mathematics, and contemplating a return to the study of aero-acoustics.

“As Director of MSU’s Honors Program, Professor Farris has developed a program that offers students an academic environment that values and promotes critical thinking, analytical writing, and research and information competency skills through an innovative and challenging curriculum,” says Dr. John Martinez, Professor of Economics. “In providing such an enriched academic, cultural and social experience to our most intellectually inquisitive and motivated students, he has significantly promoted the university’s true mission. And, in that regard, no one on this campus has done more!”

The Honors Program would not be where it is today without the efforts of Dr. Farris. We certainly miss him in Honors, and we wish him all the best in the Mathematics Department!

## Faculty Highlight



**TOM MCNEELY**, Interim Coordinator for the Intensive English Language Institute, has drawn on his graduate studies in film and literature to teach three Honors seminars: History of World Cinema, Film Noir, and this semester’s Shakespeare & Adaptation. “I really appreciate the opportunity to design courses that aren’t regularly taught at MSU,” he says. “Having such bright and talented students in the Honors classes allows me to challenge both them and myself as together we tackle these subjects from an interdisciplinary perspective. The classroom conversation is always lively, intelligent, and just downright fun. Teaching for the Honors Program has been the high point of my 20 years at MSU.”

# Featured Alumna



From an early age, Wichita Falls native **ASHLEY CANNON** (formerly Gravelle) knew what she wanted to do in life. When most young children express dreams of becoming movie stars, princesses, or astronauts, they tend to change their minds often, but Ashley has proven to be an exception. After graduating from Midwestern State University as an Honors Program graduate in May 2010, it appears that her lifelong dream of becoming an astronaut is well within reach.

As a student at Kirby Junior High, Ashley's interest in science grew. In fact, a mural at Kirby depicting her as an astronaut documents the dedication to her dream. Then at Hirschi High School, Ashley became involved with the Aerospace Program.

After high school graduation, Ashley decided that Oklahoma State University's Engineering Program would provide her with the best opportunities for involvement with NASA. She studied mechanical and aerospace engineering at OSU for one semester. Through OSU she received the opportunity to complete an engineering internship at NASA, which she did not enjoy. Although unsure about her interest in engineering, she returned to Wichita Falls the following semester and enrolled in the engineering program at Midwestern, but quickly found that her true passion was chemistry.

Ashley studied chemistry at MSU until August 2008, at which point she felt the need to broaden her horizons. She then enrolled at the University of Missouri in St. Louis. She studied biochemistry there for one semester before being called home because of a family illness.

She re-enrolled at Midwestern in January 2009, and this time many educational opportunities started appearing for Ashley. Dr. Magaly Rincón-Zachary, Graduate Coordinator and Professor of Biology, played a pivotal role in Ashley's journey by connecting her with the Noble Foundation where she participated in a summer internship in 2009 and became a research technician the following summer.

Through the Noble Foundation, Ashley was connected with Dr. Elison Blancaflor, who had received a grant from NASA to send plants into space to study the effect of an anti-gravity environment. Ashley received the opportunity to do the

groundwork for the study. Through her work, she found that the chemical Brassinolide enhances the gravitropic response by disrupting the cytoskeleton. This study is significant because it is a small step to helping scientists better understand gravitropic response and to reaching the goal of growing plants in outer space. "Ashley is indeed a unique student. She is an independent thinker who actively engages in her own learning, and that's key to her being a top-notch student and a productive undergraduate researcher," says Dr. Rincón-Zachary.

Ashley has presented a poster giving an overview of the results of her study at several conferences, the most recent at the Texas Undergraduate Research Day in Austin last year. One of the most exciting opportunities that her research has provided her was the opportunity to present her poster, "Brassinolides Promote the Gravitropic Response of Maize Roots by Disrupting Actin Filament Organization," at the 26th annual meeting of the American Society for Gravitational and Space Biology (ASGSB) in National Harbor, Maryland. At this meeting, Ashley won third place for the best undergraduate poster presentation.

Throughout all of these accomplishments, Ashley continued to be involved at MSU as an active Honors Program student. She served as a Peer Leader for new Honors students in the Honors Introductory Seminar, and she won the MSU Alumni Association Outstanding Honors Program Student award in spring of 2010.

