

# Honors & Scholars

## 2014-2015 Report



Riding on elephants on the other side of the world; helping build houses for the homeless; making a live radio debut; touring hospitals, labs and health clinics and conducting and presenting scholarly research—those are just a few of the experiences the AC Honors Program has provided to students this year.



During the 2014-2015 school year, the program helped students explore the meaning of service through community and campus-wide projects; expand their cultural awareness and global competency through travel; experience enriched educational activities in interactive smaller class settings; enhance their knowledge

and academic achievements through specialized research projects and build life-long friendships.

This report provides a summary of the programs, activities and achievements during the past year; pertinent data; an overview of the program organization and program goals for the upcoming school year.

### AC Honors Program History & Background

Established in 1988, under the direction of Gene Byrd and Dwight Huber, the AC Honors Program is an enriched academic environment for students of high ability, regardless of major, who are interested in taking advantage of educational and intellectual opportunities and challenges. Beyond the classroom, the Program's extracurricular opportunities include concerts, plays, lectures and off-campus excursions that foster cultural enrichment, friendship, and learning.

- Dr. Dwight Huber served as Honors Program Coordinator from 1988 – 1994
- Professor Carol Nicklaus served as Honors Program Coordinator 1994 – 2002
- Professor Judy Carter served as Honors Program Coordinator from 2002 to 2015
- Professor Jill Gibson has served as Honors Program Co-Coordinator from 2013 to present
- Professor Lesley Ingham has served as Honors Program Co-Coordinator from 2014 to present.



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"I am grateful for the opportunities I have had through the Amarillo College Presidential Scholars Program. From international travel to academic rigor, the experiences I have had at AC have shaped the past two years of my life.

Without a doubt, the Presidential Scholars program at AC has been academically challenging. But the challenge has not been without accomplishment. In Scholars Speech, I spoke on the radio station. For Texas Government, I participated in creating a commercial. Through Art History, I ran an event for the Amarillo Museum of Art. Finally, in World Literature, I worked with classmates to make a parody video. Outside of these classes, I have spoken to civic groups in both Amarillo and Canyon, as well as met some incredible people. In short, the classes I have taken have not only been a part of my education, but have also inspired me to learn beyond the classroom.

Through the Presidential Scholars program, I have grown personally and academically. I experienced a completely different way of life in the international world, as well as received hands-on experience in a variety of subjects in the educational world. These experiences have given me a foundation to build on for the rest of my life."

--Jack Truelock  
Engineering Major  
Spring 2015 graduate

In Fall 2011, AC expanded the program into two tiers: Honors courses and the Presidential Scholar Program.

Honors courses in high-demand subjects provide smaller classes featuring increased interactivity, engagement and challenge for academically prepared students. The Presidential Scholar Program offers a learning community that gives high achieving and motivated students the opportunity to participate in student-centered learning experiences that promote intellectual growth, cultural appreciation, professional focus, leadership development, and civic participation. The Program challenges students to better themselves and society through exposure to a wide spectrum of courses and co-curricular learning experiences.

Both Honors classes and the Scholars Program provide intellectual exploration through small, stimulating classes, taught by faculty who employ innovative teaching methods.

### Presidential Scholars

Presidential Scholars serves 30 students each semester. Prospective Scholars submit

an application, transcript, and essay, and complete an interview with the Honors Program Coordinators.

The Presidential Scholar Program is a learning community. In addition to their major course work, Scholars take these required courses, which comprise part of the required General Education Core for all transfer majors:

SPCH 1315 PSH Public Speaking  
ARTS 1304 PSH Art History,  
Renaissance to Modern  
GOVT 2306 PSH Texas Government  
ENGL 2332 PSH World Literature  
EDUC 1100 PSH Honors Seminar  
HONRS 1011 PSH Honors Seminar II  
HONRS 1012 PSH Honors Seminar III

### Benefits to Scholars

- Scholars receive a scholarship of \$300 for each of the four semesters they participate. Combined with other AC Foundation scholarships, this package usually covers all tuition and fees.
- First year students (approximately 15) receive a virtually full scholarship for international travel (students contribute \$500 and pay for their passports).
- Scholars receive an iPad, or

Scholars  
volunteering  
for Habitat for  
Humanity



fully participate in the Program. Upon graduation, students who complete the Scholars Program, keep the iPad.

- Completing the Presidential Scholar Program is recognized by special notation on the student's permanent transcript.
- Completion of the Presidential Scholar Program often allows transferring students benefits of scholarships, membership in the university honors program, early registration, and/or acceptance in honors dorms. The Program co-coordinators and Bob Austin are currently working towards securing agreements with the top five transfer universities guaranteeing admittance and scholarships equal to those awarded incoming freshmen.

### How Scholars Benefit AC

- Scholars assist with marketing the College through presentations and participation in community activities.
- The Scholar Program allows AC to provide exceptional students with transformative educational experiences at minimal cost; thus, boosting AC's image amongst gifted students.
- The Scholars increase AC's completion rates and performance standards since nearly all Scholars complete degrees, successfully transfer and consistently earn high grades.

### Scholars Service & Activities

The Presidential Scholars provide service both to the college and to the larger community.

Scholars are encouraged to fully participate with campus life activities and to join and be involved with clubs related to individual majors or interests. Examples include serving as "cleanup crew" at Fall Fest, assisting with the Common Reader programs, and presenting at orientation meetings.

Community and College service has included acting as hosts for the Creative Mind Series

Scholars presenting at Downtown Lions Club



and AMoA events, presenting programs at elementary and middle schools and working with students in after school programs. The Scholars also present at all local high schools at least once a year and serve as presenters at numerous civic meetings. These students have served on several campus pilot programs and are often called on to speak before the Board of Regents and the Amarillo College Foundation.

The Scholars Program also emphasizes the importance of arts and culture and gives students the background and opportunity to attend art exhibits, music and theatre performances. Along with providing numerous free tickets to local cultural events, particularly the Amarillo Opera, the Program also takes students on a two-day excursion to a major metropolitan area each Fall semester. During the Fall excursion, Scholars tour art museums and attend a live performance, such as a symphony.

The final component of the Scholars Program is the bonding aspect derived from the learning community structure. To bolster this sense of belonging, the Scholars participate in several

organized social events each semester.

