I just finished reading Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters by Michael Roth, the President of Wesleyan University in Connecticut, my alma mater. Roth makes the case for what he calls “a pragmatic liberal education.” In an interview, Roth tells us that “The key is to develop habits of mind that allow students to keep learning, even as they acquire skills to get things done. This combination will serve students as individuals, family members and citizens — not just as employees and managers…higher education’s highest purpose is to give all citizens the opportunity to find ‘large and human significance’ in their lives and work.” He goes on to argue, and I think rightly, that a “Liberal education must not limit itself to critical thinking and problem solving; it must also foster openness, participation and opportunity. It should be designed to take us beyond the campus to a life of ongoing, pragmatic learning that finds inspiration in unexpected sources, and increases our capacity to understand and contribute to the world — and reshape it, and ourselves, in the process.” I was happy to be reminded this past summer that our LAH students are pursuing just such an education. I received e-mails from, among others, Arjun Ruwal, a Government, Sociology, and Arabic major, describing his work in Alexandria with young Egyptians, sixteen to thirty-five, on issues of gender equality. Elan Kogutt, a Psychology major, kept me up to date on his work with Dr. Rick Hodes at the Cure Hospital in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. And I watched Government major Alex D’Jamoos, an intern this summer in Moscow with the Russian newspaper, Kommersant, on Russian television, advocating for children in Russian orphanages. Some thirty of our LAH students were abroad this past summer, increasing their understanding, contributing, acquiring skills to get things done. Equally uplifting was hearing from the many LAH students engaged in internships. To cite three: Jessica Cisneros worked fulltime for Congressman Henry Cuellar in Washington D.C.; Nikki Beittenmiller also in the nation’s capital, interned at the Center for Strategic and International Studies; and Sam Claflin interned at The Barcelona Bar Association, Barcelona, Spain. These students, some of whom you will read about in this newsletter, remind us in Michael Roth’s words that a “broadly based, self-critical and yet pragmatic education matters today more than ever, and that it matters far beyond the borders of any university campus.” I welcome your comments, suggestions, and questions (carver@austin.utexas.edu).

Best Wishes,
For 12 weeks this summer, I interned in New York City for Google. I was an Engineering Practicum (EP) intern, a program designed for freshman and sophomore Computer Science students who want an internship, but do not yet have the technical skills to code with little to no assistance. I worked with another EP intern and our two hosts, as well as my hosts’ teams. The experience was amazing. I was able to learn from some of the best programmers in the world at one of the best tech companies in the world. For a tech nerd like me, this was my idea of heaven.

While coding for Google was awesome, there are other aspects of working at Google that are just incredible. Each office is a little different and usually reflects where it is. For example, Boulder has a rock climbing wall; LA has surfboards; and Seattle/Kirkland has kayaks. I worked in New York in a building the size of one entire city block. The floors are themed, and the meeting rooms on each floor reflect that theme such as the different parks (Central Park) on the 10th floor to the tourist traps (Empire State Building) on the 4th floor. We even had a giant lego room and a ladder. And because the office was so large, Razor scooters lined the halls, so Googlers could arrive in a timely fashion. It was always interesting seeing men who are in their 40s with suits on scooting past you on a way to a meeting.

While ‘The Internship’ is mostly fictionalized, there is one important matter that is true: free food. The amount of food at Google is beyond imagination; it is said that if you are at your desk, you are about 100 feet away from food. There are microkitchens all over the office stocked with everything we may want from chips to sodas to cereal and everything in between to make sure that we never go hungry. Plus there are various Starbucks-style coffee machines in the microkitchens in case you do not have time to go to a cafe for a barista to make your coffee. In NYC, there are 6 cafes that you can go to for a meal. Each cafe has a different menu, ensuring that you will find the food you want everyday.

While it was not only awesome to work at Google, I had a chance to branch out within the company to learn beyond code. Being at such a global company, the World Cup became incredibly prominent in our daily lives. Every game was broadcasted on all of the TVs around the office and some computers displayed the games as well. Productivity dropped dramatically during the games, not only for me, but also for just about every other Googler around me and around the world. Once the World Cup entered the elimination stages, that was most of the conversation heard around the office. Additionally, because of the diversity at Google, they had American Sign Language lunches and classes for Googlers to learn ASL, which I frequently participated in. I even had a few Googlers think I was deaf because one of my teammates and I would sign to each other when we spoke throughout the day. Additionally, I met various celebrities from Arianna Huffington to Eric McCormack when they came to the office to promote their work. And as if my internship was not cool enough, I was able to be a part of the Pride Week at Google where I heard two of the lawyers who brought the Edie Windsor DOMA case to the Supreme Court and was able to be on Google’s float at the Pride Parade.

Although I was interning as a Computer Science major, my Linguistics and LAH side of me still was able to shine through. One of my teammates told me that writing is a big issue for the engineers at Google, and the ability to write succinctly is valuable. Moreover, there are other types of internships at Google from UI/UX to technical writing to marketing, so I was definitely not the only person who was a liberal arts major. I even met someone who worked with linguistics as a software engineer, so there is an opportunity to use what I have learned in liberal arts classes in a tech setting.

