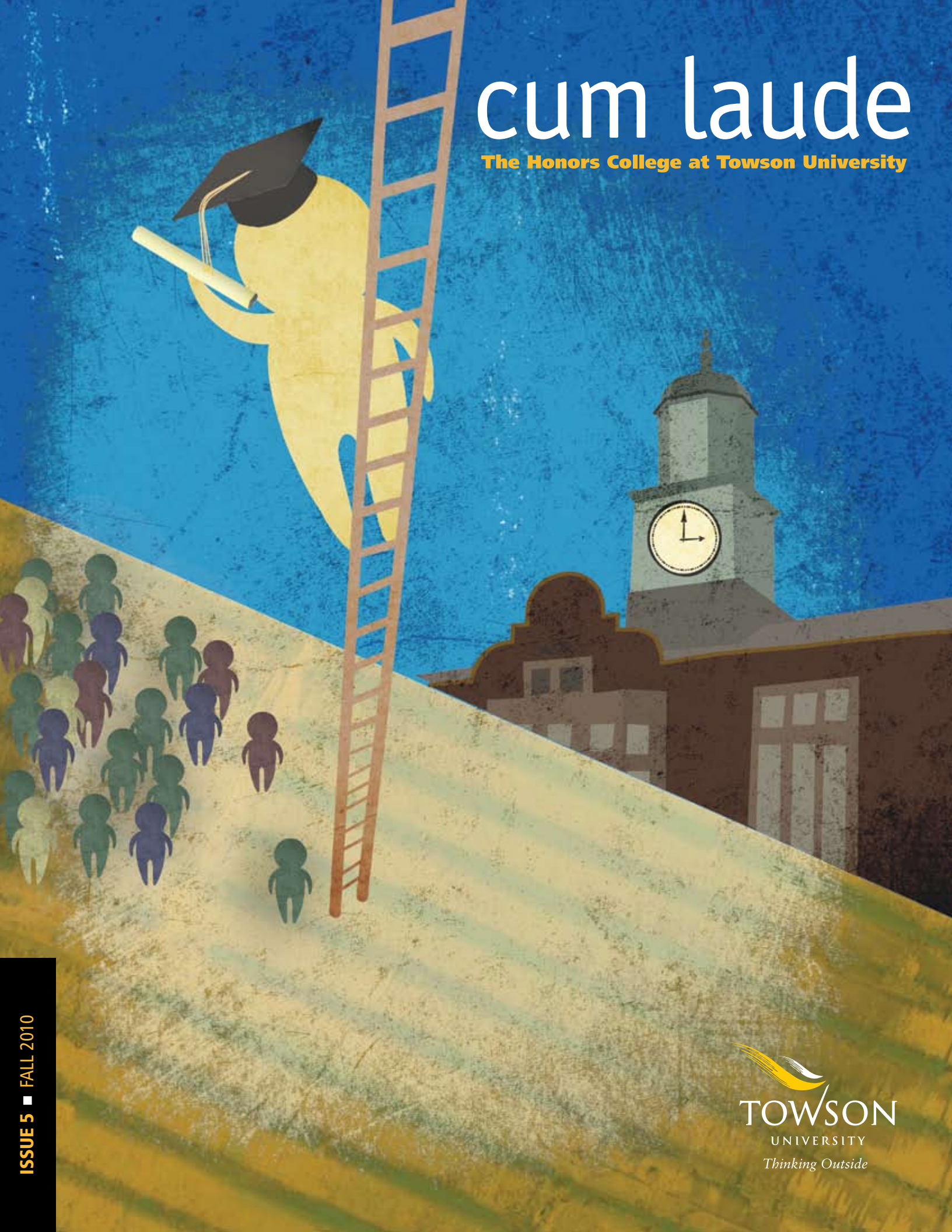


# cum laude

The Honors College at Towson University



ISSUE 5 ■ FALL 2010

  
**TOWSON**  
UNIVERSITY  
*Thinking Outside*

cum laude

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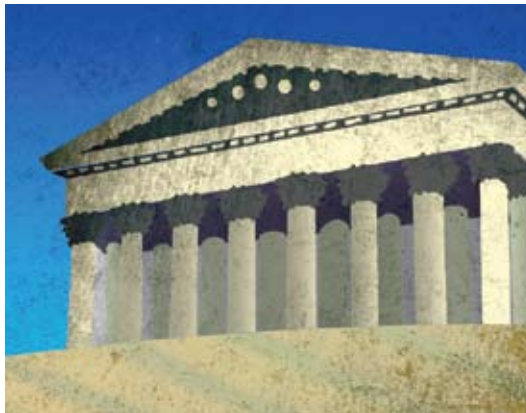
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**Great students. Great minds.**