### 2014/2015 Scholars Activities High School Recruiting/ Community Outreach

- Common Reader Book Community Leader discussion Luncheons Sept. 11 and 18
- Dumas College Fair Sept. 22
- Canyon Lions Club Presentation Oct. 15, 2014
- Presentation to Amarillo High Seniors Oct. 16
- Presentation to Tascosa Seniors Oct. 30, 2014
- Presentations to Caprock AP English students (8 classes) Oct. 28, 2014
- Counselors Round up Presentations Nov. 6 2014
- Presentations to Palo Duro AP English classes Nov. 10, 2014
- Presentation to family of Scholars traveling to Nepal and India Nov. 12
- Presentations at Randall English AP classes Dec. 8, 2014
- Future Ready College & Career Fair January 27
- Bivins Elementary February 6, 2015
- Leadership Luncheon Feb. 19, 2015
- Community Leader/Donor Travel Dinner Feb. 26
- Avondale Elementary February 27, 2015
- Tascosa College Fair March 24
- Caprock College Fair March 25



Scholars enjoying Palo Duro Canyon hike

- AMoA Ladd Lecture
- Les Miserables
- Band of Horses Opera
- Musica Variada Performance
- Pagliacci Opera
- As You Like It, AC Theatre
- Dracula, Lone Star Ballet
- Amahl and the Night Visitors

### **Social Events**

- June Jazz Picnic
- Honors Program Potluck
- Game Night
- Painting Night
- Canyon Hike
- Park Picnic/Outdoor Bash
- PSH Banquet

### **Common Reader Author Visit**

Ushering/Assistance Nov. 11

- Amarillo Area Foundation Meeting Jan 20
- Honors Expo Dec. 3 & 4; May 6, 7
- AC Foundation Board Presentation August and February meetings
- Distinguished Lecture Ushering/Assistance Feb. 24
- India/Nepal Campus Travel Presentation February 28
- Creative Minds Humanities Lecture Series Ushering/Presenter Dinner Assistance, March 3, 4, 5 2015
- Represented AC at UT Harrington Fellows April 7
- Spring into Honors Recruiting/Information Event April 23
- AC Commercial Shoot April 14
- Badgerama Booth April 23
- Sigma Kappa Delta Poetry Slam
- Habitat for Humanity help with 5K Family Fun Run Oct. 18
- Habitat for Humanity volunteers Nov. 15
- Habitat for Humanity volunteers April 18
- High Plains Food Bank Garden volunteers April 28

### **Cultural Events**

- Fall Excursion, Dallas Symphony, Dallas Museum of Art, Nasher Sculpture Museum

### **Scholars Success Measures**

Presidential Scholars consistently maintain high GPAs and graduate from AC within three years of matriculation. Many complete AC degrees in just one year.

### **Completion & GPA Statistics**

- 22 started PSH in FA 2012, of these, 20 (90.9%) graduated by SP 2015 (within three years of entry). The two who have not graduated are still attending AC.
- 19 started PSH in FA 2013, of these, 11 graduated by SP 2015 (within two years of entry) and 6 are still attending AC, which is a success rate of 89.47%.
- 21 started PSH in FA 2014, of these, 2 graduated by SP 2015 (within one year of entry) and one transferred with plans to complete AC degree through a reverse transfer. The rest are still participating in Scholars and attending AC.
- The average cumulative GPA of PSH graduates is 3.7.

“The time and investment that AC has put into my life and education is priceless. The last two years have been filled with so many amazing friendships, experiences and opportunities that have created so many memories. Looking back on the investment AC has made in my life makes me sad to leave, but I look forward to taking the things I’ve learned at AC and using them to make the world a better place.”

--Hannah Lang, Spring 2015 graduate



### HONORS BIOLOGY CLASS SEES SCIENCE IN ACTION

This year Honors Biology I for Majors taught by Susan Burgoon took a field trip to the BSA Hospital clinical laboratory. Here are some students' comments about the visit:

"Wow, where to begin? My favorite thing was the robotic testing machine. It took up almost the entire lab! I also found the microlab fascinating. I learned that what we do in class will be what we do in the 'real' world. Everything we do in class was put into action on a daily basis here."  
Katie Hack

"I've never been in a setting like the blood lab at BSA. It was fascinating to see all of the high-tech machinery performing tests on the countless vials of blood. I learned that there are many roles that lab technicians and other scientists must perform in testing blood. The blood lab seemed like a fascinating place to work. I personally appreciated realizing that there are so many ways to diagnose diseases and that by testing at the molecular level we can hopefully find the root cause of those diseases. This knowledge will help prepare me for a successful career in allied health."  
Lauren Coward

"I learned all sorts of new and interesting information, especially about blood samples and bacteria. I have been in the hospital numerous times and have had blood drawn numerous times and never understood the process until now. Technology plays a major part in the lab—even more than I imagined."  
Niki Brown

### AC Honors Courses

Honors Courses are offered by specific departments. These are single course offerings with no obligation to take other Honors courses. The goal is to provide an expanded menu of choices for AC's best and brightest students. Honors sections are offered for courses that are traditionally required for most majors in the general education core.

Faculty wishing to develop an Honors section make formal application to the Honors Program coordinators. The coordinators grant permission based on the feasibility of the course succeeding and the service learning component or exceptional enrichment offered.

Honors classes are capped at 20. There may be as many courses as departments wish to offer. The goal of the College is to eventually offer Honors courses to more than 300 students each year. Honors courses are only offered in subjects with at least ten course sections. Upon consultation with the program coordinators, departments with more limited offerings use combined Honors/standard courses or Honors contracts to increase the number of opportunities.

Students with GPAs of 3.0, or better, automatically qualify to

self-enroll in Honors courses. Incoming high school students may be admitted with a high school average of 90 or better. Any adviser/counselor or the Honors Program coordinators may clear these students to enroll. According to the AC registrar's office, approximately 1,500 students earn at least a 3.0.

In addition to completing enriched activities in Honors classes, students will present the culmination of their enrichment project during Honors Expo. Honors students are also eligible to join the Global Educational Travel Program. In 2015, Honors students traveled to Italy.

