RAMAPO COLLEGE HONORS PROGRAM

Director of the College Honors Program
Associate Professor Rebecca Root
201-684-7429

Assistant Director of the College Honors Program
Chris Brittain
201-684-7110

For more information, visit www.ramapo.edu/honors or Email us at honors@ramapo.edu

505 Ramapo Valley Road
Mahwah, N.J. 07430

Follow us on Instagram @rcnjhonors

THE Honor-able MENTION

The Official Newsletter of the Ramapo College Honors Program

June 2019
The academic year can often seem like a marathon, especially in the spring semester. I find that each year as we approach graduation, I realize that my focus has leapt from one event to the next for nine months straight. Only when things begin to slow down a bit am I able to look around and appreciate the truly astounding volume of accomplishments our students have made both inside and outside of the Honors Program. As we cross the finish line of the 2018-2019 academic year, I’d like to reflect on some of the achievements I am most impressed by and some of the students of whom I am most proud.

I would first like to congratulate each and every Honors student for another fantastic year. Maintaining all of the responsibilities of a full course load is challenging enough. So many of you go above and beyond by dedicating your time to community service, on-campus clubs, athletics and research that I am frequently in awe that you manage to get any sleep.

Perhaps the most exciting new aspect of our program is International Service-Learning Spring Break trips. Dean of the School of Humanities and Global Studies, Susan Hangen, and Rajesh Adhikari, director of international student and scholar services in the Roukema Center, chaperoned 15 Honors students as they visited Nepal to assist earthquake-affected communities. One of the highlights of my year was receiving daily pictures of our students in the midst of this truly life-changing experience. The trip was a tremendous success; several students in this newsletter issue will recount their time there in greater detail. We look forward to planning these types of international excursions annually as a staple of the Honors Program.

Additional highlights included our trips to the National Collegiate Honors Council Conference and the Northeast Regional Honors Council Conference. Four students traveled with us to NCHC in Boston to present research on topics such as gender roles in British literature, 18th century American history and emotional contagion in psychology. Junior Stephanie Guzman’s poster on immigrant farm workers received the second place award at NCHC and was published in their conference proceedings. The trip was a tremendous success; several students at the conference were also about gender in business. I was able to create connections with undergraduate research students from around the country while learning about different concerns facing the business community. Conducting research as an undergraduate student has been a privilege that not every student gets to experience. Being able to present it in a variety of spaces positively impacted me as both a scholar and future business leader. I learned about how to conduct research, problem solve and communicate my results.

After graduation, I will be a communications specialist at Commvault. I am currently a marketing communications intern and cannot wait to take this next step. Commvault is the global leader of data management. Their biggest partners include Amazon Web Services, Google, Microsoft and Cisco. My role will include writing blogs and email copy as well as producing video content for both internal and external audiences. I will be pursuing my passion for gender studies by specializing in creating content for the diversity and inclusion programs.

Although I will be pursuing a professional career, I love being in the classroom way too much to abandon it forever. After a few years in the business sphere, I hope to go back to school to either receive an MBA in marketing or a graduate degree in women and gender studies. I know my education journey is not going to end here.

I attended the Gabelli School of Business’ Undergraduate Research Conference at Fordham University. My experience at the conference was truly invaluable. After completing a 12-minute presentation explaining my research, the floor opened for a 15-minute question and answer period. Faculty, administration and students asked me extremely thought-provoking questions. This was the most challenging portion of the day. They brought up great points that made me think about my findings in a way I never had before.

This conference was a community of business professionals who were also passionate about the topic of gender diversity. The other presentations in my session were also about gender in business.
place Sloane Prize for Undergraduate Research in the category of diversity. Ten students traveled with us to NRHC in Baltimore to present research on topics such as indigenous language retention, early gene detection and repair methods, and emerging technologies in the classroom. We are already looking forward to NCHC this fall, as eight students have been accepted to present research in New Orleans.

One of the best outcomes of the trip to NCHC (as is often the case) was the time Professor Root and I were able to spend with the students and pick their brains on what the Honors Program could do to improve the student experience. It was on the van ride back that we determined we could do more to address the issue of mental health with Honors students. As a result of that trip, seniors Reeve Olivia Harden and Amy Aroune hosted a Mental Health Panel that featured Judy Green of the Center for Health and Counseling Services, Catherine Magner of the Krame Center, as well as several students. This event was a huge success, and we intend to hold it again next year.

We made great strides reconnecting with the growing alumni base of our Honors Program as well. In August, we hosted the first-ever Honors Program Alumni Reunion in the Padovano Commons which raised more than $800 for an alumni scholarship. Senior nursing student Amy Aroune was selected as the recipient of the first-ever Ramapo College Honors Alumni Scholarship.

Our Honors Alumni Advisory Board continued to do great work, helping to plan an Alumni Networking Panel and a summer trivia night down the road from our campus.

As I attended this year’s undergraduate graduation ceremony at the Prudential Center, I couldn’t have been more proud that the student speaker was graduating Honors student Riana Katz. I still remember meeting Riana when she first entered the program in 2015; she was immediately eager to get involved. I am not surprised at all by her success, and we wish her all the best as she begins the next step in her journey as a Communications Specialist with Commvault, a global leader of data management.

This barely scratches the surface of all that we accomplished this year. I haven’t even mentioned the 1300+ hours of community service Honors students completed, the internships and graduate schools many of our students were accepted into or the 17 amazing Senior Projects our students generated after countless hours of research. Thank you once again to all who contributed to the success of our Honors Program this past year. We look forward to even bigger and better successes next year!

**SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: Riana Katz**

My Honors thesis explored the decreasing number of women entering the technology industry. While the percentage of women in other areas of STEM are increasing, the technology industry’s metrics are at a steady decline. In 2013, just 26 percent of computing jobs in the U.S. were held by female employees, which is 35 percent less than in 1990. One determining factor of career choice and employee retention is Job Satisfaction. Using this decline as a motivation, a job satisfaction survey based on Paul Spector’s variables of job satisfaction was used to measure the level of job satisfaction of both men and women from the technology sector. Analysis of the respondents reveals the current trends in factors which lead to Job Satisfaction for men and women in this industry.

This study examines the effect of 78 work-related variables on the level of job satisfaction for individuals working in the technology industry. Factor analysis with Varimax Rotation reduced the number of variables to 12 factors for this group. Data was analyzed using multiple regression models using the level of job satisfaction perceived by the respondents as the dependent variable. From the gender regression model, it was found that factors differed based on gender. Male respondents’ factors included mobility and emotional outlook. Female respondents’ factors included: benefits, gender bias, retention mechanisms, diversity and inclusion, social status and emotional outlook. We found that female

**2019 HONORS SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS**

**Century 21 Study Abroad Scholarship**
- Stephanie Guzman
- Tabitha Jaison
- Gabriella Ulloa

**Martha E. Francois Memorial Scholarship**
- Aashish Poudel

**Hiden Family College Honors Endowment**
- Dahiana Arenas
- Allie Cheff
- Aine Cullen
- Kimberly Evans
- Autumn Laird
- Nora Maamoun
- Madeline Martinez
- Audrey Miller
- Angelo Petillo
- Jessica Ryan
- Channing Smith
- Jenna Vasquez

**Jeannette Kreiger Mytelka Memorial Scholarship**
- Amy Aroune
- Amanda Mayer
- Adeline Tao
Ramapo College’s honors program launched its first-ever “alternative break” this March, sending 15 students abroad to Nepal for a week of sightseeing and service learning. The trip was co-sponsored by the Center for Student Involvement and the Ramapo Foundation, which provided funding and other support for the excursion.

It was led by the dean of the School of the Humanities & Global Studies, Susan Hangen, and Rajesh Adhikari, the Roukema Center’s director of international student and scholar services. I joined as one of the 15 students, eager for the chance to visit Asia.

Saturday, March 16, marked our group’s first day in Nepal. Adhikari and Sarwajaya “Jay” Prasai (a 2017 Ramapo graduate and Nepal native) led us to Boudhanath, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Kathmandu. The immense structure, or stupa, has been a place of Buddhist worship for centuries (its age is contested, although most estimates set construction of the monument in the late fourth century C.E.). The faithful walk the stupa’s perimeter in clockwise fashion, pausing to spin the countless prayer wheels decorating the walkway. Our group joined the flow of traffic, eventually making our way to the second level of the stupa. Above us, small figures adjusted prayer flags and splashed fresh paint atop Boudhanath’s peak.

We next visited the old city of Bhaktapur, a few miles outside of Kathmandu. It was a labyrinth of scarlet beneath a blue sky that day – red brick, red dust, red meat hanging from butchers’ open-air stalls. In Dattatraya Square, I stood by an earthquake-crumpled statuary as the sun began to set. Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “Ozymandias” came to mind.

The lushness of rural Nepal stood in stark contrast to the congestion of Kathmandu. Following our visit to Boudhanath and Bhaktapur, we spent several days in the countryside village of Balthali. It is the most beautiful place I’ve had the privilege of visiting. Adhikari had brought us here to participate in service work projects coordinated by Bishnu Belbase, a leader of a Nepalese NGO affiliated with the international group Mercy Corps. With Belbase, we toured a

American woman, speak to us on the first night of the conference. I found her speech to be interesting due to her unique perspective on the world as a woman of color within the LGBTQ community.”

Samuel Anklowitz, Class of 2021

“The ‘Challenges to Healthcare Delivery’ Paper Presentations were a breath of fresh air to me, as well as extremely informative and eye-opening to a topic I am not very familiar with. During this session we were presented with four diverse paper presentations covering topics such as the ethical implications of Islamic doctors and reproductive procedures, the effects of MDMA as a treatment for PTSD and the resiliency of nursing students at Ramapo College. As a literature major, sitting in on these presentations was at first intimidating because I am not at all familiar with these subjects. However, I quickly become invested in the topics being discussed and even stepped outside of my comfort zone to ask questions to the presenters. The session was informative and I feel that I learned a lot of valuable information.”

Jessica Ryan, Class of 2020

“Attending the conference gave me the chance to meet other like-minded Honors students from the northeast, and gave all of us a chance to showcase our passions through research. The most rewarding part of the trip was getting to meet other similar students and get a glimpse of other colleges’ Honors research.”

Anxhela Kalia, Class of 2022

“I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to learn so much about so many different peoples’ passions. I left the conference feeling beyond inspired, curious and enriched.”

