Barker Uses Honors Project to Help Others

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“The Most Mind Blowing Professor in this Joint”: Honors Program Director Dr. Brian Austin Wins Distinguished Faculty of the Year Award

By Faith Long

On Thursday, April 19, Provost Dr. Kina Mallard announced to the many attendees of Honors Convocation the winner of the Distinguished Faculty of the Year Award: Dr. Brian Austin, beloved professor and director of the Honors Program.

“I immediately thought this must be a mistake, there are so many people who are more deserving than I am,” said Austin when he realized he was the recipient of this award.

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Honors Weekend Successful Again

Honors Weekend, early in February, is designed to bring prospective students in and put them directly with faculty and current students to show them the appeal of Carson-Newman.

“The prospective students come and spend significant time with current students,” said Dr. Brian Austin, director of the Program. “They see that we really do have a sense of community in the school.”

Honors Weekend is also a time for these prospective students to compete for scholarship money, by going through an interview process and finishing with an essay.

Prospective students, and their families, will come in Friday afternoon and meet up with their current-student host. Members of the Honors Program volunteer to host one or two prospective students for the evening and night, and escort them to their interviews, tours, etc.

“I’m always very pleased with the helpful spirit of our current students,” said Austin. “There are always plenty to host and help out.”

Sixty students came to Honors Weekend 2012 to compete for scholarships. Of these sixty, at least 35 will choose Carson-Newman as their school, said Austin.

“I am just thankful for not only the students and the effort they put into it, but the faculty and alumni as well,” said Austin. “All that is testimony to the ethos of Carson-Newman. Faculty stay late on Friday to do interviews and talk on panels, and Alumni come in on Saturday morning for 4 hours to interview. That kind of spirit of pitching in is very gratifying.”

On Friday evening students, families, faculty, and hosts are invited to a banquet. Here, Professor Houston of the art department sits with a prospective student and her host, art major Amanda West.

President O’Brien congratulates Dr. Austin on his award.

Distinguished Faculty, continued

The winner of this award is chosen by nominations from students and faculty.

“In all his work, Dr. Austin embodies the ideal of the Christian teacher-scholar we so highly value at Carson-Newman,” said one of his fellow colleagues in their nomination. “He holds his students to high standards of academic achievement and encourages them to show intellectual curiosity and honesty.”

“Everything he says is magic,” wrote one of his students. “Dr. Austin is officially the most mind blowing professor in this joint!” wrote another.

“Whether chairing the General Education Review and Revision Task Force (which in and of itself should earn him some kind of award), Serving as the London Program Coordinator, Chief Administrator for the Private College Consortium for International Studies, editing Carson-Newman Studies, leading the philosophy major or the Honors Program, this philosophy professor with the cool glasses breathes the values of Carson-Newman College,” said Dr. Mallard to the attendees at Honors Convocation.

“It is quite gratifying to see your students and friends happy for you,” said Austin, who is still surprised and pleased. “That’s pretty cool.”
Jody Barker, a senior Interior Design student, used her senior honors project to build a children’s home in Nicaragua, a place very dear to her heart. In under a year and a half, the blueprints were drawn, the shelter was built, and the interior was designed.

Jody named the shelter El Albergue (“the shelter” in Spanish), and currently eighteen children live there. Jody’s parents, Joe and Sandy Barker, have been missionaries in Nicaragua and started a mission organization there called FISH, Families Involved Serving Humanity. Jody spent three years of her life in Nicaragua when she was a child, and she returns every year for a visit. This background and the visits gave Jody the idea for her project.

“I wanted to do something that would make an impact for the better, and I knew the need for a children’s home in Nicaragua,” says Jody. This home would be for children who were orphaned or who had been abused and neglected. Jody decided to partner with FISH to achieve this dream.

At the time of starting her honors project, the funds for a children’s home were not in the budget for FISH. With approximately a $30,000 yearly budget, a building that would cost between $25-30,000 did not seem possible. However, Jody continued with her dream, and the honors council suggested that she design the structure as her project, minus the actual building part. Just a few weeks after submitting her honors prospectus, an elderly member of a church in Kingsport, TN, passed away, and the family decided to donate her money to the FISH organization, providing the funds for Jody’s project. During the spring semester of her junior year, Jody designed the blueprints for the shelter, along with help from her dad, an architect.