### Honors Courses Offered

Fall 2014:

- American Music
- Biology
- History of the US I
- First Year Seminar
- General Psychology
- Microbiology
- Public Speaking
- English Comp. I
- Business and Prof. Speaking
- Interpersonal Communication

Spring 2015:

- English Composition II
- First Year Seminar
- General Psychology
- Intro to Humanities
- Public Speaking
- Business and Prof. Speaking
- Interpersonal Communication



Students present at Honors Expo December 2014

### Honors Grade Distribution

During the past three years, over 90% of students in Honors courses have achieved course success (grades A-C and P)

### Honors Persistence

Statistics show that taking Honors courses improves retention. The Institutional Research Department found that of the students who took an Honors course in either Fall 2011, Fall 2012, or Fall 2013, 89% returned the following spring semester.

Honors Public Speaking students broadcasting live on FM90 for Honors Week



### Honors Course Enrollment

Course and Section	Enrollment	Course and Section	Enrollment
BIOL-2401-H	13	BIOL-2402-H	16
BIOL-2421-H	14	EDUC-1100-PSH	17
EDUC-1100-PSH	2	ENGL-1302-H	15
EDUC-1200-PSH	18	ENGL-2332-PSH	16
EDUC-1300-H	20	GOVT-2306-PSH	16
ENGL-1301-H	15	HIST-1302-H	4
ENGL-1302-H	11	HONR-1012-PSH	5
GOVT-2306-H	11	HUMA-1302-H	6
HONR-1011-PSH	12	MUSI-1310-H	10
HUMA-1301-H	6	PSYC-2301-H	5
HUMA-1315-PSH	16	SPCH-1315-H	4
MATH-1314-H	18	SPCH-1318-H	8
MUSI-1310-H	12	SPCH-1321-H	9
PSYC-2301-H	13		
SPCH-1315-H	14		
SPCH-1315-PSH	16		
SPCH-1321-H	4		
<b>2012 FA Total Enrollment</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>2013 SP Total Enrollment</b>	<b>131</b>

2013FA		2014SP	
Course and Section	Enrollment	Course and Section	Enrollment
BIOL-1408-H	4	BIOL-1408-000H	6
BIOL-2401-H	15	BIOL-1411-000H	5
BIOL-2421-H	14	EDUC-1100-PSH	15
EDUC-1200-PSH	19	ENGL-2332-PSH	15
EDUC-1300-H	15	GOVT-2306-PSH	14
ENGL-1301-H	14	GOVT-2306-PSH2	1
ENGL-1302-H	9	HONR-1012-PSH	8
GOVT-2306-H	11	HONR-1013-000H	11
HIST-1301-H	5	HONR-1013-001H	11
HONR-1011-PSH	11	HUMA-1301-000H	6
HUMA-1301-H	8	HUMA-1315-000H	5
HUMA-1315-PSH	15	MATH-1314-000H	11
HUMA-1315-PSH2	2	PSYC-2301-000H	7
MATH-1314-H	15	SPCH-1315-000H	8
PSYC-2301-H	20	SPCH-1318-000H	6
SPCH-1315-H	11	SPCH-1321-000H	5
SPCH-1315-PSH	18		
SPCH-1318-H	10		
SPCH-1321-H	9		
<b>2013 FA Total Enrollment</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>2014 SP Total Enrollment</b>	<b>134</b>

2014FA		2015SP	
Course and Section	Enrollment	Course and Section	Enrollment
ARTS-1304-PSH	10	BIOL-1411-000H	8
BIOL-1406-000H	20	EDUC-1100-PSH	20
BIOL-2420-000H	15	EDUC-1300-000H	5
EDUC-1200-PSH	22	ENGL-1301-000H	8
EDUC-1300-000H	18	ENGL-1302-000H	11
ENGL-1301-000H	10	ENGL-2332-PSH	11
ENGL-1302-000H	5	GOVT-2306-PSH	18
GOVT-2306-000H	10	HONR-1012-PSH	7
HIST-1302-000H	3	HONR-1013-000H	18
HONR-1011-PSH	7	HUMA-1301-000H	8
HUMA-1301-000H	5	MUSI-1310-000H	4
MATH-1314-000H	20	PSYC-2301-000H	12
PSYC-2301-000H	16	SPCH-1315-000H	9
SPCH-1315-000H	13	SPCH-1318-000H	8
SPCH-1315-PSH	19	SPCH-1321-000H	3
SPCH-1318-000H	11		
SPCH-1321-000H	7		
<b>2014 FA Total Enrollment</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>2015 SP Total Enrollment</b>	<b>150</b>

### Benefits of Honors Classes

- Honors classes provide intellectual exploration through small, stimulating classes, taught by faculty who employ innovative teaching methods.
- Honors classes challenge motivated students to better themselves and society through exposure to a wide spectrum of courses and co-curricular learning experiences.
- Additionally, these students benefit by becoming immersed in service learning or exceptional enrichment opportunities.
- Honors courses are noted with an “H” on the student’s transcript.
- Currently, the first 200 students to enroll in an Honors course participate in a drawing for an iPad Mini.
- Completion of Honors courses often places transferring students in a better position to receive university scholarships.
- Honors students find themselves in class with like-minded serious students. This atmosphere encourages students to stay in school and complete degrees.
- Honors students are more likely to earn high grades and complete degrees.

## Honors Persistence

Fall to Spring Persistence (Includes Fall 2011, 2012, 2013)			
Course	Enrolled	Not Enrolled	Grand Total
BCIS 1305 H	5	3	8
BIOL 1408 H	4	1	5
BIOL 2401 H	43	10	53
BIOL 2421 H	40	6	46
EDUC 1100 PSH	28	3	31
EDUC 1200 PSH	36	2	38
EDUC 1300 H	33	3	36
ENGL 1301 H	27	4	31
ENGL 1302 H	19	4	23
GOVT 2306 H	24	2	26
HIST 1301 H	14	3	17
HONR 1011 PSH	21	2	23
HUMA 1301 H	13	2	15
HUMA 1315 PSH	47	4	51
HUMA 1315 PSH2	2		2
MATH 1314 H	33	4	37
MUSI 1310 H	19	3	22
PSYC 2301 H	42	7	49
SPCH 1315 H	24	2	26
SPCH 1315 PSH	51	3	54
SPCH 1318 H	21	2	23
SPCH 1321 H	13		13
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>629</b>

