



DEAN'S DISTINGUISHED GRADUATES ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

5TH EDITION

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CALENDAR OF COLLEGE EVENTS

Gone to Texas
Aug. 28, 2012, 6 - 8 p.m.
Turtle Pond

Family Weekend
Oct. 16 - 18, 2012
Various Locations

For more events please
visit the Liberal Arts
website at:
www.utexas.edu/cola.



A MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

This year marks 32 years since the Dean's Distinguished Graduates program began. For 2012, we are pleased to welcome 12 more students who possess the dedication, leadership, and academic excellence exhibited by the DDG alumni who came before them. Among this year's awardees were the student body president, editor-in-chief of the Daily Texan, and a Fulbright finalist, representing just a few of the notable activities and awards bestowed upon these graduates.

As always, we continue to look for ways to improve the DDG program in an effort to build relationships and connections between those who are honored. This year, the selection committee decided to create a special designation – an Honorable Mention – for the students who were nominated for the award but not selected. All of these Honorable Mentions received a certificate and their names were printed in the commencement program.

In addition, the 2012 awardees were assigned a simple project: create a presentation representative of their time at UT, to be unveiled at the award luncheon. The finished product was a PowerPoint presentation highlighting these students' hard work and contributions to the UT community. Both of these new traditions will no doubt bring the DDG association closer to its goal of building stronger connections among DDG alumni.

I will continue to look for ways to improve the association and look forward to all the great things to come. As always, Hook 'em Horns!

Sincerely,

Marc Musick
Associate Dean for Student Affairs



2012 DEAN'S DISTINGUISHED GRADUATES

From left to right starting at the back: Roberto Flotte Jr., Kathleen Burns, Viviana Aldous, Melissa Macaya, Jean Nava, Natalie Butler, Jessica Messier, James Lamon, Derya Kadipasaoglu, Dean Randy Diehl, Kelli Schultz, Jillian Owens, Naveen Patisapu

AN INSIDE LOOK

Jillian Owens

Religious Studies Senior Receives Awards for Academic Excellence



Jillian Owens, a graduating senior in religious studies and Plan II Honors, capped a spectacular undergraduate career by sweeping many of the most prestigious awards offered by the University, the College of Liberal Arts, and the Department of Religious Studies:

* University Co-op George H. Mitchell Student Award for Academic Excellence. Jillian received the \$2,000 prize on May 2 at a reception at the Four Seasons Hotel. The Co-op Mitchell Award acknowledges undergraduate students nominated by their professors for recognition of their hard work and extraordinary contributions to their fields of study.

* Dean's Distinguished Graduates Award. Each year the College of Liberal Arts honors 12 seniors with the Dean's Distinguished Graduates Award for their leadership, scholarly achievements and service to the community. Jillian and the other distinguished graduates will be honored at the College of Liberal Arts spring commencement ceremony on Friday, May 18.

* Religious Studies Senior Thesis Distinction. This honor recognizes extraordinary scholarly achievement and superior quality in a religious studies thesis.

Jillian's senior thesis, "A Wide Net of Hope: Understanding the Success of Joel Osteen and Lakewood Church," examines the many factors that have made Houston's Lakewood Church the largest congregation in the United States and its pastor, Joel Osteen, a media star and one of the most influential religious figures in the country. Drawing on months of fieldwork -- visiting the congregation, interviewing members, and attending groups -- she concluded that Lakewood's success is built on three components: Osteen's encouraging message of hope, the network of volunteers who manage routine operations and integrate newcomers into the congregation, and the media network that beams Osteen and Lakewood around the world. Professor Thomas Tweed, who supervised the thesis, nominated Jillian for a departmental distinction based on the outstanding quality of her work.

Jillian's interests and efforts have extended beyond her research field to the rest of campus and into the community. She was vice-president of the Religious Studies Student Committee and President of the Plan II Student's Association during her time on campus. She also has an abiding passion for the theatre, which has resulted in roles in several productions at UT, an internship at the ZACH Theatre, and participation in the Shakespeare at Winedale program. As a Shakespeare Outreach volunteer, she planned and taught workshops on the Bard for elementary and middle-school students in the area. Currently she writes regular biweekly theatre and arts reviews for the *Austin Chronicle*. Needless to say, we are extremely proud of Jillian's accomplishments and proud to count her among our department's graduates.

AN INSIDE LOOK

Natalie Butler

Seizing Opportunity: Graduating Student Leader Makes the Most of College Experience



After graduating from one of Arizona's top-ranked high schools in 2007, Natalie Butler had a host of higher education options.

"At the end of the day, The University of Texas at Austin just felt right," Butler said. "I just felt at home in Austin."