## Dear Friends of the Honors College,

As I write this, it has been nearly one year since I was appointed interim dean of the Honors College. It has been a time of learning not just for our students, but for me as well. I've seen what our community of scholars is capable of, and I'm happy now to share it with you.

In this issue of *Cum Laude*, you'll find out about some of our students' wonderful accomplishments this year. We are home to student government leaders, prize-winning under-



graduate researchers and socially conscious activists—students whose talent, ability and hard work is found in every nook and cranny of TU. In the past year, I've had the pleasure of being a guest at undergraduate thesis defenses on topics ranging from art in the black townships of South Africa to the variation in maturity rates of black-nosed dace. The research may be disparate, but it's all held together by the common threads of our students' scholarship, commitment and curiosity.

Our students have fine minds, and fine minds demand high-quality stimulation. We've worked hard to provide that stimulation every day. This year we introduced brand-new seminars on utopian literature, Biblical archaeology and Latino immigration—all designed to challenge students to think on their feet and express themselves in new ways. We provided out-of-classroom enrichment through subsidized or free tickets to theater productions on campus, a professional production at Baltimore's Centerstage and a "Viennese Matinee" of classical chamber music performed by Pro Musica Rara, Maryland's professional early-music group.

The Honors College has further expanded its borders by offering financial aid for our students' study abroad experiences, including a spring break session in Mexico for students participating in the Latino immigration seminar. We also awarded our first Honors College Distinguished Service Scholarship to recognize students who dedicate themselves to building community and helping others.

Our friends and alumni are integral to the future success of our college and our students. You can help us by contributing to the Honors College. We recognize that not everyone can make a large gift, but even small contributions add up to big support. Please consider making a gift to the Honors College—even \$20 can make a difference. In this issue, we thank last year's donors for their generosity—we'd love to add your name to next year's list!

Sincerely,



**Michael O'Pecko, Ph.D.**  
Interim Dean of the Honors College  
Professor of German

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## Inspiring Internships

Many college students complete internships, but few expect the experience will change their lives. But for two Honors College students, that's exactly what happened.



"I was one of those students, just looking to get my credits filled," admits Honors College senior **Dan Partylak '10**, who recently completed an internship with the Casey Cares Foundation, a nonprofit that provides uplifting activities for critically-ill children and their families.

But what started as a simple graduation requirement for Partylak quickly evolved into something greater. On his first day on the job, the organization received a letter from a boy whose older brother had died of cancer. In honor of his brother, the boy started a cookie company and was donating his profits to the Casey Cares Foundation. Partylak's first assignment: draft a press release about the young boy's remarkable gift.

"It was an honor to tell that story," he says. "At that point, I

knew I was going to take away a lot from this internship."

As he became more involved in the organization, Partylak's responsibilities grew. He planned galas, facilitated auctions, courted donors and designed websites. Today, his internship complete, he continues to volunteer his time twice a week, serving as program coordinator.

"I don't get paid, but every time a thank-you letter comes in with a picture of a child with a big ol' smile on their face, I'm reminded of why I do it."

But Partylak wasn't the only honors student to have such a significant experience. **Alexis Smith '10** took on a very different kind of internship—with a very similar payoff.

Last summer, in the rural African village of Kayafungo,

Kenya, Smith served as a Global Development Intern for the nonprofit Student Movement for Real Change, now known as Think Impact.

The mission of the organization is to use existing assets to start new projects in communities to improve health, education and sanitation. Smith's charge was to facilitate the new community group *Kayafungo Elimika*, which worked with adult education and illiteracy.