In the summer between her junior and senior year, Jody went to Nicaragua for a month. In that time, she selected a building location and hired contractors. In four short months, the building was finished.

“They were all such hard workers, and since they knew they were building a children’s home, the passion spread,” says Jody. When she returned over Christmas break, she focused on the interior design of the shelter. “It was so wonderful seeing the building. It had been in my mind for so long that it was almost surreal walking through it for the first time!”

After considering drawing murals of favorite Bible stories and pictures of that nature, Jody decided that words have a deeper meaning than just a picture. She picked words, Bible verses, and quotes that she thought would bring meaning to the children and adults reading them.

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New “Alumni and Friends Advisory Council” Created for Honors Program

This year for the Honors Program saw the creation of the “Honors Program Alumni and Friends Advisory Council,” who met for the first time on March 30. The purpose of this council is to help improve and enhance the current program.

“This fabulous group is going to help us brainstorm improvements for the program, actual things on campus,” said Honors director Dr. Brian Austin. The council is also going to help the Program raise money and help connect other Honors alumni with current students who are interested in the same professions.

“That’s one of our goals,” said Austin, “to take our current students and find connections with alumni.”

This new council will meet once or twice a year.

As of now, the council consists of twelve members, eight of whom signed up to attend the meeting in March. The members are from all over the country, in various walks of life; some are retirees, some lawyers, and a former director of the program. The ages range from 25 to 70 which, says Austin, was by design.

“We want people from different eras of the program,” said Austin. All are alumni of C-N and most were Honors students themselves. Two members of the council are parents of past and current Honors students.

“The meeting itself went really well,” said Austin. The president and provost both came and spoke, and the council members had a question and answer session with some of the members of the Student Advisory Board. Afterwards, they went through the Honors House to discuss its needs, as well as the needs of the Program itself.

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“Some of these children have never been told that they are smart, beautiful, or loved, they have only been told that they are stupid, ugly, and unlovable. I picked things that would show them things they may have never heard before, but that sometimes we here in the United States take for granted,” says Jody. The words are a few shades darker than the walls, providing decoration without being intimidating or oppressive.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony was on Jan. 1, 2012, and the children’s home was surrounded quite literally with love and prayer on that day. “We actually tied a ribbon around the building, and people from the congregation came and walked around the entire building,” says Jody. Now, El Albergue provides a place where children that were once abused and neglected can now go to school, eat three meals a day, and receive medical care. While there is still work to be done, such as adding an outside porch, the shelter is already making big progress in the community.

“The shelter is as much a statement as it is a place to stay. It says that we are putting our foot down against the abuse and neglect of children. There is now a place for them to go,” says Jody.

Jody’s honors project can be viewed online though Prezi.com (search for Jody Barker). Jody was recently one of the recipients of the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award and was recognized during Honors Chapel in front of the student body. As the first Interior Design major to graduate with honors, Jody Barker has certainly set a high bar for future honors students and philanthropists at Carson-Newman.

contributors

Faith Long/junior/Journalism major // Jennifer Bowman/junior/Pre-med, biology major
Meet the Students

Amanda West // junior

Major(s)/Minor(s): Graphic Design - Art History minor
Hometown: Church Hill, TN
Extracurriculars: Marching and Symphonic Bands, Percussion Ensemble, Tri-Beta, Phi Sigma Tau, Omicron Delta Kappa, PRAY, FBC Jefferson City Steele Ringers (Handbell Choir), FBC Church Hill Choir & Sign Language Ministry, Tutor at Jefferson Elementary

Honors Program Experience: The Honors Program has allowed me to develop relationships with so many people outside of my department(s) that I probably would have never met outside of the program. I’ve been challenged academically and have really learned a lot. But I have to say, the program trips are my favorite! I love getting to go new places and see new things. My experience in the Honors Program has really enriched my worldview and my life.

Fun Fact: I make my own formal dresses!
Aspiration: I want to travel the world and be an internationally recognized graphic designer/artist. I believe in dreaming big!

Caleb Gibson // sophomore

Major(s)/Minor(s): Chemistry and Philosophy double major
Hometown: Kingsport, TN
Extracurriculars: Ultimate Frisbee, Everything to do with the outdoors (camping, hiking, backpacking, rock climbing...)

Honors Program Experience: The Honors Program has been a core part of my college experience. My relationships with fellow students and professors have grown stronger because of the Honors community, and my mind has been challenged by the questions that the Honors classes have raised.