Amy Aroune, Class of 2019
fun, food, friends and honors: the second annual honors banquet
written by nicholas bykov

within my past two years as a member of the honors program, the honors banquet has definitely been a highlight of my spring semester. the end of the semester can get a bit hectic and sometimes all you need to get past that slump is to take a break and get together as a community to sit down and look back at, and appreciate, all of the great memories and achievements that the honors community has made throughout the year. and of course, getting to dress up fancily, enjoy some food and dance to fun music with your friends is yet another amazing experience that members of the program have enjoyed for the second year in a row.

i had an amazing time hanging out with my friends and interacting with fellow members of the honors program, while also being honored with two awards for the work that i had done as an hdg leader and as a member of the admissions team.

the second annual honors banquet was a great experience and an incredible way to finish up my second year at ramapo with the honors program. i find it imperative that the honors program continues to hold co-curricular social events like the banquet in order to provide students opportunities to foster new connections (and strengthen old ones!) within the program. my experience at the banquet reminded me that the honors program is not just a group focused on academic achievements, but rather, we are members of a close-knit community.

local health clinic before spending time on a variety of ongoing projects. first-year student kate gavin planted potatoes in a small plot of land outside the village center. she found the experience fulfilling. “to see people planting each potato individually ... gave me a lot of appreciation for all that they do,” she said. “i was really humbled to work with, and hopefully help out, these farmers.”

i discussed this concept of “service learning” with adhikari several days later. adhikari, himself a native of nepal, thinks “cultural immersion” and service learning cultivate a sense of empathy and awareness among students. “all the luxury back home – it’s all given,” he said. “we don’t give a second thought to the billions of people in this world who don’t have what we have.” adhikari describes service learning as “learning by giving.” he hopes the honors program’s brief taste of village life sparked a desire among students to help the impoverished while recognizing the dignity of the affected people.

days after their return home to ramapo, the beauty and vibrancy of nepal had not dimmed in the imagination of the honor students. “i’m in awe of nepal,” gavin said. “the country has a never-ending hum of energy.” fellow first-year student griffyn leeds agreed. “it was a once in a lifetime experience, and one i will never forget.”
COMMUNITY SERVICE INITIATIVES IN HONORS

The People to People Food Pantry in Nanuet, New York

Mckenna Byrne

People to People is a small, predominantly volunteer-run organization which helps people who are unemployed or not making satisfactory wages to afford food for their families. When a person enters the premises with proof of financial qualifications, they receive a two-year card with absolutely no questions asked. During my time at the food pantry, I primarily restacked boxes and cans of soup and I also sorted the clothing donations. That day reinforced the true meaning of community service, giving back to those in the community and improving people’s lives around us. I felt extremely fulfilled after this long day of service.

The Invisible No More Foundation

Cassidy DeMona

I worked with the Invisible No More Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that is dedicated to improving the lives of children with life-altering illnesses, including pediatric cancers. This is a charity that I personally founded and have run since 2015. Each February, we team up with the National Organization for Rare Diseases (NORD) for Rare Disease Day on February 28. This year, we worked with children and teenagers across the world to produce a short awareness video, designed to be shared on social media. I organized a team of 30 people from multiple continents, ranging in ages 12 to 25, all living with rare diseases. Producing this documentary was an incredible experience. I learned so much about a wide variety of medical conditions, as well as the medical systems across the world. I also learned a great deal of new technology skills, like video editing, which I have never done. I also honed my communication and leadership skills. Although I have done a lot of charity work over the past three years running Invisible No More, this is by far one of the biggest projects we have ever done. I have a handful of people who volunteer with my organization, but running this group of 30 people was definitely a challenge. I will be able to use the technology, communications and leadership skills going forward in my charity work and in the rest of my life, both in the classroom and in my future career.

The Honors Program Alternative Spring Break Trip to Nepal

Danielle DeAngelis

The Honors Program had a wonderful time on their alternative spring break trip to Nepal in March. On this journey to the other side of the world, 15 Honors students (myself included) participated in multiple endeavors, from service in the rural farmlands to sightseeing in the center of Kathmandu. On the first day of this service trip, the schedule was light yet busy. Our group of 17 traveled from Kathmandu to Balthali Mountain where we stayed to later participate in service projects for the next few days in the communities nearby. On the first day of service, the Honors students were given a tour of the Mercy Corps Health Center based in a rural area nearly an hour away from Kathmandu. We helped build more sustainable roads by transporting rocks and creating a stone base on top of the previous dirt path. A lot of the houses we saw were being rebuilt to be more sustainable for earthquakes, so it was a rewarding experience being able to help. In addition to this, we also helped out on a local farm, from planting potato seeds to churning yak milk. This experience was rewarding and unique. Before college, I would have never expected to participate in such an amazing opportunity where I would be able to directly help communities across the world. Next year, I am excited to see what the Honors Program has to offer as I am planning on embarking on another service trip experience, as this one was so incredibly eye opening. I cannot wait to see what the next journey will be!
written by Mahnoor Khan

The Honors Networking Dinner took place on February 28. The two-hour event included different rounds of table-switching to maximize interaction with people both in and out of the same field. Everyone felt immediately comfortable with fellow students who were going through the same experiences and hardships, just at different intensities and timelines. Stories of shared classes and professors with tips and tricks to survive even the toughest week were memorable conversation starters that put the freshmen at ease. Seniors and juniors reveled in the spotlight as the wise, older version of the freshmen and sophomores, while the latter enjoyed these pearls of wisdom to maneuver the rest of their undergraduate experience.

As a rising junior, I related both to the younger students as well as to the upperclassmen who have learned to navigate difficult classes, time management and a social life. It was also interesting to see how my experience with a certain class and professor may have compared with someone from a different year. I enjoyed talking to the few people from my major, political science, and comparing our exchanges with people of other majors. As a commuter, full-time student and part-time worker, I have limited opportunities to get to know other Honors students outside of any shared classes. The event introduced me to new people I never talked to before and I was able to relate to them on a personal level.

