



# HONORS COLLEGE

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

ETSU Honors College Newsletter

June, 2015

## *Hello all,*

*I hope that this letter finds you all well and excited to embrace the adventures that summer often yields. It is my last letter for the semester, so I will make it a crisp outro. I consider it an honor to have served as president of the Honors College Student Council this past school year, and I am thrilled to see the huge strides that the council has made toward achieving the excellence that is deserved by our students. The freshly compiled council desired to make the students' interests a priority while ensuring that when we say "student," we are thinking about every person in the Honors College family. Changes were made, lessons were learned, and I believe the future looks very bright (which is a big deal if you know how pessimistic I can be). I would like to wish the best of luck to everyone who is a part of the Honors College, as you continue along your respective paths. I challenge everyone from administration to students to professors to continue learning, questioning, and being generally great. Thank you.*

*Best,  
Woodson Carpenter  
HCSC President*

## *Faculty spotlight: Judy Harrell*

*by David Floyd*

Judy Harrell, the honors college's information research technician for the past 8 years, will retire from her position this semester after working at ETSU for almost 30 years.

"I want to get out and spend time with my family," Harrell said. "I have two grandchildren that live in Chesapeake, Virginia, and my husband and I want to be able to spend time with them because they are growing up so fast."

Harrell originally worked in the registrar's office before moving to a position in the honors college.

"When I was working in the registrar's office, I saw the ad that came up on the website and thought I had been there in the registrar's office for 20 some years and I thought it's probably time for a change," Harrell said. "I knew Dr. Pyles, she was the dean of the honors college at the time, and I applied for the job ... It was just time for a change, and I really felt like I would be a good candidate for the position."

Harrell said having the opportunity to interact with students was an incentive present in both her job in the registrar's office and her position in the honors college.

"One of the main things that also caught my attention was working with students," Harrell

said. "That's one of the things that I found by working in the registrar's office I value so much - working with students, assisting students."

Harrell said she'll miss both the students and her co-workers when she retires and will have fond memories of working with Joy Wachs, the director of the midway honors scholars and university honors scholars programs.

"Dr. Wachs is an amazing boss," Harrell said. "She and I get along well with one another. ... Sometimes [students will] encounter a problem with a professor. They'll come in and talk to me, and if I cannot help them, Dr. Wachs just has this ability to sit down with them, and they explain from the very beginning what's going on. Sometimes they just want to have someone to listen to them. She's an amazing person, not only as a boss but as a friend. We have this friendship that is very special to me, and she'll be part of my life forever."

Harrell said will cherish several memories for a long time after retiring.

"I would have to say [one of my favorite memories] would be when [UHS sophomore] Caitlin Duke presented me with a journal from all of the Class of 2017 that really touched my heart," Harrell

said. "This is something I will treasure forever."

The journal included brief messages from members of the sophomore UHS class thanking Harrell for her assistance and service to the college.

Harrell is hoping to spend her downtime traveling and exploring the outdoors, and she is planning a trip to Alaska with her husband next year.

She and her husband also own a farm containing over 100 head of beef cattle, and retiring will offer Harrell the opportunity to explore new activities.

"[My husband] says he's going to put me on the tractor and I'm going to mow hay but I told him, 'You may not have any fences left when I get up there on the mower.'"

Ultimately, Harrell said she will miss her interactions with students and faculty, but she's looking forward to accepting any new challenges life throws at her.

"None of us have a promise of tomorrow, and we don't know what life going to throw at us from one day to the next," Harrell said. "I want to be able to enjoy life and enjoy some of the things that my husband and I want to do together."

---

---

# Faculty spotlight: Dr. Scott Contreras-Koterbay

by David Floyd

---

Scott Contreras-Koterbay is the Director of the Honors College's Fine and Performing Arts Scholars program and has taught multiple classes as a professor of philosophy and art history at ETSU.

"Pat Cronin [the previous director of the FPA program] in 2008 was looking for someone to be an associate director for the program, and he asked me to do it and I was quite happy to do it," Koterbay said.

Koterbay was eventually offered the opportunity to head the program, and he has been the director since 2013.

Koterbay grew up in Rhode Island and went to the Portsmouth Abbey and Priory, a prestigious high school in Portsmouth, Rhode Island.