Looking back, I realize that my summer was special, but not because it was at Google. It was because I loved what I was doing at a place I had wanted to work at for years. What I worked on will be used by other Googlers, and it will matter and make a difference to them. While I got to meet inspirational people and do remarkable things, I made an impact at a company I admire during my short 12 weeks, which is undoubtedly my favorite part of my internship. And while ‘The Internship’ did not depict my specific experience, the movie does share my love and enthusiasm for Google, something that I will carry with long past this summer.

--Courtney M Rochvarg Ross, Linguistics/Liberal Arts Honors & Computer Science
Standing in the examination room at Cure Hospital in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, I was struck with awe while watching Dr. Rick Hodes examine patient after patient with terminal diseases. My journey to be in clinical with Rick was not short, starting at the age of 11, but Rick’s journey was even longer and more fascinating. Rick Hodes is an American doctor who has lived and worked in Ethiopia for over 20 years. Hodes first went to Ethiopia as a relief worker during the 1984 famine. He has also worked with refugees in Rwanda, Zaire, Tanzania, Somalia, and Albania. Currently, he is the senior consultant at a Mother Teresa’s Catholic mission helping impoverished sick people with heart disease, spine disease, and cancer. One day at the mission, Rick came across two boys, Dejene and Semegnew, with ‘S’-shaped spinal columns, severe deformities caused by tuberculosis of the spine. Rick adopted the boys so they could receive spine surgery under his healthcare plan. Dejene and Semegnew moved to Dallas to have surgery at Scottish Right Hospital. This is where my journey began. Being best family friends with the family that hosted the boys, I was at their house constantly. Though Dejene and I could barely communicate because he spoke no English, by the time of his surgery a few weeks later, my family and I visited him at the hospital often. Ten years later, Dejene, now a handsome, very intelligent young man with no sign of any physical deformity, and I are still very good friends. I have always wanted to go to Ethiopia to see Dejene’s homeland and the amazing things that Dr. Rick was doing. This summer I was given the chance after being selected for a “Wise Wanderer Scholarship” by Liberal Arts Honors.

On this scholarship I traveled to Ethiopia to teach English and shadow and help Dr. Hodes. Experiencing Africa and the Ethiopian culture gave me a more expansive view of the world. I feel as though I changed in many positive ways both minor, such as breaking a lifelong habit of biting my nails and learning how to hand wash my clothes, and large, such as becoming a citizen of the world. I have been dedicated to helping people in various capacities my entire post-adolescent life, but now I have an understanding of the need outside my direct environment and community. As a 6 foot tall foreigner, or firengie as I was called there, who was white in a land of few tourists and who did not speak the local language, most of the experiences I had took me out of my comfort zone. At points during traditional Ethiopian dancing ceremonies, the male musician will walk around and tell jokes. I vividly remember him standing over me making fun, in Amharic, of me and my Americanness. I was not only targeted as the butt of every joke, but also by many beggars and thieves. On the second to last day of my trip while walking to a market with a friend, a group of children swarmed us asking for money. As I told them some of the words I was taught for these occasions, for which I was all too practiced in by this time, I subconsciously slapped my hand toward my right pocket, where a tiny boy no older than 6 had his hand around my cell phone.

I found solace from events like this in the classroom. Almost every day I taught children at a youth center on the outskirts of Addis. I remember when I was teaching my group of students the family tree I had every child go around and say “I have ___ brothers and ___ sisters”, and I was astonished to learn the size of their families, each having 5 or more siblings with only one parent and living with little shelter or food. Teaching English every day was a true pleasure because of my students’ strong desire to learn, creating an endearing relationship with each student. Though their English was weak, we connected through the mutual desire that they would learn English and it would help to alleviate their situation. Progress in develop-
ing countries such as Ethiopia is hindered because of the medical and educational systems, two things that I was able to experience firsthand. I could not help but think of all the people not being helped by youth centers or by people like Dr. Rick and who started a life of labor or of begging at a too young age, feeling helpless against the uphill battle out of destitution.

I lived in a house with a group of young men and women in Rick’s large extended family. All of them have experienced much hardship in life; one of the men was a child soldier, some come from villages in the countryside, and many others were patients of Dr. Hodes’s. Now given a “second chance,” as they often say, they are provided shelter, food, and education. They all welcomed me as family. I lived on a couch in a house where the water and electricity would go out on a regular basis, and always at the most inopportune times, like when my hair was full of shampoo. Because of my living scenario and different experiences I felt as though I truly gained full knowledge of the country and people. I learned to love Ethiopia as the unique place that it is; from the Ethiopian people that are a friendly and fun-loving people who greet by patting shoulders against one another’s, to injera, a sour spongy bread made of a local grain that I would eat at least twice daily.