## Honors Grade Distribution

2012 FA	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D	Grade F	Grade P
Total # Each Grade	125	47	17	7	7	12
% of Total Grades	58%	22%	8%	3%	3%	6%

2013 SP	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D	Grade F	Grade P
Total # Each Grade	89	26	6	2	3	5
% of Total Grades	68%	20%	5%	2%	2%	4%

2013 FA	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D	Grade F	Grade P
Total # Each Grade	143	40	14	6	11	11
% of Total Grades	64%	18%	6%	3%	5%	5%

2014 SP	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D	Grade F	Grade P
Total # Each Grade	85	12	2	0	5	30
% of Total Grades	63%	9%	1%	0%	4%	22%

2014 FA	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D	Grade F	Grade S
Total # Each Grade	152	31	16	4	1	7
% of Total Grades	72%	15%	8%	2%	0%	3%

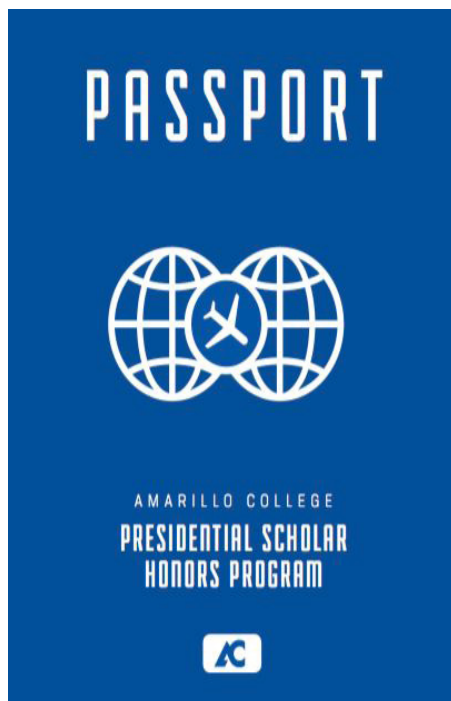
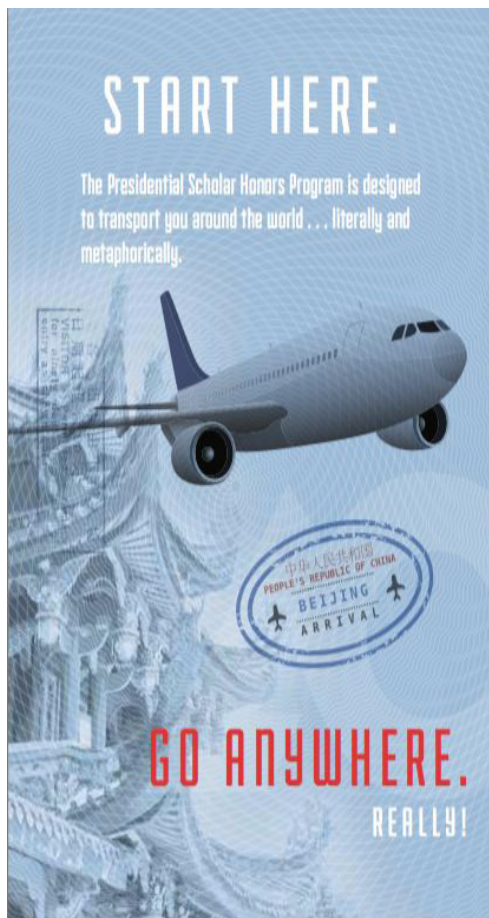
2015 SP	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade F	Grade P
Total # Each Grade	91	22	7	5	25
% of Total Grades	61%	15%	5%	3%	17%

## Honors/Scholars Marketing/Promotions

Promoting Honors classes and the Scholars program helps recruit new students and reinforces the image of Amarillo College as an educational destination for exceptional students. Promotional activities during the 2014-2015 school year have included:

- Growing the AC Honors Facebook to 348 friends with several posts reaching more than two thousand people (<https://www.facebook.com/achonors>)
- Creating a blog, the AC Honors Update, which has 19 posts and has garnered 1,086 views and since August 2014 (<https://achonors.wordpress.com/>)
- Revamping and updating the Honors/Scholars website ([www.actx.edu/Honors](http://www.actx.edu/Honors))
- Creating new Scholars brochures that have a passport theme and emphasize the incentive of international travel
- Creating Honors class cards that promote Honors course offerings using the “smart cookies” theme
- Implementing and advertising a drawing for cash prizes and mini-iPads to encourage students to enroll in Honors courses
- Creating and sending out “all-student” emails several times during the year to inform students of Honors opportunities
- Producing promotional videos, which were shared online and in presentations:
  - Why Apply for AC Presidential Scholars: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdNM4lAqC48>
  - The AC Honors Program: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AJ6Um4tIk4>
  - AC Honors Potluck Fall 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsIpHasDWdo>
  - AC Presidential Scholars Seminar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAmj-q-xXPSA>
  - Travel abroad renews gratitude; sparks desire to serve: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19z0b18VJ-k>
  - Lessons from Nepal: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXbrfdQxMQo>
  - Scholars Travel Reflections: India and Nepal: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLnN3K4ggzE>
  - Scholars Travel Reflections: Cambodia: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0-RevaDPhE>
  - AC Student Trip to Italy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86LKEUEFUJU>
  - Honors Week 2015 on FM90: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjqc4-PCAJs>
  - Student Research Presentations
    - Hannah Lang: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiQ\\_zBOUQNE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiQ_zBOUQNE)
    - David Do: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXO7U5BLVwQ>
    - Christian Filsof: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shfMKbZHt9s>
    - Jenna Hooten: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_a2F\\_C1Jlw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_a2F_C1Jlw)
    - Samson Wood: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Gi7Rgex5E8>
  - Common Reader Wrap-up on FM90/Presidential Scholars discuss the Common Reader:
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaEh4f2AFBg>
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARZMi8Rj2jQ>
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvsh4r8InPg>
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SX16saPGhRQ>
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jas85W0fCwU>
  - AC Presidential Scholars Year in Review: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3g8SvP8878s>