Although Ashley's original plan for getting involved with NASA did not transpire, she attributes all of the decisions she made and the paths she chose to God's plan for her. She says, "When things fall into your lap I don't believe it is by coincidence." She believes that Midwestern State University was in God's plan all along. While MSU may not be as well-known as other universities listed on Ashley's transcript, she believes that the kindness and dedication of her professors here cannot be matched. She describes MSU as "a small school that does such big things."

Ashley plans to continue to do big things as her next step is to attend graduate school at The University of Texas in Austin and to continue her study of space biology. Eventually Ashley plans to pursue her dream of becoming an astronaut, but first she would like to obtain her Ph.D. and become an educator. Through her experiences she says she has "learned to enjoy sharing what she is passionate about." She wishes to give opportunities and assistance to the next generation just as many of her professors have given to her.

Candice Fulton, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, describes Ashley as "...a very caring young lady who puts a priority on serving and caring for others. She was one of the top students from this department and the College of Science and Mathematics. Being accepted into the University of Texas graduate program (one of the top programs in the country), she will be a successful researcher. She is an incredible student and individual."

*Originally published by MSU's Public Information Office and written by Haley Hall, a current Honors Program student.*

***Do you have a story to share? Send us an e-mail! We would love to hear from more alumni! We hope many of you will continue to keep in touch with us, and we look forward to sharing your stories in the future.***

# Research Highlights from Current Students and Alumni:



**KYLE CHRISTIAN**, a senior Honors Program student at MSU, presented “*Odysseus—The Ancient James Bond*” at the annual Honors Program Symposium at MSU as well as the Great Plains Honors Conference in Arlington, TX, in March 2011:

## *Odysseus – The Ancient James Bond*

It was the French Sociologist Émile Durkheim who coined the term collective consciousness to describe the shared human experience which surpasses the boundaries of geography, culture and even time. Whether because of this collective consciousness, or direct cultural inheritance, there are many parallels that can be drawn between the value of machismo in ancient Greece and the western world today.

*The Odyssey*, in a sense, is one of the earliest celebrations of the male ego. Reading the epic poem is evocative of watching one of the film interpretations of Ian Fleming’s James Bond novels. The films are packed with themes of male sexual prowess and superior masculine intelligence, very similar to that of *The Odyssey*.

Also present in both works are the contrasting elements of the femme fatale, the woman whose mission is to detract the hero from his goal, and what I like to refer to as the goddess figure, the woman without whom the hero cannot complete his mission.

Overwhelmingly, the similarity between the values of the Greeks and us today, thousands of years removed from ancient times, indicates that human nature

is more static than we would like to believe; that there exists a collective consciousness in humankind that transcends all times and all places.



**MATT MOUDY**, a senior Honors Program student at MSU, presented his research on snake venom at the 2012 Honors Program Symposium and at the Great Plains Honors Conference in Overland Park, KS. Matt worked with Dr. Rodney Cate and Jeremy Lynn Motley, both faculty at MSU, on his project:

## *Isolation of NADase from Agkistrodon piscivorus leucostoma venom*

In order to better understand the effects of snake venom, identifying and characterizing its chemical makeup is of vital importance. One such component, an enzyme, which bears further study, is known as NADase. Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide glycohydrolase (NADase) enzymes often show activities of NAD-glycohydrolases, ADP ribose (ADPR) cyclases or cyclic ADP ribose (cADPR) hydrolases. The NADase of *Agkistrodon acutus* venom demonstrated multiple activities including the hydrolysis of ATP, ADP, and AMP-PNP as well as the cleavage of NAD<sup>+</sup> to ADPR and nicotinamide. NADase from *Agkistrodon piscivorus leucostoma* venom was isolated in a three step purification procedure by cation exchange, gel permeation and anion exchange chromatography after the method of Wu, et al. Homogeneity of the isolated enzyme was verified by SDS polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis.