Fun Fact: I am well on my way to accomplishing my goal of exploring every national park in the United States.
Aspiration: I plan to graduate from Carson-Newman, having received much more than an education. I intend to attend graduate school, get a PhD in Chemistry, and eventually become a professor. Above all, I aspire to continually grow in my relationship with Christ while incorporating my faith into my education, career, and family.

Etta Long // freshman

Majors/Minors: Psychology, Human Services, and Philosophy majors with a minor in Applied Developmental Psychology
Hometown: Knoxville, TN
Extracurriculars: I attend a weekly book study run by a faculty member, and I am a tutor for a great 2nd grader at the Good Stuff Tutoring program at the local Methodist Church. I also work at McAlister’s Deli in Knoxville.

Honors Program Experience: The honors program is what most appealed to me about Carson-Newman and has been one of my favorite parts of school thus far. I met my three best friends and my boyfriend through the Honors program. The class Humanity and the Cosmos is what inspired my new love for philosophy. The Honors House, access to a kitchen, laundry, and a general place to spend time, has been very helpful for me as I navigated my first year of college. I would not enjoy C-N nearly as much as I do if it weren’t for this program.

Fun fact: I truly enjoy making and sewing jewelry, clothing, and various other crafts.
Aspiration: Currently I am undecided between becoming a Marriage/Family Counselor or a Social Worker. While I am completely certain I want to spend my life helping children, I hope that as I further my education I’ll be able to discern which specific career will be best for me.
2012 Honors Theses

Jacob: A Case Study of the Behavioral Attributes of a Child with Autism During Structured Play Sessions by Maggie R. Smith  Advisor: Sandra Long

Detecting Interactions between GPA1 and GPA2, the G-Alpha Subunits Involved in GPCR Signal Transduction in Saccharomyces Cerevisiae by Bradley P. Clarke  Advisor: Stephen Wright

Camreta v. Greene: Childhood Sexual Abuse Investigations and the Fourth Amendment by Jennifer M. Watson  Advisor: Kara Stooksbury

Designing the Future of News: Online User Preference, News Impact, and Content Recall by Lauren P. Henry Advisors: Mark Borchert, Julie Rabun, Joc Collins

The Individual Colon Cancer Patient: A Qualitative Study of Food Preferences, Craving, and “Feel Better Foods” by Cara B. Hedges  Advisor: Kitty Coffey

Effects of Sugars on Constitutive Activity with the STE2P Pathway of Saccharomyces Cerevisiae by Russell L. Shults  Advisor: Stephen Wright

Bibliotherapy to Facilitate Emotional Intelligence in Elementary Students: A Working Pedagogy by Jessica L. Laws  Advisor: Sharon Teets

Peirce’s Tychism and Heisenberg’s Uncertainty: A Search for Common Conceptual Origins by Schuyler W. Matteson  Advisor: D. Brian Austin

The Effects of Pheromone Pathway Gene Deletion on GPR1P Levels in S. Saccharomyces Cerevisiae by Travis R. Pace  Advisor: Stephen Wright

It Came from the West and East: A Postmodern Experiment in Postcolonial Religiosity in The Gambia, West Africa by Ah-reum Han  Advisor: Susan Underwood

Book Design and Process: Creating Wayfarer by Hannah B. Williams  Advisor: Julie Rabun

O: Ato x Cycle by D. Nathanael Mosher  Advisor: Julie Rabun

Designing Hope for the Impoverished and Abandoned by Jody M. Barker  Advisor: Steven Huff
Hannah B. Williams
Seymour, TN
Honors Project:
“Wayfarer: A Visual Chronicle”
I created an 84-page book based on the poetry by C-N senior Kayla Beth Moore. I created illustrations for each poem resembling subway map systems that built upon each other, representing the idea of growth and travel.
Favorite Thing About the Honors Program:
The friends that I’ve made through the program and the experiences I’ve had in terms of the major events we have access to.