Her intuition proved correct. Throughout her five years at the university, Butler has had more opportunities than she could have imagined.

She has completed three majors – communication studies in the College of Communication, as well as government and the Plan II Honors Program in the College of Liberal Arts.

For her Plan II senior thesis, Butler researched and wrote about education policy and how high school civics experiences invite and negate positive attitudes about government, public life, and future political engagement.

"Her progress was consistently on pace with my master's and doctoral students, her ability to make sense of data was a joy to watch, and her authorial voice emerged in an exciting way," said Sharon Jarvis, associate professor of communication studies, associate director of the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation, and Butler's Plan II thesis adviser.

In Jarvis' civic participation and political communication courses, Butler became a leader, raising the level of conversation for her peers.

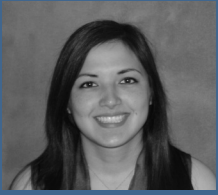
"Students looked forward to hearing her points and learning from her questions," Jarvis said. "I know that they learned more in those classes simply because Natalie was in them. I, and so many others, will miss her terribly when she graduates. We are a better university because she chose us."

In addition to completing three majors, Butler has served in several Student Government roles, most recently as 2011-12 student body president. Butler also was selected to join several prestigious organizations, including the Friar Society, Orange Jackets, Phi Beta Kappa, and the Texas Coalition for Excellence in Higher Education.

"Milk this experience for everything you can," Butler said. "These years have been transformational for me, and I know they can be for everyone. Take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves to you."

After she graduates on May 18, Butler will join the Texas Exes as a summer fellow. In the fall, she will work for the Boston Consulting Group in Dallas.

2012 DEAN'S DISTINGUISHED GRADUATES BIOGRAPHIES



Viviana Aldous is a Plan II and philosophy senior from New Orleans. She enjoys writing, a passion that has manifested itself in a four-year investment at *The Daily Texan*, where she currently works as editor-in-chief. She also

loves to travel and studied in Buenos Aires for a summer. After graduating in May, Viviana will attend law school.

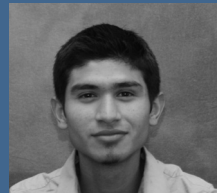


Kathleen Burns is a double major in English honors and biology with an emphasis in ecology, evolution, and behavior. After graduating from UT, Kathleen plans to attend graduate school in a dual degree program tailored to her interests in tropical ecology, conservation, and writing. Having lived abroad most of her life in Peru and Qatar, she intends to work and travel extensively in the tropics, helping to empower women through ecologically sustainable practices.



Natalie Butler graduated from high school in Arizona and moved to Texas to attend UT. While pursuing her degrees, she was elected student body president and is a member of Orange Jackets and the Friar Society. Her thesis focuses

on the importance of government and civic education in America's schools. She will be moving to Dallas after graduation to work for the Boston Consulting Group.



Roberto Flotte Jr. was born in Presidio, Texas, but grew up in Mexico before returning to the U.S. at age 15. As a research scholar, leader, and advocate for Latino and Indigenous students, Roberto founded the first

Native American and Indigenous student organization on campus. After graduation he will either join Teach for America or work in public policy in Washington, DC. .



Derya Kadipasaoglu was born in Houston, Texas, and after focusing on drawing and printmaking at an arts high school, moved to Austin to pursue a degree in the Linguistics Department's Child Language Lab. She studied children's language

acquisition and development and plans to start a Ph.D. program in the field of cognitive science after graduating from UT.



James Lamon has been active in all aspects of the Shakespeare community including acting with the Spirit of Shakespeare and volunteering with Shakespeare Outreach. He wrote an English honors thesis that uses optical physics to understand solipsism

in David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*. After graduation, James will apply for M.F.A. programs in creative writing and move to Los Angeles to pursue a career in screen writing.



Melissa Macaya was born and raised in Venezuela. At UT, she is double majoring in Latin American studies honors and journalism with a Bridging Disciplines Program Certificate in International Studies. Melissa is currently a Fulbright

finalist, and upon graduation, she plans to spend a year abroad and then attend graduate school in Washington, D.C.



Jessica Messier grew up in Houston, Texas, where she attended The Kinkaid School. For three years she has been a member of the Lee laboratory, which studies the role of the midbrain dopamine system in attentional processing. Jessica is graduating with dual

Bachelor of Science degrees in mathematics and psychology.



Jean Nava is the son of a single, immigrant mother. He grew up in Houston, Texas, with his mother and older brother and is the first in his family to attend college. When not studying, Jean enjoys reading books on math history, running long distances, and playing guitar. He is also an avid health enthusiast and vegetarian.