"*Elimika* means 'get educated' in Swahili," explains Smith, who worked on-site with the organization for an intensive six weeks. "The vision of the Kayafungo Elimika was to increase literacy in the community over five years. It's no small task, but I'm very proud to have been a part of it."

Smith plans to return to Kenya in the coming months as a Think Impact team leader. "I want to work with the new crop of interns to foster their connections and awareness of the community. I want to share all that I've learned, so that they'll be as effective as possible in continuing the project."

## Conferences

Student research takes center stage at regional, national conferences.

There was no shortage of TU talent at this year's round of regional and national honors conferences. Honors students, and a few faculty, from disciplines across the univer-

sity hit the road with some of their most interesting research projects. From poster presentations to panel discussions, students showcased the best of what they—and the Honors College—have to offer.

At the Northeast Regional Honors Council Conference in Annapolis, Md., **Tom Martz '11** presented his poster, *How the New Deal Hurt Us*. His project focused on the current housing crisis, and the ways in which policies of the past led to the financial contractions of today. The project, says Martz, allowed him to explore concepts that were only covered briefly in his economics classes, and the conference provided an opportunity to share his ideas with peers from other programs.

"It was refreshing to have intellectual conversations without the pressures of a classroom setting," he says. "I would encourage everyone to try and attend a conference at least once during their undergraduate studies."

Meanwhile, at the Colonial Academic Alliance Undergraduate Research Conference in Richmond, Virginia, honors student **Ermengarde Jabir '12** presented her poster, *The Greek Financial Crisis: A Modern Tragedy*. Her work identified the origins of Greece's debt crisis and explored the European Union's plans for stabilizing its economic community.

**Alexis Smith '10** also presented a poster, *Illiteracy in Rural Kenya: How the Community Can Take Action*, at the Northeast Regional Honors Council conference. Her presentation highlighted her work abroad over the summer, in which she organized a community group



Alexis Smith presents her poster at the Northeast Regional Honors Council conference.

in Kenya that promoted adult education and literacy. For more on Smith's unique marriage of service learning and international education, see "Inspiring Internships," left.

TU associate professor of mathematics **Gail Kaplan** and her students, **Sarah Kutzberger '11**, **Jon Graf '10** and **DJ Eden '10**, demonstrated an eclectic mix of assignments from TU's Honors Mathematics Seminar at this year's National Collegiate Honors Council conference in Washington, D.C. In *An Excursion in Mathematical Explorations: Creative Projects Connecting Mathematics to other Disciplines*, the group discussed the world of math and its connection to disciplines such as art, history, literature and politics.

"It felt great to be able to present in our nation's capital on the national stage," said Graf. "We had the chance to talk and share our ideas with other honors students and faculty. Everyone at the conference shared the passion for education and valued the impact an honors experience has on students."

In the end, TU honors students took away a great sense of pride and belonging from their conference experiences. In addition to dipping their feet in conference culture, the students had countless opportunities to network, make friends and, of course, share their scholarship with peers from across the nation.

Says Eden, "We shared the floor with many prestigious institutions and, for me, it validated Towson's place in the academic world. It was an honor to see such interest in Dr. Kaplan and the college's success in building a unique mathematics course. Our presentation helped me appreciate the value of all we've achieved."

## Finding Meaning in the Medina

*Honors College junior Lindsay Roberts spent a term in Morocco at Al Akhawayn University.*

I've always known that my undergraduate career would not be complete without a semester abroad. As a French major, I wanted to study in a francophone country, but I also wanted to experience a completely different culture. So for me, the program at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco, was a perfect match.

I spent my first weekend in the town of Fes at a small, inexpensive hotel in the *medina*. Meaning "old city," medinas are found in many Moroccan and North African towns. They are preserves of traditional architecture and culture, often separated by high walls from the more contemporary *ville nouvelle*, or "new city."

The medina offered a view of traditional life that I wouldn't have seen from a modern hotel room in the *ville nouvelle*. I awoke to the sunrise call to prayer right outside my window, and began my morning by walking among the maze of winding, slender alleys as shop owners prepared their stores for the day. Cars are not allowed on the narrow medina streets, but the roads are crowded with people, motorbikes and donkeys lugging carts. Shop owners hassle tourists to buy leather products, rugs and ceramics; hoteliers offer cheap rooms; guides insist on showing you around. At first it was quite overwhelming, but I learned how to politely engage the people vying for my business.