The event itself was arranged in order to rotate each person according to their major first, and then randomly. This allowed everyone to familiarize themselves with people they have seen and interacted with before as well as introduce themselves to others outside of their field. I definitely took advantage of the ability to ask other students every question I was too embarrassed to ask the faculty, especially about my major, political science, and comparing our exchanges with people of other majors. As a commuter, full-time student and part-time worker, I have limited opportunities to get to know other Honors students outside of any shared classes. The event introduced me to new people I never talked to before and I was able to relate to them on a personal level.

As a rising junior, I related both to the younger students as well as to the upperclassmen who have learned to navigate difficult classes, time management and a social life. It was also interesting to see how my experience with a certain class and professor may have compared with someone from a different year. I enjoyed talking to the few people from my major, political science, and comparing our exchanges with people of other majors. As a commuter, full-time student and part-time worker, I have limited opportunities to get to know other Honors students outside of any shared classes. The event introduced me to new people I never talked to before and I was able to relate to them on a personal level.

The event itself was arranged in order to rotate each person according to their major first, and then randomly. This allowed everyone to familiarize themselves with people they have seen and interacted with before as well as introduce themselves to others outside of their field. I definitely took advantage of the ability to ask other students every question I was too embarrassed to ask the faculty, especially about internships and research opportunities. It helped knowing that most of us were in the same boat, regardless of major, school or field, and that the roughest times during the semester mold us into the best versions of ourselves as scholars.

Professor Root will be taking a sabbatical during the fall 2019 semester, and we are pleased to announce that Professor Tae Kwak will be serving as the interim Honors director in her absence. Professor Kwak, an associate professor of history with the School of Humanities and Global Studies, has been a member of the Honors Advisory Board for eight years and has taught an Honors First-Year Seminar since 2010. He has been incredibly involved and present with the development of the Honors Program, regularly teaching mock Honors courses at Family Day and attending Honors Admissions Receptions to meet with prospective Honors students. We are pleased that the Honors Program will be in good hands with Professor Kwak in the upcoming semester.
THE 11th ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

The Honors Program celebrated amazing work and research at this year’s 11th Annual Symposium. Graduating students from all five schools presented their senior thesis projects in the form of oral or poster presentations to a large crowd of Ramapo College family, friends, faculty members and peers.

This year’s graduating cohort conducted research ranging from the colonization of Mars and the viability of plants in space to gender differences of job satisfaction in technology and student perceptions of financial literacy. We are very proud of the graduating class of 2019 for all of their work.

EMAN AL-YOUSEFY
Biology Major, Neuroscience Minor, School of Theoretical and Applied Sciences
“Effects of Stevia Rebaudiana Glycoside on Osteoblast Growth and Differentiation”
Eman is pursuing a career in optometry. She has been admitted into a joint degree program with SUNY College of Optometry. Her research involved the testing of the glycoside of a common household sweetener, stevia (Stevia rebaudiana), on rat osteosarcoma cells. In exposing the cells to food-grade concentrations of a glycoside called steviol, she was able to monitor indicators of the cell colony’s health such as cell proliferation and levels of alkaline phosphatase. Eman’s Senior Project ultimately provided further insight on the movement in search of healthier or natural sweeteners to replace sugar for the population of diabetics, dieters and other health-conscious people.

REGINA CUDDEBACK
Psychology Major, School of Social Science and Human Services
“A Male Perpetrator’s Sexual Orientation Affects Perceptions of Sexual Harassment Towards a Woman”
Regina’s research focused on how our implicit beliefs about gender and sexual orientation affect how we perceive sexual harassment. Specifically, it has been found that people tend to judge the severity of sexual harassment differently if a gay man sexually harasses a woman versus when a straight man harasses her. This research can provide insight on people’s beliefs about what motivates sexual harassment and what affects its severity, which can prove useful given the current social climate regarding sexual harassment. Regina is now taking a gap year to serve in AmeriCorps before pursuing her master’s degree in counseling.

MICHAEL STELLITANO
Environmental Science Major, School of Theoretical and Applied Sciences
“Climate Change Policy in New Jersey: A Review and Proposal”
Michael graduated with a degree in environmental science and public policy. His research focus was climate change laws in New Jersey, but he also performed research on sustainable recycling as well as field research on forest ecology.

At Ramapo, he was president of his fraternity and the Newman Club. He was also VP of Ramapo’s Inter Fraternal Conference, and through these positions, he helped plan events that raised more than $5,000 for charity. He has interned for The Raptor Trust, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, NY-NJ Trail Conference and the NJ Botanical Gardens. Michael will be attending Columbia University next year in pursuit of a master’s degree in environmental science and policy.

ACHYUT GAUTAM
Finance Major, Mathematics and Economics Minors, Anisfield School of Business
“ETFs and their Impact on Pricing Efficiency”
Achyut’s research focuses on understanding the impact of exchange traded funds (ETFs) on pricing efficiency. This study delves deeply into understanding the quantititative impact on the market from the growing investment in ETFs and seeks to understand its significance in shaping the U.S. economy. Achyut wants to work as a management consultant.
The Honors Program celebrated amazing work and research at this year’s 11th Annual Symposium. Graduating students from all five schools presented their senior thesis projects in the form of oral or poster presentations to a large crowd of Ramapo College family, friends, faculty members and peers. This year’s graduating cohort conducted research ranging from the colonization of Mars and the viability of plants in space to gender differences of job satisfaction in technology and student perceptions of financial literacy. We are very proud of the graduating class of 2019 for all of their work.