**TIFFANY BARTHELMY**, a May 2011 Honors Program graduate, presented “*Foreign Policy: Application through Definition*” at the 2011 Honors Program Symposium. She created a poster display of her research to present at the Great Plains Honors Conference in Arlington, TX, in March 2011:

## *Foreign Policy: Application through Definition*

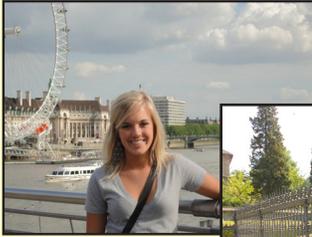
Although all countries have some form of foreign policy, for many small countries foreign policy translates merely into domestic-based policy, as they have little to no influence in international politics. Therefore, foreign policy is assessed on this premise: true foreign policy does not apply to small, developing nations; but rather it can only truly apply to nations with relative forms of power. The definition of power within the framework of foreign policy is also used to underscore the leverage of small nations in international affairs.

Foreign policy analysis is motivated by the desire to understand and improve the relations among countries around the world. This analysis attains general knowledge about foreign policy decision making, behaviors, and outcomes. In accessing any foreign policy, one must follow basic political guidelines: assess the environment, identify the goals of the principal actors, assess personal capabilities, define problems, develop solutions, and test and refine these solutions.

As countries seek to make decisions on the international stage, they must use these guidelines and take into account the opportunities that are realistically available to them. With that in mind, how many countries are viable for opportunities on the global stage? How many affect the decisions made in this arena? This presentation attempts to reveal the dynamics that hinder certain countries from actively participating in foreign relations as it was initially designed.

# Study Abroad

Hannah Lamar, Madrid



Laura Clark, London



Mariette Smithen, Granada

Many Honors Program students participate in the various study abroad programs offered at MSU. The Honors Program offers additional scholarship support for Honors students who study abroad through any of the programs supported by the university. These opportunities not only help broaden our students' perspectives on the world, but they also fulfill the senior requirement necessary to graduate from the Honors Program. Students must study abroad, complete an internship, or submit a senior research project in order to finish their Honors Program requirements. Some of the programs available at MSU include a fall semester in Granada, Spain, a spring semester in Pontlevoy, France, one month in Madrid, Spain, one month in London, England, and a rainforest study in Panama. We interviewed several Honors Program students who recently returned home after studying abroad, and here is a snapshot of their experiences:

## *Where did you study?*

**LAURA CLARK:** Queen Mary, University of London

**MARIETTE SMITHEN:** Granada, Spain

**HANNAH LAMAR:** Madrid, Spain

## *What was the most memorable experience you had while studying abroad?*

**LAURA CLARK:** There is no simple answer to that question! Numerous experiences stand out to me from my time spent in London. I think one of my absolute favorite experiences was going to see *Les Miserables* at the Queen's Theatre in Leicester Square.

**MARIETTE SMITHEN:** My most memorable experience was our frequent "Happy Friday" dinners. While residing at the Don Quijote residence, I met many students from a number of European and Asian countries. After developing a strong, amiable bond with each other, we designated Fridays for a multi-cultural feast, which was comprised of a variety of typical dishes of our respective cultures. These scrumptious dinners fostered an increased sociability among us and contributed to a lifetime of fond memories.

**HANNAH LAMAR:** My most memorable experiences while studying abroad were spent in the many museums I went to.

## *What was the most difficult thing about studying abroad?*

**LAURA CLARK:** Surprisingly, I don't recall ever feeling homesick. I think the most difficult part of studying abroad is being adventurous and courageous enough to try new things.

**MARIETTE SMITHEN:** The most difficult thing that I encountered was the culture shock that set in about two weeks into my stay. It suddenly struck me that not only was the setting different but also the people, the food, the values, the customs, the beliefs – basically everything that had anything to do with life. Even worse was the fact that I had to live with those differences for another ten weeks. Once I had embraced the differences for what they were worth, I saw a significant change in my outlook to life in general.

**HANNAH LAMAR:** The most difficult thing for me was completely emerging into the culture.

## *How were your classes different from a typical semester at MSU?*

**LAURA CLARK:** We seldom studied in an actual classroom, and when we did, I was never bored. Our classes consisted mostly of field trips all around London and England, and the professors were very active and involved in everything we learned! It was awesome.

