Recently, Professor Emeritus Dr. Gordon Kirk established a significant scholarship for incoming history majors who are members of the Centennial Honors College. The scholarship was made possible through a generous $50,000 endowment agreement (detailed below). This is not Professor Kirk’s first contribution to the Honors College.

Professor Kirk was the first director of the university wide University Honors Program (later called the Centennial Honors College). Dr. Kirk presided over the organization of the program, the establishment of the honors curriculum, and the recruitment of honors students and faculty into the university wide honors program. Early on, the program was housed on the fifth floor of the Malpass Library. Dr. Kirk is quick to give credit to his colleagues, especially Professor Sterling Kernek, a fellow history professor, who became the program’s second director. Professor Kirk grew up in Detroit, Michigan, and remains an avid Detroit Tigers fan. After completing his Ph.D. in history at Michigan State University, Professor Kirk took a professorship at St. Louis University before coming to Western Illinois University in 1972. His academic specialty is urban history using social scientific data, and he has published numerous articles, book chapters, book reviews and books. He is the author of The Promise of American Life: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century Immigrant Community, Holland, Michigan, 1847-1894 (published 1978), and co-author of Everyday Life of Working Americans: Textile Workers and Their Families, 1988-1980 (published 1989).

After serving as the first director of the University Honors Program, Professor Kirk served two stints as Chair of the History Department (1984-1986 and 1989-1999) and helped raise a number of departmental scholarships. He also earned the reputation as an outstanding classroom teacher, offering an array of survey courses, upper division classes and graduate seminars. According to his former colleague, Professor Emeritus Larry Balsamo, “Gordon Kirk was the complete package—he was a gifted scholar, a great classroom teacher, and a fine administrator.”

Professor Kirk and his wife, Carlryn Tyrin Kirk (Ph.D. from Michigan State University and a retired Professor of Sociology from Monmouth College), now reside in Chicago and enjoy reading and traveling.

Next fall the Centennial Honors College will celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the university-wide honors program. We are planning a gala celebration and will honor Professor Kirk and all the other Honors College directors who have guided our program over the past three decades. Again, we are most grateful to Professor Kirk for his significant gift and innumerable contributions to Western Illinois University.

–Rick Hardy

Dr. Hardy takes a pie for the team, the pre-law fraternity Phi Alpha Delta, helping them raise money to take a trip to Washington, D.C.
As the University moves toward Thanksgiving Break, the Honors College has much to celebrate. The past month has been marked by the wonderful achievements of Honors students, faculty, staff, and friends. This issue recognizes some of those superlative individuals who have helped make the last month a memorable one. Included are pieces on our Student of the Month, Daniel Halbe of Physics, our featured faculty member, Dr. Leslie Melim from Geography, and our featured alumnus, Dr. Ryan Gordon, as well as articles on the new Honors Mentor Program, Dr. Cynthia Struthers’s fall GH 299 course, and scholarship announcements. Director Hardy has provided a fine tribute to Dr. Gordon Kirk in his monthly column, but I would like also to commend Dr. Kirk for his remarkable generosity, both of resources and of spirit.

When I contacted him in hopes of an exclusive quote for “With Honors,” his thoughts turned immediately colleagues whose efforts he wished to celebrate. He noted, “I particularly enjoyed being the first director of the Honors Program because it allowed me to expand to make university wide the wonderful honors program Sterling Kernek started in Arts and Sciences in 1976. Sterling worked tirelessly to institute that program in 1976 and I took over as its coordinator in 1980.” As a faculty member in the Department of History, I am reminded of the vital connection between my home department and Honors here at Western Illinois University, and I am inspired by Dr. Kirk’s example and his legacy of leadership and service.

I would like to take the opportunity to recognize the outstanding work of another member of the Honors College staff, graduate student Caitlin Salmon. Since last month’s unveiling of the newsletter’s new name and masthead, a number of people have commented on our striking logo, which features the Honors College graduation medallion on its signature light blue ribbon as the second “o” in “With Honors.” That logo is Caitlin’s design, and it serves as one example of the many talents she brings to this newsletter and to the College. Thank you, Caitlin, for your dedication and hard work.

Those light blue medallions will soon be on display at December’s Commencement, and next month’s issue will put the spotlight on our graduates. I look forward to sharing their achievements with you. Best wishes for a successful and productive month!

The Honors College helped sponsor a team of WIU students to the Phi Alpha Delta National Pre-Law Honorary Society’s Mock Trial competition, held in Washington, DC.

“In daily life we must see that it is not happiness that makes us grateful, but gratefulness that makes us happy.”