EMAN AL-YOUSEFY
Biology Major, Neuroscience Minor, School of Theoretical and Applied Sciences
“Effects of Stevia Rebaudiana Glycoside on Osteoblast Growth and Differentiation”
Eman is pursuing a career in optometry. She has been admitted into a joint degree program with SUNY College of Optometry. Her research involved the testing of the glycoside of a common household sweetener, stevia (Stevia rebaudiana), on rat osteosarcoma cells. In exposing the cells to food-grade concentrations of a glycoside called steviol, she was able to monitor indicators of the cell colony’s health such as cell proliferation and levels of alkaline phosphatase. Eman’s Senior Project ultimately provided further insight on the movement in search of healthier or natural sweeteners to replace sugar for the population of diabetics, dieters and other health-conscious people.

REGINA CUDDEBACK
Psychology Major, School of Social Science and Human Services
“A Male Perpetrator’s Sexual Orientation Affects Perceptions of Sexual Harassment Towards a Woman”
Regina’s research focused on how our implicit beliefs about gender and sexual orientation affect how we perceive sexual harassment. Specifically, it has been found that people tend to judge the severity of sexual harassment differently if a gay man sexually harasses a woman versus when a straight man harasses her. This research can provide insight on people’s beliefs about what motivates sexual harassment and what affects its severity, which can prove useful given the current social climate regarding sexual harassment. Regina is now taking a gap year to serve in AmeriCorps before pursuing her master’s degree in counseling.

MICHAEL STELLITANO
Environmental Science Major, School of Theoretical and Applied Sciences
“ETFs and their Impact on Pricing Efficiency”
Michael graduated with a degree in environmental science and public policy. His research focus was climate change laws in New Jersey, but he also performed research on sustainable recycling as well as field research on forest ecology. At Ramapo, he was president of his fraternity and the Newman Club. He was also VP of Ramapo’s Inter Fraternal Conference, and through these positions, he helped plan events that raised more than $5,000 for charity. He has interned for The Raptor Trust, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, NY-NJ Trail Conference and the NJ Botanical Gardens. Michael will be attending Columbia University next year in pursuit of a master’s degree in environmental science and policy.

ACHYUT GAUTAM
Finance Major, Mathematics and Economics Minors, Anisfield School of Business
“ETFs and their Impact on Pricing Efficiency”
Achyut’s research focuses on understanding the impact of exchange traded funds (ETFs) on pricing efficiency. This study delves deeply into understanding the quantitative impact on the market from the growing investment in ETFs and seeks to understand its significance in shaping the U.S. economy. Achyut wants to work as a management consultant.
The roughest times during the semester mold us into the best versions of ourselves. As seniors and juniors revealed in the spotlight as the wise, older version of the freshmen and sophomores, the latter enjoyed these pearls of wisdom to maneuver the rest of their undergraduate experience. As a rising junior, I related both to the younger students as well as to the upperclassmen who have learned to navigate difficult classes, time management and a social life. It was also interesting to see how my experience with a certain class and professor may have compared with someone from a different year. I enjoyed talking to the few people from my major, political science, and comparing our exchanges with people of other majors. As a commuter, full-time student and part-time worker, I have limited opportunities to get to know other Honors students outside of any shared classes. The event introduced me to students outside any shared classes. The event itself was arranged in order to rotate each person according to their major first, and then randomly. This allowed everyone to familiarize themselves with people they have seen and interacted with well and have shared truly amazing memories. My favorite memory as a leader was during Honors Olympics, when we all were forced into a human knot and spent about 15 minutes trying to get out. Trying to untangle a human knot is hilarious, as we all forgot how awkward we felt and focused as a team to devise a plan to get out."

Jenna Vasquez:
“My favorite part about being an Honors Development Group Leader was serving as not only a mentor, but as a resource, confidant and friend to my students. I got to see each of them grow throughout their first year of college and I made so many great connections. For this, I am eternally grateful and feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to know and love my kids.”

Michelle Park:
“I would say my favorite part of being an HDG Leader was creating a strong bond with the underclass students and taking the group to unexplored places of the campus such as the art gallery, Laurel viewing hall and Laurel kitchen. My favorite activity with the Jade Jellies would have to be baking cookies and doing a gift exchange at the end of fall semester.”

Brendan O’Reilly:
“Being an HDG leader has been a super awesome experience for me. I feel like I’ve made close pals with everyone in my group and passed my great wisdom down to them. My favorite activity was painting our feelings. I still have all the paintings my group made and I cherish them all. I loved working with them and I’m excited to see them all keep growing because I know they’ll be awesome.”

Sevan Asadurian:
“My favorite part of being an HDG leader is the ability to be a role model and guide incoming freshmen students. Additionally, HDG feels like a tiny family. We all get to know each other so well and have shared truly amazing memories. My favorite memory as a leader was during Honors Olympics, when we all were forced into a human knot and spent about 15 minutes trying to get out. Trying to untangle a human knot is hilarious, as we all forgot how awkward we felt and focused as a team to devise a plan to get out.”