- Responding to requests for interviews with local/college media, which generated the following articles:
  - Cambodia trip gives Amarillo College students new perspective, Globe News <http://amarillo.com/news/local-news/2014-06-05/cambodia-trip-gives-amarillo-college-students-new-perspective>
  - Amarillo natives help earthquake ravaged Nepal, Globe News <http://amarillo.com/news/local-news/2015-05-15/amarillo-natives-help-earthquake-ravaged-nepal>
  - Amarillo College starts educational forest fire, column written by Scholar graduate, Globe News <http://amarillo.com/opinion/letters-editor/2014-04-12/silva-amarillo-college-starts-education-forest-fire>
  - 2016 global travel destinations revealed, The Ranger <http://amarillocollege.info/2016-global-travel-destinations-revealed/>
  - Honors, Presidential Scholars provide motivation and opportunity for students, column written by Presidential Scholar, The Ranger <http://amarillocollege.info/honors-presidential-scholars-provide-motivation-opportunities-for-students/>
  - A glimpse into Honors classes, column written by Presidential Scholar, The Ranger, <http://amarillocollege.info/a-glimpse-into-honors-classes/>
  - Global travelers return from Italy, The Ranger, <http://amarillocollege.info/global-travelers-return-from-italy/>
  - India and Nepal, faculty impacted by people abroad, The Ranger <http://amarillocollege.info/india-and-nepal-faculty-impacted-by-people-abroad/>
  - Scholars go global for Christmas, The Ranger <http://amarillocollege.info/scholars-go-global-for-christmas/>
  - Travel program enters 2nd year, The Ranger <http://amarillocollege.info/travel-program-enters-2nd-year/>
  - Oh the places you'll go; AC students travel the world, The Ranger <http://amarillocollege.info/oh-the-places-youll-go-ac-students-travel-the-world/>
- Creating and printing special travel newsletter for community leader dinner.





## Travel Reflections

Each Scholars trip features a significant service component. In Cambodia, students helped prepare water filtration units. In Nepal, students worked on an organic farm. Here's what some of them had to say about the travel experience:

"To me this trip has reaffirmed the value of service and connecting with those who are different than us. I am continuously thankful for this opportunity. I hope to use this opportunity to encourage myself to actively seek a life of service and impact." Abbie Biggers, biology major

"I would have never believed how much of an impression those eight days would have on me. I see the world through a different light, a different perspective, and I love it. This trip showed me I can stretch my dreams a little further than I once thought." Payton Julian, speech major

"It's just so important to see that our culture isn't the only culture and our way of living isn't the only way of living. And to see what we can do to help others has been phenomenal." Micayla Hudson, education major

"I have learned to really appreciate what we have. Many Cambodians don't have clean water... they have to work in the fields every day... they aren't educated... appreciate everything." Jeanette Camarena, nursing major

"I've learned so much more than I could have imagined from traveling. One's mindset changes in so many positive ways. It has been a life-changing journey that I'll forever cherish." Valeria Gonzalez, nursing major

"The biggest things that I took away from this trip were the importance of building relationships with those around us as well as the best way to change the world. Born and raised in Dumas, Texas and I knew that--that's it. I'd never seen a lot of our own country, another country or even the ocean. The true impact lies in what we brought back with us." Jordan Morris, engineering major

## Global Competency Educational Travel Program

"It is better to travel 10,000 miles than to read 10,000 books."

--Confucius 551-479BC

At Amarillo College, students can truly "Start Here, Go Anywhere." A global experience is a crucial part of a well-rounded undergraduate education as noted by First Lady Michelle Obama in a CNN interview March 24, 2014:

"The benefits of study abroad are almost endless. First of all, it's going to make you much more marketable here in the United States, because more and more companies are realizing that they need people with experiences around the world ... who can transition easily into other cultures and people who bring to their jobs a sensibility and a sensitivity for other people. It will also make you more compassionate.

We could always use more compassionate, young leaders out there in the world, people who are willing to step outside their comfort zones and be open to wiping away misconceptions. Especially for U.S. students, it's very hard to stay in your comfort zone when you're living in another country. When you're struggling with a language, new foods, learning directions, being forced to make friends and do things that you wouldn't normally

do, that's going to set you up for a lifetime of value. It's going to make you a better parent. It's going to make you a better human being."

## Presidential Scholar Travel

The Presidential Scholar Program offers an international travel experience for every first-year Scholar. A significant Scholars Travel award ensures the Scholars pay only \$500 for the excursion. Scholars are responsible for obtaining passports and completing all necessary paperwork and forms.

A semester of historical, political and cultural study precedes each excursion. Following immersion within a new culture, students have the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned and to share their experiences through presentations at AC, area high schools, and in numerous civic venues.

Presidential Scholar Travel destinations have included:

- London/Stratford, 2009
- Washington DC, 2010
- London/ Literary Figures of the Lake District, 2011
- New York, 2012 – based on Common Reader *Incredibly Loud and Extremely Close*
- China, 2013 – based on *Common Reader The Worst Hard Times* (China was alternative to the sands of Egypt due to political unrest)



- Cambodia, 2014 – based on Common Reader *Wine to Water*
- Nepal & India, 2015 – based on Common Reader *Blue Hole Back Home*
- Lithuania & Poland 2016 – based on Common Reader *Between Shades of Gray*.