Through all the time I spent teaching and traveling around the great rift valley seeing tribes and beautiful scenery and experiencing Ethiopian culture were incredible, the most special moments were those I spent with Dr. Hodes. He works seven days a week. With such poor healthcare in Ethiopia, one doctor for 30,000 people, he feels it is his duty to do so. Without any arrogance he said to me, “If I didn’t help them all these people (his constant influx of patients) would die.” He works at three different clinics seeing patient after patient for free. From 9am to 6pm he will see anywhere between fifty to ninety patients, diagnosing everything from the simple common colds to complex diseases like neural fibro mitosis with scarce medical equipment. When I was there I was fortunate enough to witness the process he is well-known for, helping young men and women with spinal disease from start to finish; from patients timidly coming in to meet Dr. Hodes to patients leaving for spine surgery that, for most, would save their lives. As they lined up for Rick to take their picture before flying to Ghana, which for nearly all would be their first flight, I felt as though I could make out a word from their misshapen spines. I was able to get to know Rick on a personal level from spending many hours at his house, where at least twenty people live at all times. He welcomes patients and ex-patients, providing them food, shelter, and private school education. He said it best himself, “Mother Teresa’s is a Christian home welcoming everyone; my house is a Jewish home welcoming everyone.” While I was there, two adorable young boys with TB of the spine, reminiscent of the position my friends were once in, were staying at the house, both beginning the surgery process. I cherished every moment that I could interact with these boys, who were so eager to learn and interact with me. Though Rick, a devout Jew, does not impose religion on any of the children in his house, every Friday night Rick hosts a Sabbath dinner. Fifty to one hundred of “his kids,” tourists, and friends come to join hands and sing songs and eat a meal. I loved the peaceful atmosphere Rick created and the beautiful connection and love between people from such disparate backgrounds. One Friday night as we were all sitting scattered around his living room, now a makeshift Sabbath table, eating traditional Jewish and Ethiopian foods, he casually asked a friend if he knew of anyone going to America soon because he needed a biopsy brought over. The man said he knew someone leaving Ethiopia that night. Working his hardest, never missing a chance to save a person’s life, he rushed to the airport to hand off the biopsy for the patient. For Rick, saving lives is paramount.

LAH, thank you for affording me this truly incredible experience and allowing me to wise wander in Ethiopia. Amasaganalo! (Thank you!)

--Elan Kogutt, Psychology (B.A)/Liberal Arts Honors

When not assisting American doctor Rick Hodes, Elan taught English at a local youth center.
Students Study Abroad:
Bluefields, Nicaragua

When I stepped foot in Bluefields on a sultry Sunday afternoon, I firmly believed I knew what to expect from my first foray into Central America. What happened that month and a half smashed my “radical” presuppositions about the theoretical reformations needed in our fundamentally discrepant society. The immersion into a new ecosystem of social conditions allowed me to critically challenge not only my theoretical inclinations, but my lived practice as well. I tended to always place theory on a pedestal, believing that rationalized ideology should be valorized as the key to the radical Left’s struggles. I cast aside lived experiences and experiential politics as beautiful prose rather than tangible political projects. However, witnessing the power relations of another nation and immersing myself in a different cultural matrix created the experiences and conditions necessary for me to reflect on not only the present, but also my own past as a South Asian growing up in a bigoted community. My classes allowed my academic cohort to create transnational solidarities and linkages that thoroughly enhanced my academic experiences. Some readings had a more poignant impact on my politics than others. These included the Combahee River Collective and our very own Juliet Hooker’s work. Other works I was very familiar with, but appeared in a new light after my paradigm transformation. Instead of rendering works as objects to extract ideologies from, I began to account for the potentiality of the aesthetic to embody a political project. In this sense, one work that stood out was Frantz Fanon’s earth-shattering Black Skin, White Masks, published in 1952. My exposure to academic texts and experiences with locals defined my understanding of experiential politics.

To extend upon the broad province of lived experiences in relation to revolutionary practices, one must first attempt to elaborate upon what exactly experiential politics embodies. Individuals seeking to change the public sphere through scholarly activism have long inhabited the academy. They willingly take up the imperative of knowledge production and epistemologies. Increasingly, an individual’s lived experience can be a catalyst for new ideologies or even embody a political project in and of itself. Analyzing experiences along racial lines has revolutionized our understanding of the terrifying ways slavery, colonialism, and racism have continued to haunt communities of color in the United States and abroad. Frantz Fanon dropped a bombshell on conventional anti-colonial commentary with the release of Black Skin, White Masks, describing the visceral imagery, the terror, the despair, the vision, the revolution. With this lens, reading Fanon’s greatest work is a stream-of-consciousness experience. Fanon uncannily remarks “Those who recognize themselves in it, I think, will have made a step forward.” This statement is important because it clearly implies a course of action among those who identify with Fanon’s worldview, but also is a call of solidarity among shared experiences. This is a common tool among literature focusing on issues of economics. Even in contemporary America, we see some semblance of divisions along socio-economic conditions (though most of these divisions are constructions created by the very capitalist coercion, status quo nor...