Brother David Steindl-Rast
Honors Faculty Profile

The subject of this month’s Honors Faculty Profile is Professor of Geology Leslie A. Melim. Dr. Melim’s area of expertise is sedimentary geology, and her current research involves interdisciplinary collaboration with microbiologists at University of New Mexico and New Mexico Tech, to try understand how microbial communities contribute to forming minerals in cave pools, which, she notes, “is of great interest to astrobiologists trying to figure out if there is (or used to be) life on Mars and other extraterrestrial bodies.” This year marks Dr. Melim’s sixteenth at Western, following a Ph.D. in Geology at Southern Methodist University and post-doctoral work at both the University of Miami in Florida and McGill University in Montreal.

Dr. Melim teaches a number of courses for the Department of Geology, including GEOL 115 Oceanography; GEOL 113 Earth and Energy Resources, GEOL 110 Introduction to Geology, GEOL 340 Stratigraphy and Sedimentation, and GEOL 361 Field Camp. When not in the classroom or conducting research, her hobbies include horseback riding, building fine furniture, hiking, and reading science fiction and fantasy. She recently finished Intruder by C. J. Cherryh and recommends “anything by Lois McMaster Bujold.” Dr. Melim uses news apps (especially the USA Today and New York Times apps) and weather apps daily, and uses UniSudoku to relax.

In discussing her relationship with the Honors College, Dr. Melim writes, “I enjoy working with motivated students who are engaged in their own education and challenge me to push ideas. The Honors College is a natural way to work with more of these students in a smaller class setting. I first volunteered to teach a GenEd science course in 2004 and continue to do so every other year.” Dr. Melim will be offering an Honors section of GEOL 110, Introduction to the Earth, in spring 2013 (MWF, 1:00-1:50 and T, 1:00-2:50): “We will look at the earth starting with the building blocks of rocks and minerals, moving on to plate tectonics and how oceans and mountains are made, then finish looking at the processes that shape the surface of the earth we see today like rivers, glaciers, and waves.”

Honors Student of the Month

Our Honors Student of the Month is sophomore Physics major Daniel Halbe. During his time at Western, Daniel has proven himself to be a superlative student researcher. He is the recipient of a Frank E. Rodeffer Scholarship in Physics, and presentations of his research have yielded a variety of honors. Last spring Daniel won first place in the poster division at the Thomas E. Helm Undergraduate Research Day for his presentation entitled, “Characterization of Arecibo Calibrators for Observations of Galactic Sources”; he also won a poster presentation award for his division at the Illinois State Academy of Sciences Annual Meeting in Galesburg. In addition Daniel serves on the Academic Integrity Committee for the Department of Physics, as a tutor in the Physics Tutoring Center, and as a research assistant in the Astrophysics Research Laboratory.

Chairperson Mark Boley states, “Daniel is one of those unique students that only comes along once every few years, it seems. He was highly motivated to begin undergraduate research in astrophysics with Professor of Physics and Astronomy, Dr. Esteban Araya, as a freshman in physics, and had already won local and state level awards for his research presentations by the end of his freshmen year. He is a wonderful illustration of what an honors student can accomplish when becoming part of a department whose faculty highly value and promote undergraduate research, and that’s certainly the case here in Physics.”

Daniel plans to earn an integrated B.S./M.S. degree at Western, he then intends to pursue a Ph.D. in Physics or Astronomy followed by a career as a cosmologist, theoretical astrophysicist, or observational astrophysicist. In the more immediate future, Daniel will be serving as a WIU nominee for the prestigious Barry Goldwater Scholarship, awarded to undergraduate students demonstrating outstanding potential and intending to pursue careers in mathematics, the natural sciences, or engineering.

Congratulations, Daniel, on your many achievements!
Honors Alum Profile: Ryan Gordon

Our featured Honors alumnus this month is Dr. Ryan T. Gordon. Ryan majored in Physics and Mathematics at Western and graduated with a Ph.D. in Condensed Matter Physics from Iowa State University in May 2011, with areas of expertise in Superconductivity and Magnetism. Following the completion of his doctorate, Ryan spent a year doing postdoctoral work at the Université de Sherbrooke in Canada before attaining an appointment as an Assistant Professor of Physics at Western Illinois University. Ryan’s academic and professional achievements reflect excellence in both scholarship and teaching. He is the recipient of the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, a Phi Kappa Phi Scholarship, and the Outstanding Graduate Student Teacher Award at Iowa State. He was also the Invited Speaker at the 2011 American Physical Society March Meeting.

Q: How did you get involved in the Honors College, and were you an active member of SHA or any other honors societies?

RTG: My undergraduate research advisor, Dr. Mark S. Boley, strongly encouraged me to become involved with the Honors College. He stressed its importance for preparing me to go on to graduate school in physics, which I found to be quite true. While at WIU, I was a member of the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi.

Q: WIU Honors memories you would like to share?