### Learning Service

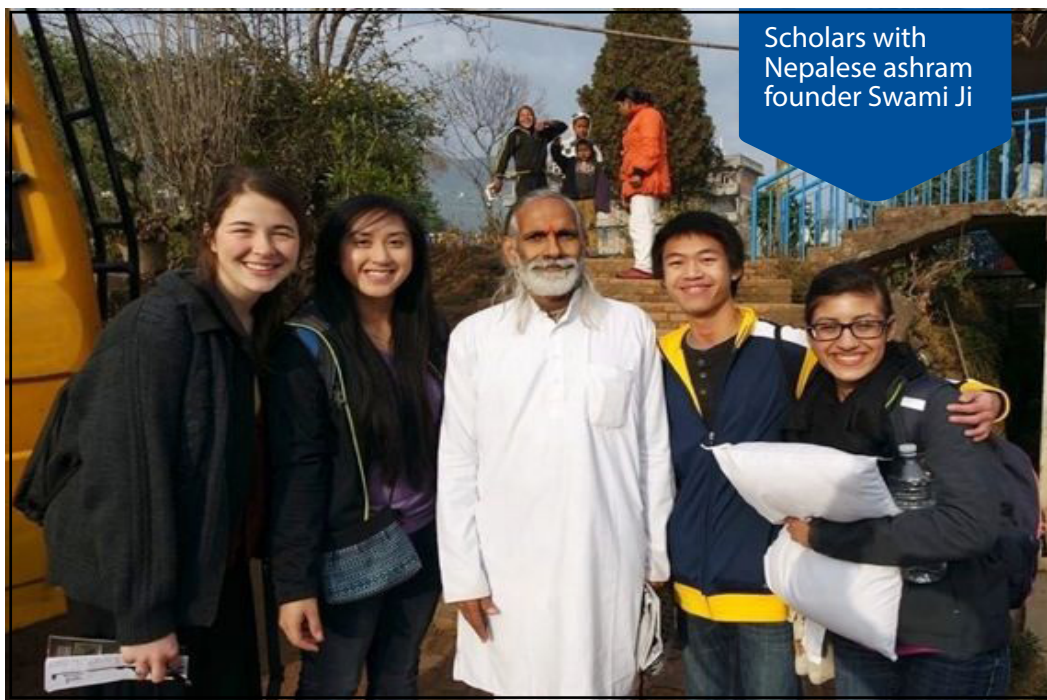
Important facets of Presidential Scholar travel are to incorporate both the study of literature and culture prior to the trip and elements of service during the cultural exchange. In 2014, AC students began working with the educational travel organization PEPY Tours. PEPY's purpose is to change the way people give, travel and live by helping students explore the themes of social enterprise, development, service and global citizenship, as well as contemporary issues facing the countries in which we travel.

PEPY Tours is a proponent of *Learning Service*. PEPY taught the Scholars that in order to effectively and responsibly volunteer, they must first learn extensively about a new culture, including development issues, about compassion, and most importantly about how to give service. PEPY creates responsible travel experiences that integrate visiting cultural attractions with cultural immersion in experiential learning opportunities. Students are offered a chance to learn from the people and programs in a way that inspires them to live, travel, give more responsibly, as well as realize their own potential to create positive change at home.

### Student Life/Honors Program Travel

In 2014, the Honors Program partnered with Student Life, expanding global travel opportunities to virtually any student at AC enrolled during the travel year. As with the Scholar program, students traveling with Student Life/Honors engage in research prior to the trip and earn a Global Competency Certification from the Honors Program. Student Life/Honors travel occurs each year during Spring Break and is led by AC faculty:

- Germany, 2014 – Mike Haynes Journalism, Angie Ross Nursing, Mark Shadix Chemistry
- Italy, 2015 – Susan Burgoon Biology, Steve Cost Art History, Ray Newburg Theatre/History
- London/Paris 2016 – Jim Laughlin Music, Frank Sobey English



Scholars with Nepalese ashram founder Swami Ji

### Students React to 2015 Italy Trip

“We left as strangers and came back as family. We saw some of the most beautiful creations in the world, whether manmade or otherwise. It’s a journey I’ll never forget.”  
--Wes Hawkins, history major

“AC students should travel because it broadens their horizons. They end up finding a new side of themselves, get to experience something different. Home is always good, but experiencing the big world we live in is an invaluable opportunity.”  
--Andrew Alexander, mass media major

“I learned that the world really is accessible, that you can reach out and touch actual history and that art means something important to the world. I also learned that gelato is pretty freakin’ delicious.”  
--Karly McCutchan, graphic design major

“I find it incredibly interesting to think that the people in Italy will continue to live their lives like we were never there. The experience inspired me to make an impact on the world beyond my own little bubble.”  
--Kyle Freeman, biology major

## Reflections on the Research Project Experience

by Jeanette Camerena, nursing major

Never have I ever performed research like I did for the Presidential Scholars Program. When this assignment was first introduced to me, I felt like I was being confronted with an impossible task! This type of research was something different than what I had ever done before. Fortunately, the help and support I needed was within my reach.

To conduct this research and start the assignment I first needed to decide what I wanted to focus on and then search for peer reviewed literature. The topic I ended up choosing had to do with possible interactions between the electromagnetic waves that a phone emits and the normal heart function. The reason I chose this topic is because I felt like this would be an important topic that would involve everyone who carries around a cellphone—basically most of the population. I feel great concern for our population's health because I feel like technology could possibly be causing us bodily harm.

I asked my Anatomy and Physiology professor, Dr. Pendleton, if she could be my mentor and push me in the right direction. Thankfully she agreed and was of great help and support. Through her sharing her graduate research experience with me, I was able to break down the process so that it was not so overwhelming. She showed me various tools that helped me look for proper studies and helped organize my findings. Every two weeks or so I would check back in with her and show her what I had done so far.

After reviewing several studies and after many revisions, my final paper and presentation came together. I was able to present it at the Honors Expo, again during class, and finally at WT's Student Research Conference. I learned so much from this experience and I am thankful that I had the opportunity to participate at this event. It served to expand my research abilities and to start preparing me for when I do conduct graduate level research. Through this assignment, I have discovered that I have some passion for researching things that really interest me and that involve medical related issues. This lets me know that I am in fact pursuing a career that I will love and that will give me the satisfaction I seek.

## Academic Research

Another goal of the AC Honors program is to promote undergraduate research. This initiative began with the Presidential Scholars but the co-coordinators plan to expand this research emphasis to include other Honors students and the college as a whole. This year, the Scholars were charged with proposing a research study related to their majors or career fields. They submitted proposals in the fall and then began reviewing literature, conducting research and, in some cases, even carrying out experiments. The Scholars submitted research papers to the West Texas A&M student research conference for consideration and 15 AC students presented their research at the conference alongside more than 160 graduate and undergraduate students. Carrying out the research project helped the students understand the academic research process, provided valuable experience and helped create foundational research that they can build upon as they continue their academic careers. Along with extending the research



component to additional students, future plans include hosting a research conference solely for two-year college students in the Texas Panhandle and printing a compilation of AC students' best work.