“Witnessing the power relations of another nation and immersing myself in a different cultural matrix created the experiences necessary for me to reflect on not only the present, but also my own past as a South Asian growing up in a bigoted community.”
ally engaged in research analyzing the whitening of a form of social mobility amongst 6 ethnic groups. The final product was titled “A PART YET APART”: The Whitening of Black Identity in Bluefields, Nicaragua. I interrogated the discourse of how mestizaje was used in order to provoke an exclusionary national identity. Costeños are seen to exist, but are cast outside of the national identity. This was seen in the Pacific vs. Atlantic rhetoric shapes the global imagery of Nicaragua as individuals who are exclusively Mestizo. Whenever citizens of the global periphery imagine the Nicaraguan state, they do not visualize Afro-descendants. Nicaraguans claim to embrace politicized indigenous and European intermixing as gains of a unique culture. This occludes the knowledge proliferation of the Spaniard historical overpowering of indigenous and Afro-descendant groups, but it also deems Afro-descendants invisible in multiethnic understandings of national identity. We traveled to Corn Island at the end of the trip, and I noticed individuals constantly referred to the brown waters of Bluefields in contrast to the white sands of Corn Island. The evolution of brown waters, deemed polluted and dirty, to clear water with white sands, filled with artifacts of life (aquatic creatures), visibility, and wealth (attraction to tourists) is metaphorical to black survivability by white conformation.

--Mirusha Yogarajah, Government/Liberal Arts Honors

Students Intern Abroad: Moscow, Russia

Last summer, I had the great opportunity to intern at Kommersant, one of the most respected newspapers in Russia. For a month and a half, I lived in Moscow, hoping to gain a better understanding of how and why anti-Americanism has become such a prevalent characteristic of much of Russian news coverage. Kommersant is an independently-owned newspaper, focusing on business, politics and economic development. Since 1989, Kommersant has gained a massive readership, and some of Russia’s most prolific journalists have worked on its staff. The newspaper’s coverage of economic trends and political events is renowned for its objectivity and comprehensiveness. It is still disputed whether the newspaper is tied to the Kremlin, as many Russian newspapers are. However, based on my experience, the journalists at Kommersant seem unconstrained in their journalistic freedom.

At Kommersant, I worked in the department of domestic politics. This assignment originally seemed quite challenging, given my limited prior knowledge of Russia’s domestic policies. My main obligations were

“This summer I had a unique opportunity to observe the social and political shift that has encouraged Russians to oppose the West and uphold their own national ambitions.”

LAH Study Abroad Scholarships

Applications will be due Monday, November 1, 2014 at 5 pm for students planning to study abroad in the Spring 2015 semester. Students must plan on studying a foreign language while abroad in order to be eligible for funding. Apply online: http://utdirect.utexas.edu/student/abroad/globalassist.WBX

Government major Alex D’Jamoos in Moscow’s Red Square.
to research political issues and conduct interviews of various officials, public figures, and citizens. I helped journalists support their information by finding and analyzing relevant statistics, as well as gathering the opinions of those involved with or affected by various domestic policies. The majority of my time was spent researching for larger editorial pieces covering cases, such as foreign funding of Russian NGOs and the social consequences of the recent limitations on adoption.

The lively and intellectually stimulating environment in my office dispelled my preconceptions about the state control of Russian news sources. For example, dozens of politicians were collecting signatures in order to get a nomination for the upcoming Moscow city elections. Kommersant covered the nominating processes diligently and impartially. It was very revealing to interview the opposition candidates, who claimed the system made it unduly difficult to oppose the Kremlin, and was thereby unfair. The Kommersant journalists’ coverage of the elections seemed to be very objective and professional. Given the negative image of the Russian press, I was surprised to hear from the Kommersant journalists that they, at least, felt no constraints in covering Russian politics. Though some of the writers told me there had been a few instances of editorial censorship, the general atmosphere at Kommersant seemed to promote dialogue about all issues.

One of the reasons I wanted to spend this summer in Russia was to observe the coverage of recent political developments and get a sense of how they are being presented by the state media. The conflict in Eastern Ukraine and the Western sanctions against Russia have visibly affected the news coverage on main television channels, most of which are either directly or indirectly tied to the Kremlin. These news channels, such as the First Channel and NTV, constantly remind the viewers that there are fascist forces in the new Kiev government and that the West, specifically the United States, played an influential role in the overthrow of the pro-Kremlin Ukrainian president, Viktor Yanukovitch, last February. The sanctions against Russia are presented as a way to isolate Russia and are described as detrimental to the Western nations, and not the Russian population. The tragic crash of the Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 in July, which many believe was brought down by a surface-to-air missile from an area controlled by pro-Russian separatists, was described by Russia’s state media as a tragedy that was caused by the incompetence of the new Ukrainian government. To this day, Russian state media refuses to claim the rebels in Eastern Ukraine are tied to Vladimir Putin’s administration.

When I visited the orphanage I grew up in, located in a remote town Nizhny Lomov, the first phrase I heard from my teachers and friends was: “What is Obama doing in Ukraine? Why is America so determined to subvert Russia?” Many people in Russia claim that US-Russian relations are more antagonistic now than during the Cold War.

This summer I had a unique opportunity to observe the social and political shift that has encouraged Russians to oppose the West and uphold their own national ambitions. My internship at the newspaper has taught me that not all Russians think alike, and that the spread of nationalism is not promoted by all of Russia’s news media. As the information war between Russia and the West continues to play a role in worsening bilateral relations, it is important to pay attention to all presented arguments and look beyond the headlines.