Traveling to a different Moroccan city almost every weekend, my friends and I quickly became flexible and

resourceful explorers. In an attempt to shed our "tourist" image, we would explain in Arabic to Moroccans that we were students in Morocco. We frequented the local restaurants and developed relationships with the owners. While I was only in a city for a couple of days at a time, I connected with locals—if only in small ways—which made the trips unique and memorable.

My time abroad has prepared me for future endeavors. There were Moroccan and American students in most classes, so intercultural communication occurred every day—something that will serve me well as I follow my dream of international work. I learned from a wide range of perspectives on government, religion and popular culture, but also felt confident in contributing my own ideas. I learned from Morocco's widespread hospitality and I hope to be as welcoming to others in the U.S. as many Moroccans were to me.

I developed skills in Morocco that will be valuable both personally and professionally, and I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to embark on a unique adventure. It will characterize my experience at Towson and beyond.

—Lindsay Roberts

Ancient Ruins in Morocco



## TU Vegetable Garden takes root

One Honors College student has set out to make the TU campus a little bit greener—one vegetable at a time.

TU junior Jeffry Bothe is the brain and the brawn behind the TU Vegetable Garden, a 1,000-square-foot plot of land that's been carved out of the TU campus for development as a community agriculture project.

Bothe conceived of the garden in the spring of 2009, originally planning to make the project his Honors College capstone. His capstone plans have since changed but the garden lives on.

Bothe, who is involved with the Baltimore Master Gardeners association and the Community Greening Resource Network, teamed up with English Lecturer Ben Warner, Assistant Professor of Elementary Education Shaun Johnson and graduate student Liz Schatz. Together, the foursome wrote a proposal for the garden

that won the support of the TU administration.

The project will establish ongoing vegetable cultivation at the site, but that's only a small part of the plan. The garden is also designed to provide community service opportunities for students, as well as health and wellness education programs for the greater Towson area.

The whole idea is centered around community involvement and enrichment, says Bothe. "The produce will be donated to the Assistance Center of Towson Churches' weekly dinner for the homeless and needy. We've proposed partnerships with local schools that wish to teach students about urban agriculture and sustainable living. We also hope to offer work study or service-learning opportunities at the garden for TU students."

Bothe says that the garden—and its lessons in sustainable urban agriculture and outreach—serves to reinforce TU's role as a metropolitan university.

"It's an excellent opportunity to establish the university as a local leader in tackling tough environmental issues," he explains. "Although other colleges in the area have vegetable gardens, none has a student-run, sustainably managed vegetable garden of the scope we propose. Towson University would be first to have a campus garden that is linked to the broader community, demonstrating a commitment to urban agriculture while promoting public health education."