Biology major John Jackson presents at the WTAMU Research Conference



### Alignment with AC Strategic Plan

The Honors Program aligns its mission, vision, goals and action strategies with the AC Strategic Plan. Numerous statements within the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan applied directly to the Program. The tables that follow summarize how the Honors Program achieved the goals set forth in the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan and will align with the 2020 No Excuses AC Strategic Plan.



#### Achievement of 2010-2015 Strategic Plan Goals

2.4.1 President and academic leadership will expand the Honors Program

Outcome/Objective Statement : Expand the existing Honors Program of 30 students to 100 annually.

In response to this statement, the Program took the following steps:

First Step:

Create a two tier program:

Tier one: Presidential Scholars (30 students)

Tier two: Honors Program – establish honors sections in courses which have 8 – 10 regular sections scheduled during a semester

Second step:

Expand the Honors Program to include Honors Contracts

This permits Honors to be offered in courses where there are fewer than 10 sections as well as on other campuses

1.4.3.2 Student enrollment will grow to at least 100 honors students enrolled annually.

Fall and Spring 2010 enrollment was 30

Fall 2012 enrollment was 215 Spring 2013 enrollment was 131 Annual: 346

Fall 2013 enrollment was 225 Spring 2014 enrollment was 134 Annual: 359

Fall 2014 enrollment was 211 Spring 2015 enrollment was 150 Annual: 361

2,4,1,1 Appoint a task force

Spring 2008, a Focus Group was established to look at ways to make the Honors Program more visible, desirable, and accessible. Those committee members were: Lynda Barksdale, Amber Brookshire, Judy Carter, Tracy Dougherty, Monique Dupuis, Jill Gibson, Alan Kee, Carol Nicklaus, Lou Ann Seabourn, April Sessler, Joan Urban

2010: Task force members: Russell Lowery-Hart, Bob Austin, Ellen Green, Tracy Dougherty, Lou Ann Seabourn, April Sessler, Danita McAnally, Lu Lu Cowen, Judy Carter

2013 Task force members: Russell Lowery-Hart, Bob Austin, Ellen Green, Tracy Dougherty, April Sessler, Danita McAnally, Jill Gibson, Judy Carter

1.4.3.2 Articulate transfer credit into honors programs at the five top universities where AC students transfer and five targeted out-of-state universities

Memos of Articulation Agreements have been established with WTAMU, Texas Tech University, and Lubbock Christian University.

1.4.3.3 College Relations will expand the list of benefits when marketing this program.

College Relations has developed new Scholar brochures and new Honors mailing cards. College Relations has assisted with designing and posting information through email and on the Portal. College Relations has also provided “give aways” for Honors recruiting efforts.

### Amarillo College Honors Program 2020 Strategic Plan – No Excuses in Action

The Honors Program fulfills the AC mission by enriching the lives of our students and providing servant leadership for AC and the larger communities. The Program supports the college's completion mission and follows the No Excuses philosophy in all activities and endeavors. Honors and Scholars demonstrate AC's core values by consistently showing caring through providing **INNOVATIVE, FUN** options that allow high-achieving students to excel. From international travel to academic research, the Program provides a platform to show prospective students, potential donors, area educators, community leaders and other stakeholders why AC is exceptional--to make them say **WOW**. The Program creates a supportive and caring **FAMILY** atmosphere that nurtures students and gives them the tools they need to succeed as they move beyond AC. With a spirit of **YES**, the Program co-coordinators eliminate roadblocks and offer unique intellectual and co-curricular options for students who want more from their college experience—more challenges, more engagement, more opportunities, more leadership and more connections.

HONORS PROGRAM GOALS	DEFINITION	ACTION FOR IMPACT
1. Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve persistence</li> <li>• Increase completers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Comprehensive Transfer/Completion Pathways</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach a 90% Completion Rate of Presidential Scholars</li> <li>• Reach a 90% Semester-to-Semester Persistence Rate of students in Honors courses by 2020.</li> </ul>
2. Align degrees with Honors CORE courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align Presidential Scholar Learning Community with CORE requirements</li> <li>• Expand Honors offerings to include all large departments</li> </ul>	<p><b>Work closely with advisers and department chair</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training to help advisers to better understand the benefits of Honors</li> <li>• Provide outreach so Department Chairs will better understand the benefits of Honors</li> <li>• Continue and expand marketing to high school counselors and principals</li> <li>• Continue and increase recruiting within high schools</li> <li>• Create a process to address CORE requirements and Honors courses during interviews and advising for Presidential Scholars</li> </ul>
3. Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase student engagement</li> <li>• Increase student enrichment opportunities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infuse High Impact Practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance the use of learner center pedagogy</li> <li>• Increase enrichment opportunities by partnering with FM 90, AMoA, Amarillo Opera, AC Music, Theatre, Photography and Science Departments. Increase field trips, lectures, and cultural opportunities.</li> <li>• Work with Department Chairs to design more responsive and purposeful scheduling</li> <li>• Embed high impact practices across the curriculum</li> </ul>
4. Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase enrollment of sub-populations</li> <li>• Increase completion of any sub-populations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Build Systems for Equity Gains</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systemically remove fear barriers</li> <li>• Increase student-to-student mentoring efforts</li> <li>• Coordinate global travel experience for any AC student offered by partnership of Student Life and Honors Program</li> </ul>

**Specific Action Strategies for 2015-2016 School Year**

**Action Strategies for Recruitment/Outreach**

- Visit every high school in the AC district during the school year.
- Increase outreach to area high schools beyond AISD and CISD, starting with Highland Park, Bushland and River Road and expanding to visit Dumas, Borger, Hereford and Pampa high schools.
- Expand the number of college-readiness programs provided for AP classes, junior and senior classes.
- Provide information program for a larger community outreach such as to African American churches and the Amarillo Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.
- Increase the number of high school visits and community presentations by 25% over the next two years.

**Action Strategies for Marketing**

- Revive use of Honors Twitter account, start Instagram.
- Create a schedule for social media and blog posts.
- Publish a digital newsletter similar to Plugged In once a semester and distribute to high school teachers and counselors, community leaders, regents, etc. Print if funds allow.
- Obtain news coverage from local TV stations.