--Alex D’Jamoos, Government/Liberal Arts Honors/Eastern European Studies

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Kathleen Aronson
Director of Development and Alumni Relations
The University of Texas at Austin
College of Liberal Arts
116 Inner Campus Drive G6300
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Reality hit me the moment I stepped onto Egyptian soil: I was alone in an entirely new and politically unstable place. Here we go, I thought to myself. Be vigilant. Be alert. And try your hardest to blend in. Spending two months in Egypt was unlike any other life experience. The amount of learning and growth I experienced living and working in Egypt for two months surprises me every day. I can say with complete confidence I returned Stateside a better version of myself.

My work taught me a great deal about new social and work environments. I interned with a non-profit seeking to advocate for and educate the Egyptian public on gender equality and women's empowerment. Now you may be wondering why a 19 year-old male college student would travel all the way to Egypt to advocate for gender equality. Well, a large part of that answer has to do with the fact that Egypt is actually the worst place on Earth for women. With some of the highest levels of sexual harassment, domestic violence, and absence of fundamental rights for women, Egypt ranks at the bottom of the ladder. But I also had more personal motivations: in the past two years I have realized the amount of privilege I have as a man. For example, I can go jogging shirtless around Austin and even earn a higher wage than women for the same work. So, in order to deconstruct the privilege and fight for equality, traveling to the most gender inequal place seemed to just make sense. Through my work, I interacted with locals on almost a daily basis and engaged with them on a range of issues tied to gender equality. We challenged, debated, and tested each other's perspectives. It was in those moments that I realized the importance of conversation and productive dialogue, especially on the topic of gender equality. If the other interns and I would not challenge many of the conservative, misogynistic, and regressive views we encountered, who would? If we did not engage the locals in these crucial discussions, how would we ever help Egypt change? How would we ever be able to progress towards equality as a global community if we were not willing to talk?

“IT WAS IN THOSE MOMENTS THAT I REALIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF CONVERSATION AND PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE.”

Tahir Square in Cairo, Egypt.
One of the biggest takeaways from my summer in Egypt would have to be resiliency. From haggling with taxi drivers in Arabic about the fare, to warding off tourist-hungry shop owners in markets, to strategically hiding my valuables to outsmart anyone who may try to take advantage of me, I developed a very thick skin. I learned to be direct, stern, and aggressive when appropriate, which was never in my nature. I also learned to not take things too seriously. There were many moments in which I could do nothing about what was happening, and I had to be okay with that. For example, the tram in Alexandria would never come at a regular interval. Sometimes the driver would need to eat, or use the bathroom, so he would take time out of the tram's schedule to accommodate himself. Many times, this resulted in the tram being thirty to forty minutes late and in my becoming a very frustrated passenger. I quickly realized that I had absolutely no agency to do anything about the tram, so there was no point spending my energy being frustrated. Needless to say, I rolled with many punches.

Traveling to Egypt exposed my naïveté to myself. Throughout my life, I was always able to trust people easily, albeit to a certain degree. In Egypt, I caught myself on several occasions making that mistake. I had to unlearn being so trusting, and instead, I was forced to be extremely skeptical and vigilant at all times. In spite of having traveled abroad with my family and alone inside the States, I never encountered an environment similar to Egypt. Furthermore, I realized how sheltered I had been. Growing up, I always thought out of all my peers I was the least sheltered. Spending time in Egypt was a transformative, life-changing experience. I am very grateful for all the support and encouragement my mentors, friends, and family gave me to go on this dangerous trip alone; I could not have embarked on such an adventure and lived to tell the tale without them. Even though there were miserable moments, there were many moments that redeemed the entire experience. I made some amazing friendships and met some great people, regardless of our disagreements. Many have asked if I would go back. If given the chance and the means, I think I would. But now, the rest of the world feels less of a stranger, and I yearn to explore it.

"I realized how sheltered I had been...Spending time in Egypt changed my entire perspective."

--Arjun Arwal, Government/Liberal Arts Honors
You’re old. Not the “This is my third hip replacement surgery,” or “Don’t poke my colostomy bag” type old, but old. You’ve seen some stuff. You’ve had some heartbreak. You’ve lost. You’ve had the rose-colored glasses savagely ripped from your face, revealing a less-than-flattering sunglasses tan-line around your eyes. You are less naïve, and more wary. More skeptical. More cynical. And that means that you are wise and that you make way, way, way fewer stupid decisions than me and people my age make.

But that also means the world is less magical, less mystical, less miraculous in your eyes. The hopeful promise of a new day is tainted by the past, when life let you down. When promises were broken and expectations unmet. Now that I’ve properly insulted and depressed you, I say “fear not!” for innocence remains – hope remains.

To me, this generation, the world is still a magical place. The future is wide open with possibility, and we haven’t yet had our dreams stomped out by “real life.” Hope remains. Love is still a holy and ungraspable perfection. The idea of world peace sits in the back of our minds, fidgeting, even as we watch American journalist James Foley beheaded by ISIS militants, or hear the stories of Ebola victims without proper medical care. Hope remains. At this age, straddling the gap between childhood and adulthood, we retain a spark of our innocence, our undying hope, our untainted joy; but that spark is coupled with minds that are capable of greatness, and fierce, fervent souls full of passion. “Innocence of heart and violence of feeling are necessary in any kind of superior achievement: the arts cannot exist without them.” I posit that Louise Bogan is correct, and that these components, innocence and violent feeling, are found more abundantly in youth.