"Think Dead Poets Society but all the professors are monks," Koterbay said. "The reason it's called the Portsmouth Abbey and Priory is it's a monastery first ... At the time it was an all-male, jacket-and-tie-and-shoe wearing, English-modeled, private boy school in which every student took at least two years of Latin and every single semester we had theology as part of our curriculum."

Koterbay later attended the University of Saint Andrews in Scotland where he studied art history. He completed his Ph.D from St. Andrews in 1998 and subsequently taught at the University of South Alabama where he earned less than \$10,000 a year.

"I probably should have been on food stamps," Koterbay said.

Thinking he needed to find a more sustainable source of income, Koterbay decided to apply for a number of positions across the country.

"East Tennessee State University had this really unique position that they were advertising," Koterbay said. "They were advertising a joint position between the art department and the philosophy department for someone to teach modern and contemporary art history and then someone to teach philosophy of art."

Several of Koterbay's friends had applied for the position, but the art department and the philosophy depart-

ment couldn't agree on a candidate.

Koterbay said the philosophy department eventually deferred judgment to the art department and Koterbay was selected for the position.

Koterbay started teaching for the honors college his second year at ETSU, teaching Artistic Experience — a required class in the University Honors Scholars curriculum.

One of the aspects Koterbay enjoyed about teaching honors students was their willingness to put in the effort to understand complicated philosophical ideas.

"I love the fact that I would walk into class ... and I'd say to the university honors students, 'Next week we're reading Kant,'" Koterbay said. "And, out of a sense of responsibility, almost all of them would read of it — not all of them of course — but most of them would come in and read it, accept the challenge and work hard to try and live up to the challenge."

Koterbay said he loves working at ETSU and cites a particular incidence as evidence of his devotion to the school.

About a year after receiving his position at ETSU, Koterbay ran into a friend at a philosophy conference who had recently been hired as a professor in the philosophy department at Harvard.

"We were talking about our students and the more we were talking about our students he ultimately looked at me and said, 'You know what, I would love to work at your university if I got paid the same amount that I got paid at Harvard.'"

Koterbay's friend said the experience teaching open-minded students who had never been exposed to philosophers like Kant, Plato and Aristotle was much more fulfilling than teaching students who had gone to private schools and, despite their ignorance, already felt like they had a firm understanding of basic philosophy.

"The longer I've been here, the longer I've appreciated exactly what he's said," Koterbay said.

---

---

## Rising HID Students

Assenmacher, Emily	<i>Honors in English</i>
Cockrell, Morgan	<i>Honors in Math</i>
Driscoll, Erik	<i>Honors in Technology</i>
Duncan, Baylee	<i>Honors in Teacher Education</i>
Dunker, Jessica	<i>Honors in English</i>
Eccles, Bree	<i>Honors in Chemistry</i>
Elgazzar, Ahmed	<i>Honors in Environmental Health</i>
Ford, Hannah	<i>Honors in Technology</i>
Fouls, Natalie	<i>Honors in Teacher Education</i>
Friend, Christopher	<i>Honors in Technology</i>
Guillory, Adam	<i>Honors in Business</i>
Hansen, Alexa	<i>Honors in English</i>
Howard, Amber	<i>Honors in English</i>
Johnson, Amber	<i>Honors in Chemistry</i>
Mckinney, Levi	<i>Honors in Technology</i>
Murphy, Jessa	<i>Honors in Chemistry</i>
Norris, Austin	<i>Honors in Technology</i>
Paul, Natania	<i>Honors in Chemistry</i>
Reed, Samantha	<i>Honors in Business</i>
Reynolds, Mykala	<i>Honors in Communication Studies</i>
Schroeder, Amelia	<i>Honors in Math</i>
Sedlak, Alexander	<i>Honors in Technology</i>
Wiseman, Raina	<i>Honors in Chemistry</i>
Wolf, Nathaniel	<i>Honors in Math</i>
Wormer, Van	<i>Honors in Technology</i>
Yarid, Colin	<i>Honors in Chemistry</i>

---

---

## Rising FPA Students

Brister, Michael	Howard, Amber
Crabtree, Rachel	Kinser, Isaac
Edmonds, Brianna	Labelle, Morgan
Evans, Madisen	Leonard, Ryan
Galpin, Kennedy	Oakes, Hannah
Getchell, Chelsea	Powell, Alexandra
Hicks, Tyler	Powell, Katlyn
Houseton, Fran	Teaster, Erin