**MARIETTE SMITHEN:** One major difference in the semester abroad in comparison with classes at MSU is that the classes were not done concurrently. One class preceded another, and the level of course work increased at the end of each session, which culminated in an exam that covered the duration of the entire course (2.5 to 3 weeks). Class sessions were more informal, interactive, and diverse. Also, the semester was travel-intensive. There were several excursions to popular cities to visit historical sites and museums. In addition, a ten-day travel break was incorporated about midway into the semester.

**HANNAH LAMAR:** They placed more emphasis on class participation as well as semester-long progression rather than concrete homework and test grades.

## *In what way(s), if any, did studying abroad change you?*

**LAURA CLARK:** Studying abroad required me to depend on myself. I was living in a different country for one month, and my parents weren't there to take care of me. I learned a lot about myself.

**MARIETTE SMITHEN:** Studying abroad granted me the privilege of experiencing the Spanish culture first-hand, thereby enhancing my knowledge and understanding of the values, beliefs, and perspectives held by the people of that culture. It also made me more open to new experiences and more willing to accept and appreciate other cultures.

**HANNAH LAMAR:** Studying abroad gave me a new sort of independence. Since I turned 18, I have had independence in the form of making decisions and not having certain restrictions. Now, I would define my independence as a strong sense of self, a desire to learn and experience new things, and the ability to do so without fear.

## *What is the most valuable thing you learned/gained from this experience?*

**LAURA CLARK:** The most valuable thing I have taken from studying abroad is this: I will take every opportunity that life hands to me, especially when it comes to traveling!

**MARIETTE SMITHEN:** Being immersed into an entirely Spanish-speaking environment provided a more effective method of learning the language and being able to apply its use to everyday context. As such, I was able to advance my language skills, which was a huge accomplishment. However, there was nothing more rewarding than the opportunity to experience a new culture and enjoy the camaraderie that could lead to lifelong networking benefits. I highly recommend it!

**HANNAH LAMAR:** I learned and saw so many exciting and beautiful things that opened my eyes to how much there is in the world that I have yet to discover.

# Community Service Highlights

## Girl Scout World Thinking Day

Several Honors Program students recently participated in a Girl Scout event called World Thinking Day at the Sikes Lake Center at MSU on February 4, 2012. The event was focused on teaching the young girls about different cultures around the world, and our Honors Programs students shared knowledge about their different backgrounds. We have a strong influence of Caribbean students, and they brought photos, jewelry and other items from their islands to share with the girls. Even Dr. Vandehey came dressed in traditional German lederhosen, to share his own heritage at the event!



## Alternative Spring Break



*Kyle Christian  
SGA President*

Current SGA President **KYLE CHRISTIAN**, a current Honors Program student, helped to expand his Alternative Spring Break idea to the entire student body. Kyle initially began this project for the Honors Program students in Spring 2011, and several students participated in volunteering at the Wichita Falls Area Food Bank over Spring Break. This year, MSU students took part in United Way's Alternative Spring Break in Biloxi, Mississippi, from March 11th to 17th. The cost to participate was \$250 charged by the United Way to cover meals (three per day), transportation, lodging and program fees. The Student Development Office provided scholarships to offset this cost, and the SGA helped to raise funds over the course of February and early March for the same cause. In Biloxi, students served in three capacities: tax preparation for low income families, community beautification, and building new housing.

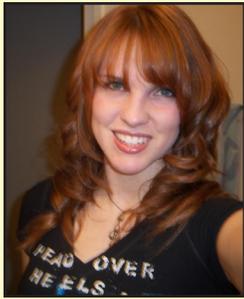
## Sixth Annual Honors Program Symposium: "Abstract Thinking in a Concrete World"

**THE SIXTH ANNUAL HONORS PROGRAM SYMPOSIUM** was held in March of 2012. The Honors Program Student Committee organized and implemented the event. Students voted to select a faculty discussion panel in place of a keynote speaker. Dr. Jeremy Duff-Political Science, Dr. Nathan Jun-Philosophy, and Dr. Jeff Stambaugh-Business Management and Marketing, discussed the topic "Individual claims of privacy ought to be valued above competing claims of societal welfare." The student presentations from March 2012 are as follows:

- Kylie Parker**-1960s Black Theatre
- Alyssa Smith**-Anime
- Mariette Smithen**-The Contribution of Francisco de Goya to Spanish Art
- Miranda N. Westerfield**-Personality Disorders of the Femme Fatale
- Tonya Bruton**-Deaf Culture
- Missy Luong**-A Muffled Voice
- Kareem Small**-The American Cowboy
- Cassandra Hermann**-Understanding Our Children: Using Psychosocial Development in the Classroom
- Kamila Bell**-Population Growth – A Potential Global Issue
- Matthew Moudy**-Isolation of NADase from *Agkistrodon piscivorus leucostoma* venom



# Honors Housing Update



**THE HONORS FLOOR** in the McCullough-Trigg residence hall has undergone several new developments. In addition to the standard entertainment lounge, a new study lounge has been refurnished and made available to Honors Program students on the floor. Wifi was also recently installed so that students may have internet access in the study lounge for their research. We interviewed a current resident, **YVONNE MICHAUD**, about her experience on the Honors Floor:

## *What are the benefits to living on the Honors Floor?*

Some benefits to living on the Honors Floor would be the extra scholarship and having people who are most likely in a class with you. If they are not currently in a class with you, then you can still discuss which Honors classes each person would recommend or you might see them in a class in the future.

## *What is your favorite memory from living on the floor?*

Favorite memory... that would be a tough one. I have had a lot of fun living on the Honors Floor, and quite honestly some of my favorite memories would be rough housing with my friends. I doubt that's exactly a normal "honors" activity! I also have several memories of staying up late in the lounge trying to study or write papers and going to Taco Bell to sustain ourselves.

## *Do you feel the students on the floor have become a part of a community?*

I am definitely closer to some of the HP students on the floor. It helps very much to see them every day and in a non-classroom setting. As for functioning as a community, I would say that for the most part we will trade notes or remind each other of tests/assignments when necessary.

## *What is your least favorite thing about living on the floor?*

My least favorite thing about the Honors Floor would be that going into that setting I was worried about being stuck on a floor with a bunch of up-tight "studiers." At first I was very correct to think that way because there were several times that certain HP students wanted to be very tight on the "quiet hours" rule. Soon enough, though, everyone lightened up and got comfortable with each other.

## Brains and Brawn

*Cara Mack-Cross Country  
Emily Saville-Soccer  
Taylor Coffman-Tennis  
Kris Aduddell-Volleyball  
Mallory Goon-Volleyball  
Andi Wisdom-Cheerleading*

## Honors Fun Facts from Spring 2012

126 total students in the Honors Program  
7 new Honors Program students accepted  
74 students from Texas  
2 students from other states:  
Oklahoma-1, Hawaii-1  
50 international students:  
1 from Europe: Germany  
31 from the Caribbean:  
Dominica-4, Grenada-6, St. Kitts-5,  
St. Lucia-11, Antigua-5  
2 from Asia: Vietnam-1, Korea-1  
16 from Africa: Nigeria-13, Cameroon-3

## HPSC Officers Spring 2012

*Katherine McDaniel, Chair  
Clinton Wagoner, Vice Chair  
Joseph Hadwal, Secretary  
Michelle Meadows, Treasurer  
Andi Wisdom, Senator  
Micki Jimenez, Honors Floor RA*

## Honors Program Graduates 2011

<i>Tiffany Barthelmy</i>	<i>Alicia Kobylecky</i>	<i>Nicole Savage</i>	<i>Jeff Garrison</i>
<i>Amanda Evans</i>	<i>Julia Mushlin</i>	<i>Irene Spaziani</i>	<i>Joanna Rankin</i>
<i>Ashley Gravelle</i>	<i>Brittany Norman</i>	<i>Samantha Tomei</i>	



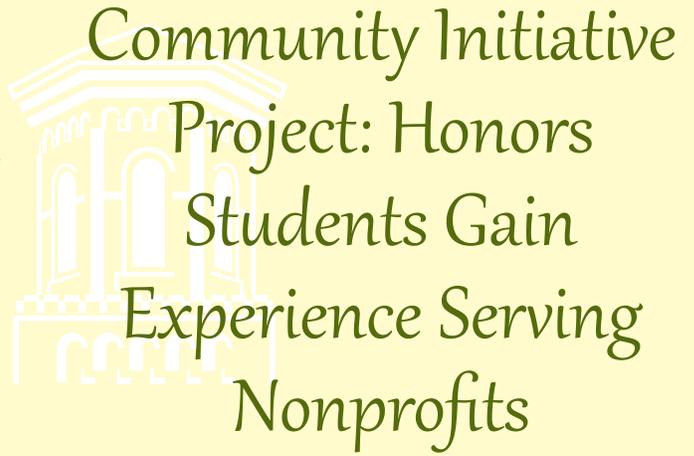
**THE HONORS PROGRAM** began organizing a new and intriguing opportunity for its students in the spring of 2011. Derived from an Angelo State University program, Midwestern opened the Community Leadership Initiative Project last fall.