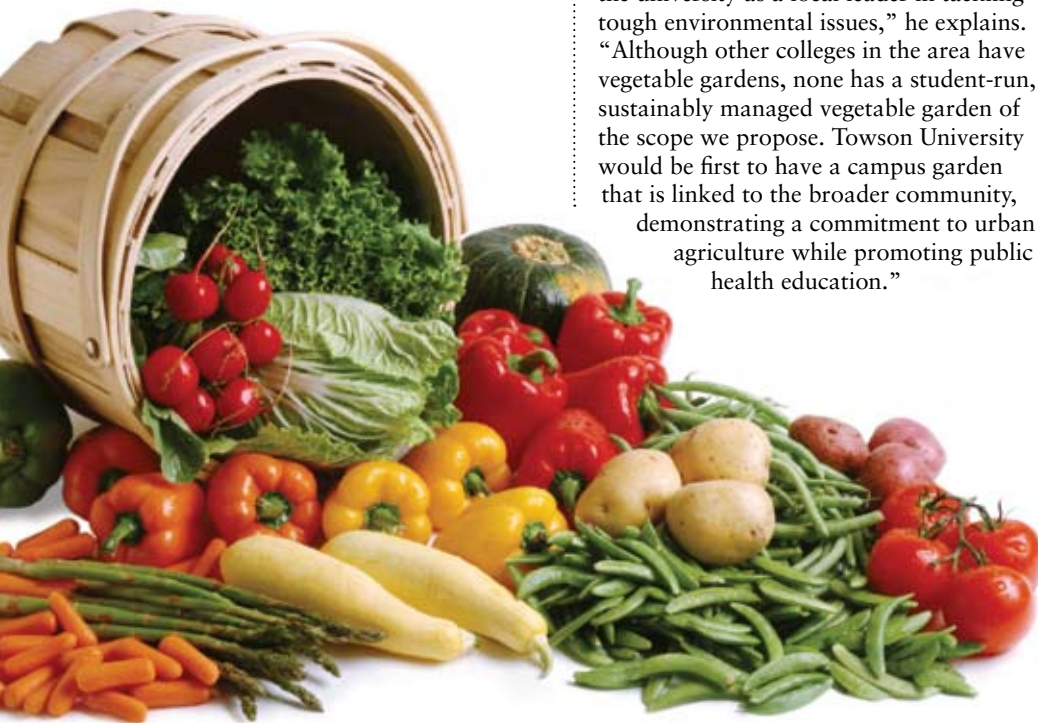


## New students get oriented, networked

The Honors College kicked off the 2009 academic year with the launch of two new programs for incoming students: a two-day orientation program for honors freshmen and the newly established Honors College Peer Network. Both programs were devised to smooth freshman students' transition to TU and the Honors College.

The new two-day orientation program was created to encourage students to build relationships and to provide them with a sense of what to expect from life as an honors student. The orientation included an introduction to the college and an overview of the community by Honors College administration, a panel discussion and a tour of the campus.

According to Assistant Dean Erin Mountz, the new orientation events were designed to be informative, inclusive and engaging. For example, "students learned the history of TU, and then put that knowledge to the test in a campus-wide scavenger hunt," as savvy students used the history lesson to help decipher clues and find their way.



At the end of the day, students relaxed in Paws, enjoyed dinner and live music from TU student bands, played games and mingled with other freshmen and current students. They even had the unique opportunity to experience a night in university housing before the general student body returned to campus for the term.

The orientation also integrated the academic rigor for which the Honors College is known, incorporating the First Year Read, *Water for Elephants*, and a visit from a Maryland Zoo elephant trainer. Following the presentation, students worked in small groups to answer questions posed by the book through skits, discussions and debates.

Following the orientation, each new honors freshman and transfer student was paired with a current honors student as part of the Honors College Peer Network. The current students served as peer mentors for the freshmen throughout the fall term, explains Mountz.

“The current students were in regular contact with them to see how their classes were going, answering questions and helping with the transition to college life. Peers were also encouraged to invite the new students to events, as a way to help the new students feel more comfortable getting involved on campus.”

Both the orientation and peer network received very positive responses from students and will be continued in the coming years.

We are deeply grateful to our donors for investing in Towson University's Honors College, its students and mission. The following donors have contributed to the Honors College from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010.

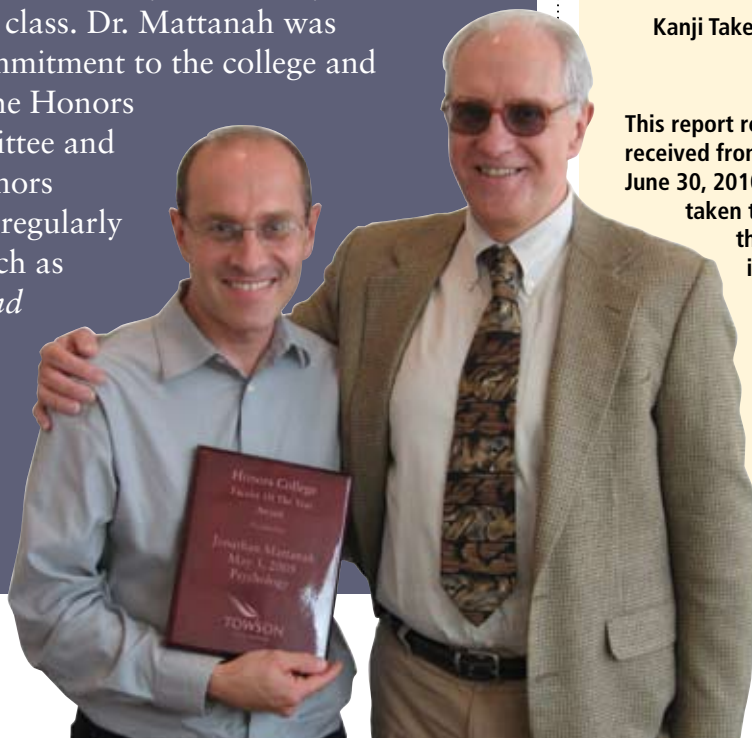
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## 2009 Faculty of the Year Award