**Action Strategies for Scholars**

- Match each Scholar with a community and transfer university mentor.
- Revise Scholars program so second year Scholars are allowed greater scheduling flexibility needed for several majors. Second year Scholars will be required either to attend five outside events a semester or to serve as peer mentors (who attend seminar) for the first year Scholars.
- Create a Scholars Alumni Association
- Request a Scholars adviser (a common practice in many community college programs)

**Action Strategies for Honors Courses**

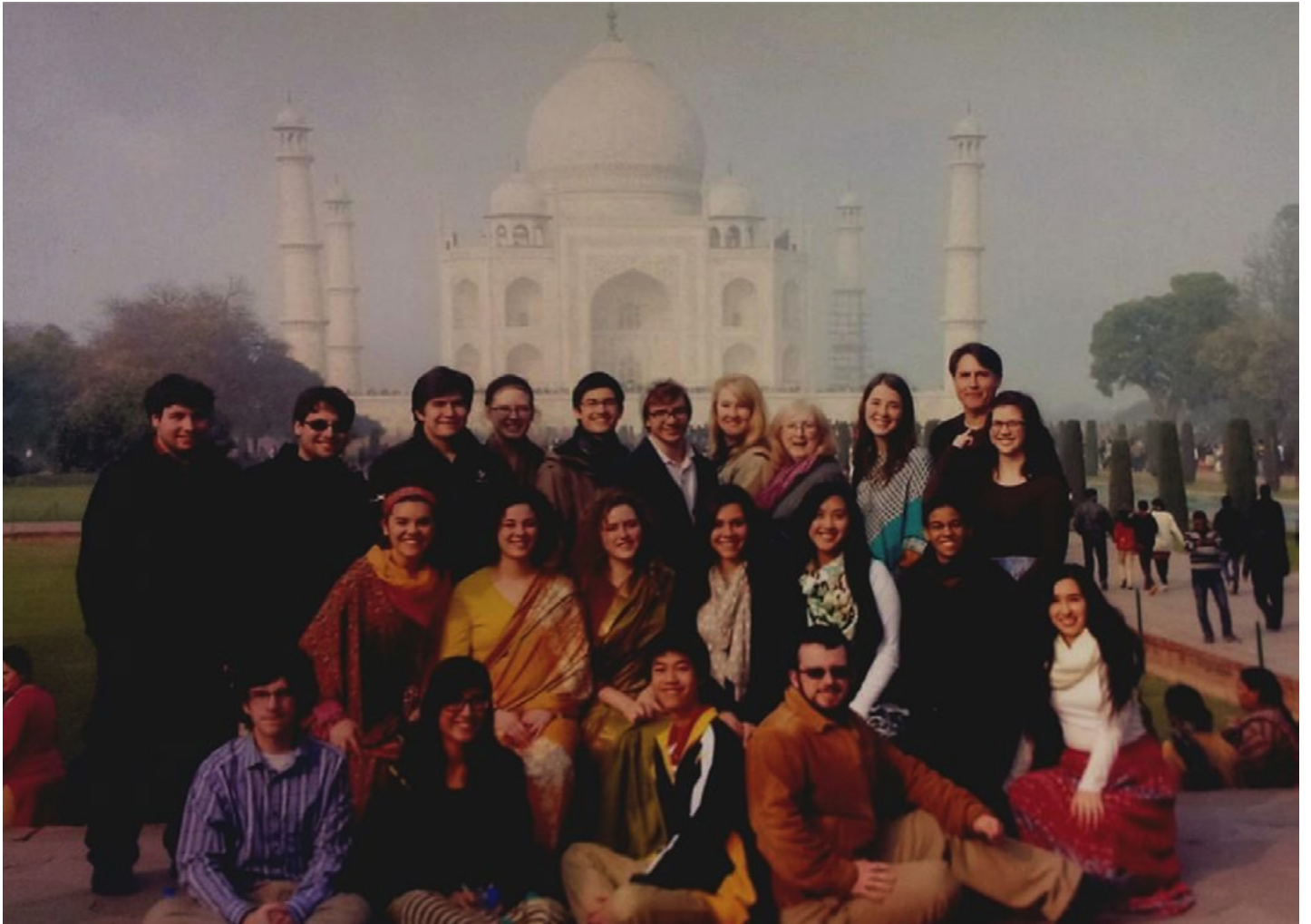
- Explore implementing an incentive in which students completing four or more Honors courses will receive a special notation on the student's life transcript.
- Propose that, upon budget approval, students taking one or more Honors courses receive a scholarship of \$100 each of the four semesters they participate. (Note: the scholarship is \$100/semester NOT per course.)
- Expand the scope of academic research project to allow students in Honors courses to participate, thus serving students beyond Scholars. Develop a process to screen research conference applicants.
- Provide additional training to Honors faculty.

**Action Strategies for Scholars Program and Honors Courses**

- Provide training for all AC advisers so they better understand the program and can recommend Honors courses appropriately and can identify prospective Scholars.
- Revamp Honors Expo to be more visible and professional; offering greater promotional opportunities while decreasing the demands upon individual Honors faculty.
- Work with Dr. Vess and Mr. Austin to expand the number of formal agreements with transfer institutions to provide transfer benefits to Scholars and Honors students.
- Publish a list of universities that offer Honors articulation agreements on the AC Honors website.
- Investigate hosting a two-year college research conference at AC prior to the WTAMU conference.
- Consider allowing a creative or performance project for certain majors in lieu of research project.
- Improve tracking of graduates.
- Create an end-of-course survey for students in Honors courses.
- Investigate options for joining national honors organizations and attending conferences.
- Create Scholars/Honors Faculty and Student Handbooks and publish them online. (Examples of handbooks: <http://valenciacollege.edu/honors/current-students/documents/Honors-Student-Handbook.pdf> <https://www.owens.edu/honors/faculty-handbook.pdf> <https://www.owens.edu/honors/student-handbook.pdf>)
- Add at least one student to the Scholars/Honors Committee and hold at least two committee meetings a year.



Business major Christian Filsouf accessorizes with local fauna while in India



Promoting registration for Honors courses



Presenting at Bivins Elementary

Traveling to Italy



Visiting the Dallas Museum of Art



Learning about service in Nepal



Broadcasting live on the radio