Lauren P. Henry
Greeneville, TN
Honors project:
“Designing the future of news: Online user preference, news impact and content recall”
The future of journalism will be determined by how current news leaders choose to use the emerging online medium. The adoption of online news is key to a news organization’s continued success, and this paper seeks to understand the best online practices in the presentation of news. It looks at the question of design and develops a study to measure design preference and uncover any correlation between design and content recall. The study shows that RIA design is only slightly more preferred over a simple page design. However, the college student study participants consistently rate RIA design as better design. Also, design does not act as a distraction in conveying information to the reader as measured through content recall. This is important to the journalism industry because it indicates that innovative design may be employed to attract readers without sacrificing journalistic integrity.
Favorite Thing About the Honors Program:
The educational opportunities.

Maggie R. Smith
Newland, North Carolina
Honors Project:
“Jacob: A Case Study of the Behavioral Attributes of a Child with Autism During Structured Play Sessions”
My honors project consisted of a case study of a five-year-old child with autism named Jacob. In order to create the case study, I spent 11.5 hours engaged in one-on-one play sessions with Jacob. During these play sessions, I utilized the Son-Rise Program (an autism treatment program) to engage Jacob socially and encourage his social interaction skills. I realized that I wanted my project’s focus to encompass not only Jacob’s language but also four other components: eye contact, inappropriate behavior, interaction, and exclusive behavior.
Favorite Thing about Honors Program:
One great aspect of the Honors Program is that it provided me with an immediate group of peers for me to get to know when I came to Carson-Newman my freshman year. It was helpful to have a built-in group of peers to interact with at the very beginning of my Carson-Newman experience.
Cara Barbara Hedges  
Tullahoma, TN  
**Honors Project:**  
“The Individual Colon Cancer Patient: A Qualitative Study of Food Preferences, Cravings, and “Feel Better Foods””  
My project is inspired by interactions with my aunt who has been battling cancer for nine years. I have had the opportunity over the years to inquire much about her diet, including her preferences. My study of fifteen patients at the UT Medical Center was an excellent experience, and my findings have shown that each patient is truly unique in dietary needs. Further research should be completed for further evidence of a dietitian’s role in attending to a patient as an individual, paying particular attention to preferences, cravings, and “feel-better” foods within cancer patients.

**Favorite thing about the Honors Program:**  
I have really enjoyed the trips; I had the chance to go to Cincinnati in the fall of ‘08 and Atlanta in the fall of ‘10. Additionally, I appreciate the high level of interaction and class discussions in team-taught courses.

Russell Lloyd Shults  
Newport, TN  
**Honors Project:**  
“Effects of Sugars on Constitutive Activity Within the Ste2p Pathway of Saccharomyces cerevisiae”  
In Saccharomyces cerevisiae, only two types of G-protein coupled receptors (GPCRs) exist, pheromone-sensing and glucosesensing. The aim of my project is to determine if there is some overlap between these two pathways by using various sugars to stimulate the glucose-sensing pathway and cells that induce the pheromone-sensing pathway to be constitutively active.

**Favorite thing about the Honors Program:**  
The people. Whether it is the students or faculty, I have thoroughly enjoyed the experiences I have had and the friends I have made.

Schuyler William Matteson  
Canisteo, NY  
**Honors Project:**  
“Peirce’s Tychism and Heisenberg’s Uncertainty: A Search for Common Conceptual Origins”  
In my project, I described the existence and content of two relationships. First, that Peirce’s tychism shares a historical origin with Heisenberg’s uncertainty principles, that traces back to the development of statistical mechanics by James Clerk Maxwell and Ludwig Boltzmann in the mid-1800s. Secondly, I submit that the two representations of chance are conceptually similar and profoundly related by a realist interpretation of statistical chance.

**Favorite thing about the Honors Program:**  
The Major events have been fun overall, especially the symphony trips. The opportunities we are presented with are invaluable, as long as you choose to be a part of them. The research experience was a huge plus too.
Activities

BROBOTS: Keith Baker, sophomore, Dr. Austin, and Thomas Waldrupe, junior, have fun during the major event trip taken in the fall of 2011 to Virginia.

GREEN AND RED: After the social event Tie-Dye Night, some of the students decided to play Apples to Apples after they finished dying their t-shirts.

LIVING: The Honors House is the place where it all happens: social events are hosted here, as well as impromptu study sessions, movie parties, dinners, or laundry nights. All Honors students are encouraged to come do laundry, cook, or hang out. Three students get to live upstairs. In the 2011-2012 school year, senior Bradley Clarke and juniors Thomas Waldruppe and David Morton were the Honors House inhabitants. Picture drawn by Amanda West, junior graphic design major.