“"We retain a spark of our innocence, our undying hope, our untainted joy, but that spark is coupled with minds that are capable of greatness, and fierce, fervent souls full of passion."”

And that is why, my respected and esteemed superiors, you should listen to and invest in me, in us: our minds are thirsty vessels waiting to be filled; our hearts are bursting with frenzied spirit. And there is power in that. You have the responsibility, and even the privilege, to fill our heads with knowledge, and to give us a reason to pour out our hearts. We carry the lamp of new perspectives. Greatness can and will come from us who are willing and enthusiastic to learn and discover – you can give us that opportunity.

To you, we can impart an undying hope and excitement. We bring to this university a passion unmatched by any other source. Youth and innocence are our greatest assets: I plead that you let us use them. Give us direction, and see our potential. We will not disappoint you.

Listen to us, the beginners, because we are the proof that the world is not wholly evil and depraved. We are proof of goodness, of light, of joy and peace. Listen to us, because we are the proof that hope remains.

John Calvin Pierce, English/Liberal Arts Honors
Dear Freshman LAHer,

I am certain that you have been receiving lots of ABCs, Advice Before College. It really is as easy as 1-2-3.

My only regret is that my parents neglected to share their best ABC until two weeks after I started the whirlwind that is the first semester of college. At the time, I was overwhelmed trying to juggle Hebrew class, removing Kerbey queso out of my T-shirt, and fending off tears. On a Sunday in early September, my parents and I had coffee at Café Medici. There, they reminded me of the theme of their speech at my bat mitzvah years before: balance leads to a happy life. Over a cappuccino, my parents came up with 1-2-3, which work in tandem to create a happy and productive college life. This, I am passing along to you today!

1. Take care of your business.
2. Pay attention to your mental and physical health.
3. Have fun.

Number 1 is obvious, of course. We are here to earn our college diplomas. Work ahead and spread out your assignments. Work diligently but remember that a balanced college life does not consist only of studying. When you have written, rewritten, and written some more, move on. This is how you will get to Numbers 2 and 3.

Number 2 means focusing on your well-being. You see, you cannot succeed in your “business” without being mentally and physically strong. I wish I had spent more time exercising during my freshman year. I stayed in shape, but I regret not working out more. When I exercised, I was energized, focused, and productive. A goal for me this year is to make exercise a regular part of my routine, and I hope you do the same. A healthy brain is just as important. Build your team – family, friends, professors, and advisors with whom you can share your feelings.

When 1 and 2 are in good order, Number 3 kicks in. College is our opportunity to explore campus activities and create lifelong friendships. LAH is an inclusive community with people who are just like you. As Dr. Carver says, “Drink the LAH Kool-Aid,” and put yourself out there. A simple hello is all it takes to create a friendship. You should know, as well, that it is OK to be alone. Sometimes, your “fuel tank” is empty, and taking “me” time will refill it. But just as we run the risk of studying too much, we also run the risk of having too much fun. When you have had lots of Number 3 time, no doubt it will be time again for Number 1.

In its simplest form, my advice is that through balance, you will find your footing. Remember the lyrics from Jackson 5 … “ABC, easy as 1-2-3.”

Your soon-to-be friend,

Dorie Kaye

History/Liberal Arts Honors
Students Intern Abroad: Orissa, India

When I visited India two years ago, I left knowing that it would be a long, long time before I had the opportunity to come back. Little did I know, there were other plans unfolding for me. The summer of 2014, Nourish International gave me the chance to intern at two coastal villages in Orissa, India. Four UT students, including me, taught spoken English classes, created a mini-documentary by interviewing villagers, and empowered women through weekend workshops for six weeks.

We lived at a convent in Gopalpur, a small village full of brimming beauty. In the evenings, our students would come and play cricket or hop scotch with us. Some nights, we would all take the ten minute walk to the beach and jump into the ocean. Some nights, we would just sit by the shore, and practice our English conversation skills. The weather was good to us those nights, and sometimes, we would even catch a full moon, hanging right above the dark crashing waves. One weekend, we had planned to go see a Telugu movie; our students were so excited, because they would be able to teach us something too! Unfortunately, that same day, one of our students’ aunt passed away. It was the first funeral that I went to. I remember the village women wailing in grief. I remember standing inside the hut, eyes closed, hands pressed together, praying with all the Christian villagers, a Hindu myself. Nevertheless, we all wanted the same thing. Peace. Peace for the mother who had to bury her child (who was only a year younger than my mom). Peace for her three children. Witnessing such an event was deeply saddening, to say the least, but I also witnessed warm acceptance. We were foreigners, strangers to this community, but they let us become a part of such an intimate event. A death.

There were moments of joy, too. Some students would ask for more literature to read, or would sit and talk to us after class. Their English seemed to improve a little each day. One of our kids notified us that our lessons had been helping her pass tests in school. Small moments like those were the ones that kept pushing us to challenge ourselves, and our kids.