Professor Root will be taking a sabbatical during the fall 2019 semester, and we are pleased to announce that Professor Tae Kwak will be serving as the interim Honors director in her absence. Professor Kwak, an associate professor of history with the School of Humanities and Global Studies, has been a member of the Honors Advisory Board for eight years and has taught an Honors First-Year Seminar since 2010. He has been incredibly involved and present with the development of the Honors Program, regularly teaching mock Honors courses at Family Day and attending Honors Admissions Receptions to meet with prospective Honors students. We are pleased that the Honors Program will be in good hands with Professor Kwak in the upcoming semester.
COMMUNITY SERVICE INITIATIVES IN HONORS

The People to People Food Pantry in Nanuet, New York

Mckenna Byrne

People to People is a small, predominantly volunteer-run organization which helps people who are unemployed or not making satisfactory wages to afford food for their families. When a person enters the premises with proof of financial qualifications, they receive a two-year card with absolutely no questions asked. During my time at the food pantry, I primarily restacked boxes and cans of soup and I also sorted the clothing donations. That day reinforced the true meaning of community service, giving back to those in the community and improving people’s lives around us. I felt extremely fulfilled after this long day of service.

The Invisible No More Foundation

Cassidy DeMona

I worked with the Invisible No More Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that is dedicated to improving the lives of children with life-altering illnesses, including pediatric cancers. This is a charity that I personally founded and have run since 2015. Each February, we team up with the National Organization for Rare Diseases (NORD) for Rare Disease Day on February 28. This year, we worked with children and teenagers across the world to produce a short awareness video, designed to be shared on social media. I organized a team of 30 people from multiple continents, ranging in ages 12 to 25, all living with rare diseases. Producing this documentary was an incredible experience. I learned so much about a wide variety of medical conditions, as well as the medical systems across the world. I also learned a great deal of new technology skills, like video editing, which I have never done. I also honed my communication and leadership skills. Although I have done a lot of charity work over the past three years running Invisible No More, this is by far one of the biggest projects we have ever done. I have a handful of people who volunteer with my organization, but running this group of 30 people was definitely a challenge. I will be able to use the technology, communications and leadership skills going forward in my charity work and in the rest of my life, both in the classroom and in my future career.

The Honors Program Alternative Spring Break Trip to Nepal

Danielle DeAngelis

The Honors Program had a wonderful time on their alternative spring break trip to Nepal in March. On this journey to the other side of the world, 15 Honors students (myself included) participated in multiple endeavors, from service in the rural farmlands to sightseeing in the center of Kathmandu. On the first day of this service trip, the schedule was light yet busy. Our group of 17 traveled from Kathmandu to Balthali Mountain where we stayed to later participate in service projects for the next few days in the communities nearby. On the first day of service, the Honors students were given a tour of the Mercy Corps Health Center based in a rural area nearly an hour away from Kathmandu. We helped build more sustainable roads by transporting rocks and creating a stone base on top of the previous dirt path. A lot of the houses we saw were being rebuilt to be more sustainable for earthquakes, so it was a rewarding experience being able to help. In addition to this, we also helped out on a local farm, from planting potato seeds to churning yak milk. This experience was rewarding and unique. Before college, I would have never expected to participate in such an amazing opportunity where I would be able to directly help communities across the world. Next year, I am excited to see what the Honors Program has to offer as I am planning on embarking on another service trip experience, as this one was so incredibly eye opening. I cannot wait to see what the next journey will be!
FUN, FOOD, FRIENDS AND HONORS:  
THE SECOND ANNUAL HONORS BANQUET  
Written by Nicholas Bykov

Within my past two years as a member of the Honors Program, the Honors Banquet has definitely been a highlight of my spring semester. The end of the semester can get a bit hectic and sometimes all you need to get past that slump is to take a break and get together as a community to sit down and look back at, and appreciate, all of the great memories and achievements that the Honors community has made throughout the year. And of course, getting to dress up fancily, enjoy some food and dance to fun music with your friends is yet another amazing experience that members of the program have enjoyed for the second year in a row.

I had an amazing time hanging out with my friends and interacting with fellow members of the Honors Program, while also being honored with two awards for the work that I had done as an HDG Leader and as a member of the Admissions team.

The second annual Honors banquet was a great experience and an incredible way to finish up my second year at Ramapo with the Honors Program. I find it imperative that the Honors Program continues to hold co-curricular social events like the banquet in order to provide students opportunities to foster new connections (and strengthen old ones!) within the program. My experience at the banquet reminded me that the Honors Program is not just a group focused on academic achievements, but rather, we are members of a close-knit community.

I discussed this concept of “service learning” with Adhikari several days later. Adhikari, himself a native of Nepal, thinks “cultural immersion” and service learning cultivate a sense of empathy and awareness among students.

“All the luxury back home – it’s all given,” he said. “We don’t give a second thought to the billions of people in this world who don’t have what we have.”

Adhikari describes service learning as “learning by giving.” He hopes the honors program’s brief taste of village life sparked a desire among students to help the impoverished while recognizing the dignity of the affected people.

Days after their return home to Ramapo, the beauty and vibrancy of Nepal had not dimmed in the imagination of the honor students. “I’m in awe of Nepal,” Gavin said. “The country has a never-ending hum of energy.” Fellow first-year student Griffyn Leeds agreed. “It was a once in a lifetime experience, and one I will never forget.”
Ramapo College’s honors program launched its first-ever “alternative break” this March, sending 15 students abroad to Nepal for a week of sightseeing and service learning. The trip was co-sponsored by the Center for Student Involvement and the Ramapo Foundation, which provided funding and other support for the excursion.