Jillian Owens majored in Plan II Honors and religious studies, fostering interests in ethnography, evangelicalism, Shakespeare, French, and theatre. She currently works as a theatre critic for the *Austin Chronicle* and has served as president of

the Plan II Students' Association and Spirit of Shakespeare.

2012 DEAN'S DISTINGUISHED GRADUATES BIOGRAPHIES



Naveen Pattisapu grew up with two older brothers (Plan II graduates) and loving parents, he led an award-winning rock band, pursued painting, basketball, and biomedical research, all activities he continues today. He aspires to be a physician-scientist to discover new therapies for poorly treated diseases by drawing upon his eclectic interests.



Kelli Schultz is a senior pursuing a triple major in Plan II Honors, American studies, and theatre and dance. Though she was born in Texas, Kelli was raised in Alpharetta, Georgia, and is one of five children. Upon graduation, she will join the 2012 Teach for America corps in the San Francisco Bay Area.

2012 DEAN'S DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE HONORABLE MENTIONS

Competition for Dean's Distinguished Graduates is very close, and the selection committee would like to honor students who were nominated, but not selected, as an Honorable Mention in order to recognize their superior efforts in academics, service, and leadership.

Ian Bridges

Shivani Chatterjee

Di Chen

Paul Cuno-Booth

Zachary Garber

Stephanie Greeson

Rachael Hyland

Grace Jamail

Ramu Kharel

William McCarthy

Alexandra Medack

Ramon Mejia

Kathryn Menefee

Ryan Millsap

Pavel Nitchovski

Preston Nix

Julie Reitz

Crystal Schoellmann

Lindsey Smith

Andrew Townsend

Rebecca Yasskin

Congratulations class of 2012!

ALUMNI PROFILE

Michael Appleman



Michael Appleman

Class of 1990

**Partner, Cantey
Hanger, LLP**

Michael Appleman earned his bachelor's degree in Plan II Honors in 1990 from UT Austin, when he was also designated a Dean's Distinguished Graduate. He went on to earn his J.D. at UT in 1993. Michael is currently a partner at Cantey Hanger, LLP, in Fort Worth, specializing in taxation, estates, and business organizational law.

In addition to his career as a lawyer, Michael is passionate about volunteering and involved with many community committees in various capacities. He serves as a member of the Professional Advisor Outreach Cabinet with the Community Foundation of North Texas, a member of the Young Professional Advocates with the Lena Pope Home, and as an advisory council member of the Tarrant Area Food Bank. Additionally, Michael is an involved alumnus who has donated his time to many campus organizations, including The University of Texas College of Liberal Arts Foundation Advisory Council and The University of Texas Ex-Students' Association scholarship committee.

In 2008, Michael was awarded the Outstanding Young Texas Ex, and was also selected as the Best Lawyer in America for Trusts and Estates from 2008 – 2012. He has been featured as one of the "40 Under 40" in the Fort Worth Business Press, which salutes individuals who are making their mark with professional success and community involvement.

Michael previously served as a volunteer leader for the American Heart Association, the Amon Carter Museum, the Fort Worth Club Junior Activities Committee, and the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, among many others. He also served on the board of directors for Beth-El Congregation.

Along with his many professional endeavors, Michael enjoys staying active by participating in marathons. Of course, he is also an avid sports fan — especially when it comes to the Longhorns!

What was your first job after graduation? What lesson did you learn on that job that you keep with you today?

I don't remember what I did re: employment after my undergraduate graduation. I do remember driving around much of the western half of the United States the summer before I started law school. After law school, I started working for Cantey Hanger, and I am still there. I am still learning lessons that I hope I will keep with me tomorrow.

Who or what was the biggest influence in your career?

My father and grandfather were strong influences. They probably unknowingly laid the groundwork for my becoming a lawyer. My first bosses, who are now my partners and who taught me just about everything I know about my area of law practice, were a tad influential, as well.

What's the best advice you didn't take?

"That's good enough."

What abilities or personal qualities do you believe contribute most to success?

Persistence, curiosity, willingness to try.

What kinds of life/personal experience, paid or unpaid, would you encourage for anybody pursuing a career in this field?

Travel, in general, and accept an internship with a law firm (i.e., be a runner or a file clerk).

Why did you decide to attend UT of Austin?

It was the only school to which I applied that accepted me. It's true, but, more seriously, I could not imagine going anywhere else.

"This award, though, is not just recognition of past good deeds and accomplishments. It is a challenge. A challenge to build upon these successes and an expectation that you will continue to do great things."

-Taken from a portion of the speech Michael delivered at the DDG luncheon, May 17, 2012.