Jonathan Mattanah, professor of psychology, is the recipient of the 2009 Honors College Faculty of the Year Award, an annual prize bestowed unto one faculty member by the Honors College graduating class. Dr. Mattanah was selected for his years of commitment to the college and its students. He serves on the Honors College Curriculum Committee and previously served as an Honors College Faculty Fellow. He regularly teaches honors seminars such as *Gender, Culture, Politics and the Arts: Psychoanalysis and Children's Literature*.

Jonathan Mattanah with Interim  
Dean of the Honors College Michael  
O'Pecko



# Reflections on Justice

In the Second Annual Honors College Reflections lecture series, Dr. Jack Fruchtman Jr., professor of political science and director of the Law and American Civilization Program at Towson University, spoke about the changes, positions, directions and cases of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Fruchtman began with an overview of the history of the U.S. Supreme Court and provided a glimpse into the make-up of the Roberts court. He spoke about the individual justices, their backgrounds and how they tend to vote on particular issues.

He focused on the controversial cases that affect the world of politics today, such as the bipartisan Campaign Reform Act and the High Court's recent decision that First Amendment rights apply to corporations. The contentious issue ultimately led to Justice Samuel Alito's now-infamous proclamation of "not true" during a public rebuke by President Obama during the 2010 State of the Union address.

The decision "undermined a century of campaign reform acts and overturned laws in 22 states," said Fruchtman. "It's what we call a judicial activist decision. It's what happens when a democratically elected body creates a law that is overturned by this group of nine lawyers."

**"We who have the final word can speak softly or angrily. We can seek to challenge and annoy, as we need not stay docile and quiet."**

— Justice William O. Douglas

See the *Reflections on Justice* lecture for yourself. To watch the video, visit [www.towson.edu/honors](http://www.towson.edu/honors) and click on "Calendar of Events."

Fruchtman also discussed the Heller decision, which addressed the Second Amendment's guarantee of the right to bear arms. According to Fruchtman, the vague language of the amendment makes it unclear whether the right extends to all individuals, or just to the militia.

"The court has historically hated to deal with this issue," he said. "The last time it came up was in 1932, when a guy carried a sawed-off shotgun across state lines." In 2008 and again in a similar 2010 case, the court decided, by a narrow majority, that the law did indeed guarantee the right to bear arms by individual citizens. The ruling overturned many state and local decisions on the matter.

What's Fruchtman's prediction for the future of the court? During his lecture, he successfully foresaw the retirement of Justice John Paul Stevens, leaving another court appointment for President Obama. (The lecture was held one month

before Stevens announced his plans for retirement.) He also speculated that Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg may be approaching retirement, but was quick to point out that as lifetime appointees, justices historically serve very long terms.

"If you want to live for a long time," Fruchtman quipped, "become a Supreme Court Justice."

Dr. Fruchtman has written six books, including *The Supreme Court: Rulings on American Government and Society*. In addition, he has devoted much of his academic research to the study of the American, British and French Enlightenment. Fruchtman's lecture brought in record attendance, including that of TU students, staff and alumni as well as Towson area community members.