Although I tried extremely hard to stay impartial, I had my favorites. One of our brightest and youngest students, Sai, presented passion, focus and kindness in a way I had never come across. “I want to be a doctor when I grow up. When I get my degree, I want to come back to my village, and help my community.” He was one of the many students who actively empowered themselves with any and all resources provided to them. Although I miss all of my students, I think I miss him the most.

Volunteering in other countries is something that will change your life. It changed me. Six weeks felt like a year, only because I felt so different when I came back. That being said, do not believe that you will make dramatic change. It was small narratives like Sai’s, that truly and deeply moved me. When I focused on the village as a whole, of course I felt resigned, hopeless. But community development is termed that for a reason. It’s a slow process. I appreciated the villagers and their lifestyle; I found beauty in it. At the same time, their options were limited. Kids like Sai deserve the right to choose their lifestyle, rather than be given only one option. Did we feel ineffective at times? Of course. Change does not happen overnight, but it does happen with consistent determination, passion, and lots and lots of love. You can be the one to mobilize that change.

If you’re interested in participating in a project this summer, go to http://www.utnourish.org/ or contact me directly at enaganguly@utexas.edu. ~Ena Ganguly, Government/Liberal Arts Honors
Alumni in Action:

ANNE HULSEY

When most people think of being glued to the TV in the aftermath of a tragedy, they think of 9/11. But I didn’t grow up in America – I had never heard of the World Trade Center. For me, I think of August 17th, 1999, when a massive earthquake struck northwest Turkey, about forty miles from Istanbul. I was eleven at the time. I lived in central Turkey, too far away to feel the quake but it shook me just the same. For weeks afterwards I would set the TV not to a channel but to the black screen with a ticker for the death toll. The final count was approximately 17,000 dead; 44,000 injured; 250,000 homeless. One particularly haunting image was of supposedly identical multi-story apartment buildings where one building stood tall while the other four lay pancaked around it. This was just one example of the U.S. Geological Survey’s (USGS) finding that “[the buildings’] poor performance was due primarily to the poor quality of construction and failure to enforce the local building code.” There was no legitimate reason why that many people should have died in their own homes. So when I was eleven, I got interested in buildings.

Fast forward seven years to my freshman year at UT in the School of Architecture. I did well but I didn’t relish it or thrive like I would have needed to make through five years of all-nighters and project reviews. One week into my second year, I finally realized that I’m not a designer – I’m a problem solver. It’s a subtle difference but it’s a real one and I needed to be in engineering. So I dropped out of architecture and transferred to Liberal Arts Honors. Wait, what? See, the death of my seven yearlong dream of becoming an architect gave me pause to think about what college is for. It’s not just a stepping stone or a checkmark on the way to a career. It’s also a chance to expand your horizons, a time to learn who you are and what you think and HOW to think. So I didn’t want to spend the next three years cramming in engineering courses with no electives. Instead, I problem solved. I found the Humanities Program which allowed me to build my own curriculum based on whatever piqued my interest – language, history, culture, my love of Turkey – while taking civil engineering courses as my electives. During my senior year, I wrote a thesis called “Politics as an Expression of Culture: Honor in Turkish International Relations” while also taking a course in Structural Analysis. It was definitely a stretch but it was incredibly rewarding to forge my own education and to delve into a previously unformed idea as I crafted my thesis.

After graduating and working for a few years, I made my attempt to get into grad school. It was a nerve-wracking year as I applied to engineering schools with only a liberal arts degree. But all the careful undergraduate planning paid off. I was accepted into UT’s master’s program for structural engineering. With that hurdle passed, I started my first year and realized that a degree in engineering wouldn’t be enough. As the USGS noted back in 1999, Turkey has a building code – state of the art, in fact – and engineers know how to use it. It’s the contractors who are shortchanging the amount of reinforcement the engineer specified for a column or switching out bags of cement for sand as they mix concrete. Or take San Francisco, where a decade long study resulted in 17 recommendations...
for making the city more resilient to earthquakes. Engineers can come up with the best methods of construction and make the best recommendations but nothing is going to change until policy makers get involved to make sure Turkey’s building codes and San Francisco’s recommendations are properly implemented.

Fortunately UT’s LBJ School of Public Affairs recognizes this need for bridging policy and other fields and has created a dual master’s degree program with most other departments. I paired my Master of Science in Engineering with a Master of Public Affairs. I plan to stay in engineering but want to know the processes and parameters that policy makers deal with in order to support and inform them well.

I have begun to find my niche. This summer, I was an intern with the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program, working on a project to compare two building codes and make recommendations to streamline their use and applicability. I am also pursuing options with San Francisco’s Earthquake Safety Implementation Program – a program set up to drive the implementation of the 17 recommendations mentioned above. There are many things that I don’t know about what the future holds. But there are a lot of options, especially for someone who came up through the Humanities Program – the only program I know of that teaches you how to take the reins and forge a completely new, as yet untrod path.

--Anne Hulsey, BA
Master of Science in Engineering Candidate, 2016
Master of Public Affairs Candidate, 2016

LAH Alumni
Please keep in touch with us by joining the LAH Alumni facebook group: LAH Alumni and the LinkedIn group: Liberal Arts Honors - UT Austin. You can also send updates for future newsletters to Linda Mayhew at lmayhew@austin.utexas.edu. We’d love to hear from you!

