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The "Honor" of LU's Honors Program

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**The “Honor” of LU’s Honors Program
An Essay Submitted to the Virginias’ Collegiate Honors Council
In Competition for the VCHC Scholar of the Year 2016 Award**

By
Kristen Christopherson

The Honors Program at Liberty University provides students with an excellent opportunity to delve into an academic program that challenges, expands, and enhances their intellectual prowess, integrity, and commitment. This program allows students of exceptional ability to be further challenged throughout their college experience. These challenges, such as Honors Seminar replacements for general education courses, Honors petition work in 300 and 400-level classes, and a culminating Honors Thesis, are designed to equip students to maximize their intellectual and creative potential, as well as to prepare them for future endeavors to complete graduate and doctoral degrees. The Liberty University Honors



Program not only encourages academic success but it also promotes a collegial-support in a community of dedicated students and inspires those students to aim to impact their community in a positive manner. Any participant in Honors will catch the inspiration of highly motivated, dedicated, and creative professors, students, and administrators, and radiate this profound inspiration into the campus, the community, and even the program itself.



Photo by Samantha Batterman of the JFL Library. The Honors Program is on the third floor on the right.

During my four years at LU, I have been incredibly fortunate to take part in the Honors Program. As a double major in Music Education and Vocal performance, I had many opportunities to connect with the campus and community as a representative of the Honors Program. On campus, I was able to live as an example within my classes for Honors and for the School of Music. Within Honors Seminars, I contributed a creative perspective on class discussion because of my background in music and the intensive “below the surface” study we must conduct for each piece of music we perform. Within my music classes, I had the great opportunity to be a tutor to fellow classmates, teaching them study and test-taking strategies that I had learned in preparation for the Honors Program, as well as those I had learned from fellow Honors students. In the music department, I gave presentations for my Honors-petition classes. These presentations included extensive study into a variety of choral conducting practices, the lives and motivations of famous composers, theoretical analysis of famous works, text-composition relationships, and detailed line-by-line analysis of works I was preparing for performance. These presentations stimulated discussion, which encouraged my classmates to conduct their own personal studies of beloved composers and in-depth analysis of their own performance pieces.



Photo by Dr. Nutter: Honors Students Doing Scholarly Stuff in the Honors Suite



Beyond the classroom, I had many performance opportunities that allowed me to reach the campus and the community as a representative for the Honors program. I performed lead roles for Liberty University Opera productions my sophomore, junior, and senior years at Liberty. I was selected to perform in two professional productions with Opera on The James as a chorus and small ensemble member. I was contracted to perform as a singer in the Holiday shows of local dance studios and ministered in local churches, retirement homes, and community events with the School of Music’s top performing group, Chamber Singers. I represented Liberty at local, statewide, and regional competitions, placing 1st, 2nd, and receiving dignified honors at multiple levels. I also toured with Chamber Singers from New York to Florida on Spring Break tours to reach out to communities through music. Through each of these opportunities I was not only able to impact those in the campus and community by sharing the knowledge, skills and dedication I had cultivated through my participation in Honors, but I was able to reciprocate the

education I had received back to fellow Honors students by sharing what I had learned from my community and professional experiences. These experiences have touched and grown me, as much as they have been a medium by which I could touch and grow those around me. I am thankful and blessed to have had so many doors open for me because of the skills, effort, and dedication that I had been encouraged to and aimed to achieve within the Honors Program.

In every situation, I have striven to represent the excellence that is the root of Liberty's Honors Program. Liberty's Honors Program is comprised of deans, administrators, professors, and students who are committed to cultivating an ideal of dedication, excellence, and a realization and attainment of one's highest potential in all avenues of life, and a goal of using this potential to inspire, aid, and benefit as many lives as one is able to reach. This culture within the Honors Program has molded my own mission and outlook on life. As a student who graduated as valedictorian of her high school with a GPA of 4.86 and who was showered with high expectations, I soon realized that the stigma associated with choosing music as a profession was not one that many identified with prestige or exceptional intelligence. With this disappointing lack of expectations for my success in music as a career, it would have been simple for me to ease my way through college, earn my degree, and never consider the academic impact that music can contribute to society.



However, because of the instruction, assignments, and requirements I received as a part of the Honors Program, I was able to uncover academic prestige in a creative content area. My intelligence was challenged, expanded, and cultivated and I was left in awe of the many facets of music that I am itching to grasp as I continue my studies. The Honors Program made me proud of the profession I chose; it made me realize that I had not opted for an easy degree, but that what each student chooses to give in his or her work or studies will be the equivalent of the value of the education they receive from their studies. And, I can say with confidence that I have received an invaluable education from the School of Music as an Honors student. More importantly, I have discovered my sole mission as a musician,

an educator, and an academician: to engage in intentional, thorough historical, theoretical, emotional and technical preparation, in order to perform musical works in a way that reflects and reveres the composer's intended design, and to inspire students and community members to do the same, as an effort to enhance society through understanding, appreciation, and revelation of music, as art and as academia.

The Honors Staff



(L-R): Mrs. Laura Kline (Office Manager), Jake Rogers (Quiz Bowl Captain), Hannah Rainous (Student Worker), Greta Hanks (Honorary Student Worker), and Dr. Jim Nutter (Director)



Wesley Pena (Student Worker)



Dr. Marilyn Gadowski (Asst. Dir.)



Dr. Brenda Ayres (Asst. Dir.)