## News and Updates from Honors College Graduates

### Dominic Markwordt '05

*Dominic Markwordt graduated from the TU Honors College in 2005 with a degree in business administration and a concentration in international business. He minored in German. Since graduation, Markwordt earned an MBA from the University of Baltimore and is currently finishing his final year of law school at the University of Baltimore School of Law. In 2010, his article "More Folly than Fairness: The Fairness Doctrine, the First Amendment and the Internet Age" was selected for publication in the Regent University Law Review.*

I distinctly remember my first honors class: a course on cosmic origins with Professor Alex Storrs. Our small class would sometimes meet on the grassy hillside in front of Smith Hall to engage in robust discussions of the origins of the universe. It was a far departure from the requirements of my business administration major, but that's what was so great about the Honors College. It allowed me to explore subjects and take classes I might never have considered.

While honors courses nurtured my intellectual development on campus, the college also supported me in expanding my horizons by encouraging me to study abroad. During my junior year at Towson, I had the opportunity to study at the *Institut de Formation Internationale*, a leading international business school in Rouen, France. I lived with a host family and fully immersed myself in the French culture. Today, more than half a decade later, I still regularly correspond with a friend I made that semester.

My time in France gave me the self-confidence to challenge myself and independently obtain a five-month internship in Berlin, Germany, during my senior year at Towson. I helped a major German company comply with U.S. securities laws and supported its international sourcing initiatives. During the weekends and in my spare time, I explored Berlin. Seeing the remnants of the Berlin Wall and walking along the rebuilt city added an additional dimension to what I had learned in the classroom as part of my German minor. Since then, I have returned to visit Berlin and the friends I made while studying and working there.

The Honors College also helped me hone my study habits. The small class sizes forced me to organize, analyze and synthesize information. Learning *how* to learn, particularly the research techniques I developed and perfected, has served me in good stead. Especially in law school, which consists primarily of reading and distilling reams of data, knowing how to distinguish and sift the unimportant facts from the crucial ones is key. As a student attorney in the University of Baltimore School of Law's Tax Clinic, I am currently representing Filipino teachers in Tax Court who are disputing the Internal Revenue Service's interpretation of a United States-Philippine tax treaty.

I strongly encourage Honors College students to challenge themselves to go beyond the traditional academic experience at a four-year university. From the honors course in cosmic origins that expands your horizons, to the study skills that help narrow your focus, the Honors College will help you make the most of your time at Towson University.

**Got news?**  
We want to hear from you!



Whether you just landed a new job, finished your next degree or have some family news to share, we want to know about it! Send updates on your personal and professional life to the Honors College. We may even contact you to appear in this magazine.

*Visit [www.towson.edu/honors/alumni](http://www.towson.edu/honors/alumni) and click on "Alumni News Form."*

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For more information or to purchase a shirt, please e-mail [hconnections@towson.edu](mailto:hconnections@towson.edu) or stop by the Honors College Office.

## Honors Student News and Events

Fall 2009



### Starstruck

Honors College students and faculty attended “A Night Among the Stars,” a reception showcasing a trip through the Milky Way in the TU Planetarium. Alex Storrs, professor in the Department of Physics, Astronomy and Geosciences, led the attendees on an hour-long tour. Following the presentation, the group mingled over appetizers.

### International success

In November, honors students celebrated the nationally recognized International Education Week by collecting school supplies for children in Africa and watching an African documentary. Thanks to the generosity and hard work of honors students, the college was able to send four boxes of supplies to Africa. Honors College Connections sponsored this event.

### Taking in a show

This year the Honors College provided students three opportunities to visit local theaters. In the fall, students traveled to the Centerstage Theatre in downtown Baltimore to see *The Importance of Being Earnest*. In the spring, students attended the TU-student performance *Landscape of the Body*, and *Pro Musica Rara, Viennese Matinee* featuring a TU faculty member in the Center for the Arts. Some performances included “talk back” sessions with the cast and directors.

### Spring 2010

### Faculty keep the crown

February saw the return of the Honors College’s annual Generation Jeopardy match, in which students and faculty/staff face off in a game of the decades. Categories included the 2010 Winter Olympics, Name That Tune, Towson Facts, '90s Cartoon Characters and more. Despite a strong effort from the student team, the faculty/staff won the night once again.