It was led by the dean of the School of the Humanities & Global Studies, Susan Hangen, and Rajesh Adhikari, the Roukema Center’s director of international student and scholar services. I joined as one of the 15 students, eager for the chance to visit Asia.

Saturday, March 16, marked our group’s first day in Nepal. Adhikari and Sarwajaya “Jay” Prasai (a 2017 Ramapo graduate and Nepal native) led us to Boudhanath, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Kathmandu. The immense structure, or stupa, has been a place of Buddhist worship for centuries (its age is contested, although most estimates set construction of the monument in the late fourth century C.E.). The faithful walk the stupa’s perimeter in clockwise fashion, pausing to spin the countless prayer wheels decorating the walkway. Our group joined the flow of traffic, eventually making our way to the second level of the stupa. Above us, small figures adjusted prayer flags and splashed fresh paint atop Boudhanath’s peak.

We next visited the old city of Bhaktapur, a few miles outside of Kathmandu. It was a labyrinth of scarlet beneath a blue sky that day – red brick, red dust, red meat hanging from butchers’ open-air stalls. In Dattatraya Square, I stood by an earthquake-crumpled statuary as the sun began to set. Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “Ozymandias” came to mind.

The lushness of rural Nepal stood in stark contrast to the congestion of Kathmandu. Following our visit to Boudhanath and Bhaktapur, we spent several days in the countryside village of Balthali. It is the most beautiful place I’ve had the privilege of visiting. Adhikari had brought us here to participate in service work projects coordinated by Bishnu Belbase, a leader of a Nepalese NGO affiliated with the international group Mercy Corps. With Belbase, we toured a

HONORS CONFERENCES

Honors students attended several conferences this year, including the National Collegiate Honors Council Conference in Boston, MA and the Northeast Regional Honors Council Conference in Baltimore, MD.

“I enjoyed that the conference took the time to try to introduce us to the city of Baltimore and the surrounding political, social and cultural influences that can be found around the bustling city. This is punctuated by having Mary Washington, an LGBTQ African American woman, speak to us on the first night of the conference. I found her speech to be interesting due to her unique perspective on the world as a woman of color within the LGBTQ community.”

Samuel Anklowitz, Class of 2021

“The ‘Challenges to Healthcare Delivery’ Paper Presentations were a breath of fresh air to me, as well as extremely informative and eye-opening to a topic I am not very familiar with. During this session we were presented with four diverse paper presentations covering topics such as the ethical implications of Islamic doctors and reproductive procedures, the effects of MDMA as a treatment for PTSD and the resiliency of nursing students at Ramapo College. As a literature major, sitting in on these presentations was at first intimidating because I am not at all familiar with these subjects. However, I quickly become invested in the topics being discussed and even stepped outside of my comfort zone to ask questions to the presenters. The session was informative and I feel that I learned a lot of valuable information.”

Jessica Ryan, Class of 2020

“Attending the conference gave me the chance to meet other like-minded Honors students from the northeast, and gave all of us a chance to showcase our passions through research. The most rewarding part of the trip was getting to meet other similar students and get a glimpse of other colleges’ Honors research.”

Anxhela Kalia, Class of 2022

“I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to learn so much about so many different peoples’ passions. I left the conference feeling beyond inspired, curious and enriched.”

Amy Aroune, Class of 2019
place Sloane Prize for Undergraduate Research in the category of diversity. Ten students traveled with us to NRHC in Baltimore to present research on topics such as indigenous language retention, early gene detection and repair methods, and emerging technologies in the classroom. We are already looking forward to NCHC this fall, as eight students have been accepted to present research in New Orleans.

One of the best outcomes of the trip to NCHC (as is often the case) was the time Professor Root and I were able to spend with the students and pick their brains on what the Honors Program could do to improve the student experience. It was on the van ride back that we determined we could do more to address the issue of mental health with Honors students. As a result of that trip, seniors Reeve Olivia Harden and Amy Aroune hosted a Mental Health Panel that featured Judy Green of the Center for Health and Counseling Services, Catherine Magnier of the Krame Center, as well as several students. This event was a huge success, and we intend to hold it again next year.

We made great strides reconnecting with the growing alumni base of our Honors Program as well. In August, we hosted the first-ever Honors Program Alumni Reunion in the Padovano Commons which raised more than $800 for an alumni scholarship. Senior nursing student Amy Aroune was selected as the recipient of the first-ever Ramapo College Honors Alumni Scholarship.

Our Honors Alumni Advisory Board continued to do great work, helping to plan an Alumni Networking Panel and a summer trivia night down the road from our campus.

As I attended this year’s undergraduate graduation ceremony at the Prudential Center, I couldn’t have been more proud that the student speaker was graduating Honors student Riana Katz. I still remember meeting Riana when she first entered the program back in 2015; she was immediately eager to get involved. I am not surprised at all by her success, and we wish her all the best as she begins the next step in her journey as a Communications Specialist with Commvault, a global leader of data management.

This barely scratches the surface of all that we accomplished this year. I haven’t even mentioned the 1300+ hours of community service Honors students completed, the internships and graduate schools many of our students were accepted into or the 17 amazing Senior Projects our students generated after countless hours of research. Thank you once again to all who contributed to the success of our Honors Program this past year. We look forward to even bigger and better successes next year!