The Community Leadership Initiative Project provides qualified students with the opportunity to improve their sense of community by becoming ad-hoc, nonvoting members of local nonprofit boards. The goals of the project are for participating students to learn about the needs of the Wichita Falls community and develop an interest in service to nonprofit organizations.

Students must go through an extensive application process before being selected for the project. Resumes are accepted in the spring semester and reviewed by the Honors Program staff. Two to four qualified candidates will receive interviews with the executive directors and several board members of participating organizations. The board may then choose which student or students would best meet their needs. Student board members receive modifications from the role of a normal board member, such as waived donation requirements. Currently, two nonprofit boards are involved in this project: Wichita Falls Symphony Orchestra (WFSO) and Children’s Aid Society. Cassie Herman and Maria Souliotis were selected to serve on the WFSO Board of Directors and inducted in May 2011. Board members elected to allow Cassie and Maria voting privileges, giving them the title of junior board members. In addition to their roles as board members, they were also chosen to serve as part of the long-range planning committee.

Maria, a music major at MSU, was immediately interested in the idea of working with the WFSO Board, as she had ties to the symphony. Although she has always enjoyed the concerts, Maria has gained a new appreciation by serving on the board. “I’ve gotten to see the business and logistic elements behind each concert. I appreciate the concerts more now that I am aware of the intense planning behind them,” she said.

Cassie, an education major at MSU, has enjoyed her experience on the WFSO Board, though, unlike Maria, she had no previous connection or musical background. She said this experience has given her a valuable behind-the-scenes look at “all the little things that go into making a nonprofit organization work.” Just like Maria, the amount of planning that goes into each concert was a surprise to Cassie. She learned that some concerts are planned three and four years in advance. Cassie said she has thoroughly enjoyed the program and would love the opportunity to serve with another board that has connections to her major.



# Community Initiative Project: Honors Students Gain Experience Serving Nonprofits

This project is seen as a win-win situation for both the students and the nonprofit organizations. While the students receive the opportunity to serve in a leadership position, participate in the off-campus community, and broaden their volunteer experiences; the boards gain valuable perspective from a younger generation.

In the future, Honors Program Coordinator Juliana Felts says she hopes to expand this project to include more nonprofit organizations. “The ideal situation would be to have enough students and willing boards that we can match the students based on their interests,” she said.

Cassie says she believes the Community Leadership Initiative Project will continue to grow and “has the potential to be one of the university’s most valuable programs” in which all Honors students should take advantage.

During Spring 2012, the Honors Program met with students and boards involved to determine what changes and improvements should be made in order to continue to grow this program. Current expansions include the Wichita Falls Youth Symphony Orchestra board.

*Originally published by MSU’s  
Public Information Office and written by Haley Hall,  
a current Honors Program student.*

## MSU Alumni Association Outstanding Honors Program Students

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	YEAR	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	YEAR
Cody	Cole	1994	Shonna	Diggs	2003
Chandra	Rodgers	1994	Adam	McMahen	2004
Melissa	Miller	1995	Marie	Ibarra	2005
Paul (Andrew)	Fleming	1995	Laura Rachael	Kair	2006
Jamie	Benefield	1996	Erin Kathleen	Short	2007
Jason	Lawrence	1997	Jonathan	Abel	2008
Paul	Mussachio	1998	Chelsea	Humphrey	2009
Danielle	Roney	1999	Liam	Guthrie	2010
Jennifer	Veitenheimer	2000	Ashley	Gravelle	2011
Jeffrey (Mark)	Fleming	2001	Kyle	Christian	2012
Nyian	Farrell	2002			