---

---

## Rising UHS Students

Alu, Stephanie	<i>Health Sciences/Pre-Med</i>
Armstrong, Heidi	<i>Human Services/School Counselor</i>
Barker, Morgan	<i>Psychology</i>
Bishop, Kaelyn	<i>Health Sciences/Pre-Dental</i>
Brackins, Elizabeth	<i>Accounting</i>
Clafin, Robert	<i>Biology/Pre-Med</i>
Colvett, Janie	<i>Music Education</i>
Crapiz, Fausto	<i>Anthropology/Pre-Med</i>
Dale, Matthew	<i>Computer Science</i>
Day, Nicolas	<i>Biology/Pre-Med</i>
Dirmeyer, Steven	<i>Biology/Pre-Med</i>
Drury, Caroline	<i>Environmental Health/Pre-Med</i>
Elgazzar, Ahmed	<i>Environmental Health/Pre-Med</i>
Heifner, Miranda	<i>Art/Scriptwriting</i>
Heineken, Kayla	<i>Psychology/Pre-Med</i>
Jewett, Bethany	<i>Epidemiology</i>
Johnson, Garrett	<i>Chemistry/Bio-Chem/Pre-Med</i>
Manis, Hannah	<i>Behavioral Neuroscience</i>
Millsaps, Caitlin	<i>Chemistry/Pre-Med</i>
May, Lauren	<i>Undecided</i>
Mawhinney, Sarah	<i>Undecided</i>
Stinnett, Joshua	<i>Human Health/Pre-Med</i>
Stubs, Brittney	<i>Undecided/Pre-Med</i>
Sturgill, Jordan	<i>Marketing</i>

---

# FPA focuses on drawing and future study

by Laura Traister

---



“Lunch Time” (top) and “Ultimate Evil” (bottom), by Hannah Justis



“Headlights” (left) and “Prongs” (right), by Hannah Justis

During her college search, Hannah Justis, a native of nearby Kingsport, looked at local colleges, including ETSU. When she heard about the ETSU Honors College’s “fantastic scholarship opportunity for the arts,” she knew she had to apply.

“When I found out I had been accepted into the Fine and Performing Arts Scholars, it was too good an opportunity to pass up,” said Hannah, who is a sophomore studying art with a concentration in drawing.

Hannah has experimented with various mediums, but chooses to concentrate on drawing techniques, although she has also recently found herself creating in mixed mediums.

“My mother and grandmother both being professional artists, [art is] just something that’s always been there. Personally, however, I didn’t become really interested into making a career out of art until late high school,” she explained.

Hannah explained that the Honors College has been a beneficial experience, one that expects a lot from her, such as a 20-hour volunteer requirement.

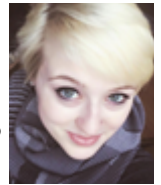
“Through my volunteering I’ve been exposed to amazing local artist and talent. Through the Honors College, students are required of more and forced earlier on to take charge of their own lives and to straighten out priorities,” Hannah said.

“I feel like the Honors College is extremely efficient at preparing the freshman for what is to come. Though I know some would disagree, and others hated it, the program of studies was very helpful and I feel like I would be lost without it now.”

She also appreciates the relational opportunities she has encountered.

“It was nice to come into the

unknown that is college with a group to welcome you. In my year, there’s only nine FPA scholars, so we all became great friends.”



Hannah’s favorite class so far was a Modern Art history course, taught by Dr. Scott Koterbay, the director for the Fine and Performing Arts program.

“Though it was most definitely the hardest class I have attended so far here at ETSU, the lectures were interesting and the papers challenging. I love to write, and having such open ended topics for discussion in his assignments, the class had me producing some of the best papers.”

Hannah has also enjoyed taking classes with assistant professor of drawing Andrew Scott Ross, and she looks forward to starting an independent study with him in the fall.

After finishing her bachelor’s of fine arts degree at ETSU, Hannah hopes to continue her studies.

“I hope to one day live and study in a bigger city, such as Chicago or even London, and complete my master’s in fine arts and then maybe later a PhD in my field,” she said.

She describes herself as being more interested in the business side of art.

“I would one day love to own and manage my own gallery, to curate different shows, and be a figurehead of such for a local art scene. Selling my own artwork would be great, and it never hurts to have that commission money on the side, but I want to get myself out there, to talk and write about the art community, and to experience the art world outside of a studio.”