RTG: My time spent working in the Research Laboratory of Dr. Mark S. Boley really stands out in my mind. It was there that I learned many valuable skills applicable for my future as a graduate student. Not only did I learn much about physics, but also I learned the importance of networking at research conferences and how to deliver an effective research presentation. I benefited greatly from my research experience as well as my time spent in Honors Courses as an undergraduate. Overall, I am very thankful for what WIU offered me as a student.

The Honors College is proud to announce the 2012-2013 Honors Mentors: Kayla Anderson, Zac Andrew, Liz Etta, Paris Hamm, Victoria Kappel, Shanique Ries, and Jamela Thompson. Starting this Fall, the Honors College established the Honors College Mentoring Program. This program pairs current Honors students with new members or students who strive to be a part of the Honors College. The Honors Mentors assist their Mentees by serving as a resource for them regarding Honors courses, extracurricular activities, and other concerns they may have regarding transitioning to a University and/or being a member of the Honors College. An Honors Mentor/Mentee volunteering opportunity is being planned for December. New Honors students and students who are interested in being a member of the Centennial Honors College are encouraged to register by going to the Honors Website at wiu.edu/honors. For more information regarding the Honors College Mentoring Program contact Janell McGruder at JLMcGruder@wiu.edu or call 309-298-
Scholarship News & Notices

The Honors College is delighted to announce the new Gordon Kirk Four-Year Honors History Scholarship. American History professor emeritus Dr. Gordon Kirk has established a $2,000 four-year scholarship for incoming History majors enrolled in the Centennial Honors College. Dr. Kirk was instrumental in the establishment of the University Honors Program in 1983 and served as its first director. “I think Western does well with high achieving students,” said Dr. Kirk in the University Relations press release, “and I would like to help with that.” He was the chair of the Department of History from 1984-86 and again from 1989-1999. He also served as Assistant Provost from 1986-89, and was active in the faculty union, serving as chief negotiator for two contracts, and faculty governance, serving four terms as chair of the Faculty Senate.

The Gordon Kirk Honors History Scholarship is designed for new students meeting the required ACT score (or grade point average) and class rank. The $500 annual scholarship will be renewable for up to three years, to assist history majors in the Honors Program the entire time they are at Western. Dr. Kirk noted, “I want to encourage students to see the importance of working hard to achieve an education, then putting those skills and knowledge to use for the good of humanity.”

Dr. Kirk was on campus October 30 to sign his $50,000 endowment agreement. “I am proud of the educational opportunities Western provides, and I still have a strong belief in and commitment to helping our youth and making their lives more meaningful,” said Dr. Kirk. “This is how I am choosing to honor Western and my own commitment.”

The Honors College would also like to congratulate the winners of two pre-law scholarships. Lindsey Posmanick was named the recipient of the $500 Charles H. “Chick” & Barbara Joan Flack Pre-Law Scholarship. Lindsey is a senior Women's Studies major and a Pre-Law and Political Science minor. Samantha Morrow and Genc Arifi were selected to receive the $1250 Keith Webb Memorial Scholarship. Samantha is a junior History major and is minoring in Pre-Law and Music Business. Genc is a LEJA major and a Pre-Law minor and is also a junior.

GH 299 – COMM History

GH 299 Community History provided honors students the opportunity to learn about and work with the community of Nauvoo as it highlights its unique history as part of a national and local exhibit. Journey Stories is a Museum on Main Street project organized by the Smithsonian Institution’s Traveling Exhibition Service and the Illinois Humanities Council. GH 299 students immersed themselves in the history of Nauvoo and learned about four distinct social and cultural influences on Nauvoo and Hancock County. The major social and cultural groups are the Mormons, Icarians, Germans, and the Catholic Church. Each group left their distinct mark on the community even though the past and present influence of the Church of the Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) is most associated with the community. Along with the reconstruction of the Nauvoo Temple the LDS church in Utah has been working to restore “the flats” to resemble the original settlement of Nauvoo by the Prophet Joseph Smith and his followers. This has led to the removal of the Icarian buildings and demolition of St. Mary’s Academy, a prestigious Catholic residential school for girls. German influences in the community continue in large part to the presence of the Kraus family. Baxter’s Winery carries on a tradition of growing grapes and wine making established by the Icarians. Honors College involvement in Nauvoo began last spring when eight students took GH 302 – Oral History. Students in GH 302 conducted oral history interviews with persons with historical ties to the community. These interviews are now on file in the Western Illinois University Archives located on the sixth floor of the Malpass Library and at the Nauvoo Historical Society. The Journey Stories exhibit ran through November 10th and is located on Mulholland St., directly across from the Hotel Nauvoo. The exhibit was open weekdays from 1:00 until 6:00pm and Saturdays and Sundays from 1:00 until 5:00pm.
Congratulations to Interdisciplinary Studies Coordinator Michele Aurand for her recent Advisor of the Month award and to Honors College Student Assistant D’Angelo Taylor for his election as the Student Member of the Board of Trustees. Well done!

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### Calendar Events: November II — December 15

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