### Honors students support the fight

In March, over 50 students participated in Relay for Life on the Honors College team in support of the fight against cancer. Many honors students served on the Relay for Life planning committee to help secure sponsors and entertainment, plan ceremonies, and serve as event co-chairs. Together, the students of TU raised more than \$55,000 for the American Cancer Society.

### The most important meal

In October, the Honors College welcomed over 300 current students and their family members for breakfast during family weekend. In addition to the grub, families were able to tour the Honors Suite, meet the dean of the Honors College, and view the College’s Lieberman Art Collection.





## Awards and Scholarships

**Thomas Martz and Shane Lester** were awarded the Mid-Atlantic CIO Forum Scholarship.

**Samantha Semenkow** was named recipient of the American Society for Microbiology Undergraduate Research Fellowship.

**Amanda Fennell** was awarded the Towson University Honors College Distinguished Service Scholarship.

## Internships

**Paige Ruecker and Chase Ruecker** interned at Partners in Care in Pasadena, Md., during the summer of 2009. During her internship she delivered emergency kits to the elderly and worked in the Partners in Care Boutique.

As the only student representative on the Board of Regents, **Sarah Elfreth** worked to accurately represent 147,000 students as a full voting member of the board to better the citizens and the state of Maryland.

## Accomplishments

During the 2009–2010 academic year, **Jon Graf** served as president of the Towson University Student Government Association. Jon worked with students and administrators to help enhance the Towson student experience.

As the president of Proud Athletes Who Serve (PAWS), **Thomas Appel-Schumacher** worked with the captains and leaders of the TU Division I athletic teams to promote effective communication between the athletic department, administration and Towson’s student athletes.

**Ben Steinberg**, an economics and political science major, served as vice president of the Towson University Student Government Association for the 2009–2010 school year.

**Philippa Nash** completed her thesis paper, *Conditional Cash Transfers, Unemployment and Remittance: Mexico’s Struggle for Sustainable Economic Growth*, which allowed her to apply theories and models she learned in class to the current economic and social issues occurring in Mexico.

**Ellon Scherer** completed her capstone research project that looked into the benefits, cautions and types of online games geared for math tutoring in elementary schools.

**James Bardsley** presented his research on Capitol Hill during the 2010 Posters on the Hill. His research was entitled *Detection of Misidentified Plants in the International Cocoa Genebank, Trinidad*.



## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## Melissa Novak and Alexis Smith

### 2009–2010 Honors College Ambassadors

As ambassadors, Melissa Novak and Alexis Smith enhanced the recruitment and retention of honors students through personal connections with prospective and current students and their families as they planned events that promoted the Honors College community. Alexis was instrumental in leading the student group, Honors College Connections, and Melissa was a huge asset in planning and publicizing all Honors College events.

“Being an Honors Ambassador allows me to interact with current honors students, faculty and prospective honors students,” says Novak. “I’m given the opportunity to help shape the program into something that they all can enjoy together.”

Smith concurs. “Being an Honors Ambassador has opened the door for me to new opportunities, learning experiences and the chance to work with some of the most dedicated and diverse faculty and staff on campus,” she says.

**Melissa Novak**

**Alexis Smith**





**"The Honors College is a great way to make connections with others who share similar interests."**

Darryl Glotfelty

**"Honors professors are very dedicated to the students."**

Elliot Glotfelty

# THE HONORS COLLEGE YEAR-IN-REVIEW



- Honors College Welcome Back Barbeque
- Fourth Annual Generation Jeopardy: Students, faculty and staff compete for bragging rights

- New Honors College Orientation and Peer Network
- A day at the Maryland Renaissance Festival



- Honors College Graduation: More than 110 students graduated in fall 2009 and spring 2010 ceremonies
- Students and faculty spend "A Night Among the Stars" with a presentation in the TU Planetarium



- Honors College students attend performances including *Landscape of the Body*, *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Pro Musica Rara*
- Relay for Life: Over 50 honors students participate in the fight against cancer for the American Cancer Society

- Outdoor Movie Night on Newell Field
- Pizza with Honors College study abroad



- Overseas Thank You: Students create cards to send holiday wishes and thanks to U.S. troops overseas



- The first Honors College Distinguished Service Scholarship is awarded