REFLECTING ON SUCCESS
(continued)

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: Riana Katz

My Honors thesis explored the decreasing number of women entering the technology industry. While the percentage of women in other areas of STEM are increasing, the technology industry’s metrics are at a steady decline. In 2013, just 26 percent of computing jobs in the U.S. were held by female employees, which is 35 percent less than in 1990. One determining factor of career choice and employee retention is Job Satisfaction. Using this decline as a motivation, a job satisfaction survey based on Paul Spector’s variables of job satisfaction was used to measure the level of job satisfaction of both men and women from the technology sector. Analysis of the respondents reveals the current trends in factors which lead to Job Satisfaction for men and women in this industry.

This study examines the effect of 78 work-related variables on the level of job satisfaction for individuals working in the technology industry. Factor analysis with Varimax Rotation reduced the number of variables to 12 factors for this group. Data was analyzed using multiple regression models using the level of job satisfaction perceived by the respondents as the dependent variable. From the gender regression model, it was found that factors differed based on gender. Male respondents’ factors included mobility and emotional outlook. Female respondents’ factors included: benefits, gender bias, retention mechanisms, diversity and inclusion, social status and emotional outlook. We found that female student Amy Aroune was selected as the recipient of the first-ever Ramapo College Honors Alumni Scholarship.

Our Honors Alumni Advisory Board continued to do great work, helping to plan an Alumni Networking Panel and a summer trivia night down the road from our campus.

As I attended this year’s undergraduate graduation ceremony at the Prudential Center, I couldn’t have been more proud that the student speaker was graduating Honors student Riana Katz. I still remember meeting Riana when she first entered the program back in 2015; she was immediately eager to get involved. I am not surprised at all by her success, and we wish her all the best as she begins the next step in her journey as a Communications Specialist with Commvault, a global leader of data management.

This barely scratches the surface of all that we accomplished this year. I haven’t even mentioned the 1300+ hours of community service Honors students completed, the internships and graduate schools many of our students were accepted into or the 17 amazing Senior Projects our students generated after countless hours of research. Thank you once again to all who contributed to the success of our Honors Program this past year. We look forward to even bigger and better successes next year!
REFLECTING ON SUCCESS

Chris Brittain
Assistant Director, Honors Program

The academic year can often seem like a marathon, especially in the spring semester. I find that each year as we approach graduation, I realize that my focus has leapt from one event to the next for nine months straight. Only when things begin to slow down a bit am I able to look around and appreciate the truly astounding volume of accomplishments our students have made both inside and outside of the Honors Program. As we cross the finish line of the 2018-2019 academic year, I’d like to reflect on some of the achievements I am most proud.

I would first like to congratulate each and every Honors student for another fantastic year. Maintaining all of the responsibilities of a full course load is challenging enough. So many of you go above and beyond by dedicating your time to community service, on-campus clubs, athletics and research that I am frequently in awe that you manage to get any sleep.

Perhaps the most exciting new aspect of our program is International Service-Learning Spring Break trips. Dean of the School of Humanities and Global Studies, Susan Hangen, and Rajesh Adhikari, director of international student and scholar services in the Roukema Center, chaperoned 15 Honors students as they visited Nepal to assist earthquake-affected communities. One of the highlights of my year was receiving daily pictures of our students in the midst of this truly life-changing experience. The trip was a tremendous success; several students in this newsletter issue will recount their time there in greater detail. We look forward to planning these types of international excursions annually as a staple of the Honors Program.

Additional highlights included our trips to the National Collegiate Honors Council Conference and the Northeast Regional Honors Council Conference. Four students traveled with us to NCHC in Boston to present research on topics such as gender roles in British literature, 18th century American history and emotional contagion in psychology. Junior Stephanie Guzman’s poster on immigrant farm workers received the second respondents’ equation for job satisfaction had more factors and thus is more complex. The only factor in both equations was emotional outlook.

I attended the Gabelli School of Business’ Undergraduate Research Conference at Fordham University. My experience at the conference was truly invaluable. After completing a 12-minute presentation explaining my research, the floor opened for a 15-minute question and answer period. Faculty, administration and students asked me extremely thought-provoking questions. This was the most challenging portion of the day. They brought up great points that made me think about my findings in a way I never had before.

This conference was a community of business professionals who were also passionate about the topic of gender diversity. The other presentations in my session were also about gender in business. I was able to create connections with undergraduate research students from around the country while learning about different concerns facing the business community. Conducting research as an undergraduate student has been a privilege that not every student gets to experience. Being able to present it in a variety of spaces positively impacted me as both a scholar and future business leader. I learned about how to conduct research, problem solve and communicate my results.

After graduation, I will be a communications specialist at Commvault. I am currently a marketing communications intern and cannot wait to take this next step. Commvault is the global leader of data management. Their biggest partners include Amazon Web Services, Google, Microsoft and Cisco. My role will include writing blogs and email copy as well as producing video content for both internal and external audiences. I will be pursuing my passion for gender studies by specializing in creating content for the diversity and inclusion programs.

Although I will be pursuing a professional career, I love being in the classroom way too much to abandon it forever. After a few years in the business sphere, I hope to go back to school to either receive an MBA in marketing or a graduate degree in women and gender studies. I know my education journey is not going to end here.
RAMAPO COLLEGE HONORS PROGRAM

Director of the College Honors Program
Associate Professor Rebecca Root
201-684-7429

Assistant Director of the College Honors Program
Chris Brittain
201-684-7110

For more information, visit www.ramapo.edu/honors or Email us at honors@ramapo.edu

505 Ramapo Valley Road
Mahwah, N.J. 07430

Follow us on Instagram @rcnjhonors

June 2019