---

*Make a difference in the lives of current Honors students. Each gift is important in our mission to champion student success and achievement across all academic disciplines through the ETSU Honors College.*

To give online please use our convenient [ETSU Online Giving Form](#)  
Thank you in advance for your support.

---

---

# *The History of the Honors College*

*by Wesley Harris*

---

After its formal formation in 2005, the Honors College at ETSU began its mission of providing “access to honors-distinctive academic, creative, and enrichment opportunities for a broad spectrum of qualified students and to provide recognition for undergraduate students who excel in diverse areas of academic achievement.” To this end it has been a grand success.

The Honors College at ETSU is among a select few honors programs across the nation that provide and coordinate honors curricula, undergraduate research, and study-abroad under one roof.

The Honors College provides its curricula through a variety of programs, two of which have been with the college from its inception. These are the University Honors Scholars program, a 52 credit hour enriched program that is designed for entering freshman and concludes with the completion of a thesis presentation.

The UHS program focuses on holistic learning. The core curriculum is built around three yearlong seminars. Freshman year focuses on literature and philosophy, while sophomore year revolves around science and the arts. This allows students to learn about alternatives to their perspectives while learning skills and knowledge from other disciplines.

Also included is the Midway Scholars program which enrolls transfer students into a program where students complete honors courses, a research course, and complete a thesis. These students take honors-enriched courses in their field while completing other Honors College requirements that challenge them to think critically.

The next program to get its start at the Honors College is the Honors-in Discipline program which provides honors coursework and a thesis in the discipline (major) of the

student.

Various departments and disciplines across campus had already established their own honors-in-discipline programs, but these were spread across the different departments. Soon after its advent in 2005, these programs were consolidated under the Honors College, and each department that participated formed a HID coordinator to facilitate interaction between HID students and the Honors College.

It was soon discovered that there was a need for another focused program at the Honors College and so the Fine and Performing Arts program, which is an honors enriched curriculum that focuses on the fine and performing arts and conclude with a thesis was created to fill this void. The FPA program focuses on interdisciplinary artistic endeavors among its scholars while allowing students to peruse their own specific artistic talent. Students in the FPA program have a wide range of disciplines ranging from music, acting, set design, to animation, sculpting, and creative writing.

Through its programs the Honors College seeks to “promote and support ambitious academic objectives for talented and motivated undergraduate students as well as innovative teaching and mentoring by our faculty.” It accomplishes this goal through the various academic programs that it administers.

More support comes from the cohort style that is present in the UHS, Midway, and FPA program. Not only do students work through their curriculum with the support of their classmates, but thanks to a partnership with the Department of Housing and Residence Life, students have the option of living with their fellow honors colleagues. These “Living-Learning Communities” are designed to give specialized support and guidance to support the needs of Honors College students.

Currently four of these communities exist in Governors Hall, Centennial Hall, Davis Apartments, and Buccaneer Ridge.

Since its inception the Honors College has focused on providing unparalleled academic and support programs to the students that it serves. Across all academic programs (UHS, Midway, FPA, & HID), the Honors College has a retention rate of 89.6%. Compare that to a retention rate of 69.3% for the university overall and 77.1% for the national average retention rate and you can see the effects of the outstanding programs at the Honors College. It is apparent that students are receiving and are receptive to the high quality of programs available through the Honors College.

So what do students do with the instruction they receive from the Honors College? 52% of the graduates from the Honors College go on to attend graduate or professional school. They have been accepted into such institutions as East Tennessee State University, Drexel, Harvard, Vanderbilt, The University of Florida, The University of Georgia, The University of Texas, The University of Tennessee, The University of Limerick, and the Savannah College of Art and Design, just to name a few. 38% of the graduates from the Honors College go directly into the workforce.

Since 2005, the Honors College has provided hundreds of students the guidance and support that they need in order to go above and beyond their academic potential. The Honors College provides the care that students need in order to excel and to find their passion.

It takes the work of many people, in front of, and behind the scenes to make the Honors College what it is. It is a labor of love and passion for all of the people who have had the pleasure of working with the Honors College.

---

Editors:

David Floyd  
Laura Traister

Writers:

Wesley Harris

Layout Artists:

Grady Saunders