Humanities Scholarship Recipients: Jackie Chorush, Chelsea Toler Hoffman, and Ruby Willmann received Karyn Cameron Scholarships; Hirrah Barlas and Maureen Clark received Collie Scholarships; and Kyle Nielsen and Juliette Seive received Werbow Scholarships.

Pictured: Jackie Chorush, Chelsea Toler Hoffmann, Maureen Clark, Kyle Nielsen, Juliette Seive, and Ruby Willmann

The Humanities Program

The Humanities Program offers motivated and curious students the opportunity to develop a unique major around a specific research interest or idea. As an interdisciplinary degree, students have the ability to pull together courses from across the university and connect them under an overarching theme.

Because of the flexibility of this major, students study a wide range of topics that go beyond traditional disciplines associated with Humanities, such as arts and literature. While Liberal Arts classes provide the foundation for the Humanities major, many students integrate courses from other colleges. Recent Humanities contracts have included topics such as “Women’s Roles in Globalized Medicine”, “Human Rights”, “Children’s Visual Media”, and “Game Theory”.

As honors students, Humanities majors are engaged in research. This unique major culminates in a required honors thesis written during the senior year. The thesis allows students to design a project, conduct in-depth research, and work closely with a faculty supervisor.

While Humanities students’ unique majors set them apart, they come together by joining a small, close-knit community within the Liberal Arts Honors Office. The many benefits of the program include individualized advising from the program Director and Academic Adviser, eligibility to apply for LAH scholarships, and access to the LAH computer lab and commons room.
Foot in the Door is a student-run theatre troupe sponsored by LAH and open to any student at UT. All experience levels and areas of interest are welcome -- we pride ourselves on our high number of first-time actors and directors. In Foot in the Door, working hard and playing hard often coincide as we put together 1-3 full productions each semester. This year Colin McLaughlin and Kenneth Williams serve as the troupe’s producers and Victoria Fazzino is our stage manager. Auditions take place during the first few weeks of classes, and rehearsals continue throughout the semester. This fall, we will be producing *Arsenic and Old Lace* by Joseph Kesselring and *The Misanthrope* by Molière. Mark your calendars:

**The Misanthrope:**
November 7, 8, 9, 14, 15 at 7pm and Nov 15 at 2pm
Calhoun 100
Directed by Charley Binkow and Kendall DeBoer
Assistant Directed by Elizabeth Hamm

**Arsenic and Old Lace:**
November 14, 15, 16, 21, 22 at 7pm and Nov 22 at 2pm
Art Building and Museum (ART) 1.102
Directed by Jordan Smith and Mandy Whited

This fall semester, the LAH Ensemble will be performing a musical review. We are writing dialog to set with songs from the worlds of pop, movie, and classical music. The story hails from classic tales of two lovers, prevented from expressing their devotion for each other by a maleficent power. Both choir and orchestra will perform in this joint endeavor. It is our hope that by combining the two, we will produce a greater sound together than apart.
LAH Student Council

The Liberal Arts Honors Student Council is greatly looking forward to another wonderful school year. We have all enjoyed meeting the Class of 2018 and recently selected Bahar Sahami, Justin Fogarty, Duncan Osburn, and Sandy Schwalen as freshman representatives for this outstanding group of students. The mentoring committee spent the summer pairing the freshman class with upperclassmen mentors to help them adjust to the University and has teamed up with the social committee to further welcome the new class through pizza parties, reading groups, and a Freshman Information Session. The entire council is also beginning to prepare for hosting All-Honors Formal this year to help to continue to raise funds for the Amorous Mayhew Carlson Liberal Arts Honors Student Council Scholarship that was created in 2013 to reward the students actively involved within the LAH community. We are also looking into getting involved in various service projects to give back to the greater UT and Austin community such as Inside Books and Austin Pets Alive. With professor-led reading groups, our annual trivia tournament, new LAH merchandise, and so many more plans, we are sure to have a busy and fun-filled year.

--Haley Williams, 2014-2015 President

Echo

Echo is the annual Liberal Arts Honors literary journal published in the spring semester. The journal showcases student submissions of prose, poetry, and photography. We will soon announce the launch date for the 2014 edition and recipients of our writing and photography awards.

To join the Echo editorial staff, please send an email to echolitmag@gmail.com or contact editor Aza Pace to be put on the mailing list.

Larry Temple Scholarship Recipient: Josh Bednorz

The Larry Temple Selection Committee has awarded Josh Bednorz one of the college’s most elite scholarships. Bednorz is one of just two recipients for 2014-2015 selected from ten finalists.

Bednorz is a Liberal Arts Honors sophomore majoring in German, Russian and East European and Eurasian Studies. He interviewed by phone from Frankfurt, Germany, where he’s studying for the 2014-15 academic year.

Liberal Arts Honors and Humanities Program

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This newsletter is distributed via our website in pdf form.
Special thanks to Leslie Gloria for designing and editing this issue.
Those interested in submitting work for the upcoming issue should contact Stacey Amorous at samorous@austin.utexas.edu or Linda Mayhew at lmayhew@austin.utexas.edu.