



# Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

The Albert Dorman Honors College Newsletter has played an integral role in representing the Honors College community and the achievements of its students for quite some years now.

As we prepared for another exciting semester at NJIT, we were faced with the challenge of selecting a theme for the fall edition of the Honors Newsletter. After exploring many different options, it only seemed fitting to choose as our theme the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Honors College, which will be celebrated in 2015.

We have striven to showcase the exceptional and countless opportunities the Honors College has to offer and how these opportunities have set its students up for success. Included in this issue are three alumni interviews that aim at providing current students with insights into what the future may hold for them. These interviews – together with another with Dr. Bloom, the former dean of the Honors College – allow us to bridge the years since the beginnings of the College to the present day and see how far it has come. Also featured are some of the many activities the Honors College offers, including the Annual Freshman Retreat and two outstanding colloquia. We then offer yet another perspective based on the first-hand experience of current students gained from participating in a study tour of Washington, D.C. This perspective shows how the Honors College can help our students both grow as individuals and make a difference in the world. What we hope you take away from this issue is the realization of how many chances you have to leave a lasting mark during your time here at NJIT.



This semester the Newsletter has three co-editors who have collaborated in their own way to create a special issue. We believe that it embodies the accomplishments of the Honors College and shows our pride in being Albert Dorman Honors Scholars.

We would like to thank the writers, layout staff and photographer, whose work is featured in this issue. Without their dedication and excellence, this publication would not have been possible. We would also like to thank Dr. Dine, the Newsletter's advisor, for being an indispensable part of the creation process and encouraging us every step of the way. Lastly, we would like to thank you, the reader, for your continued support and involvement in the Honors College community and beyond.

Thank you,

Rebecca Deek  
Anna Jezewska  
Trevor Summerfield



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# Seeing 20/20

## A History of the Honors College

Andreas Savva

*2015 marks the twentieth anniversary of the Albert Dorman Honors College at NJIT and it is certainly worth celebrating. But it is a little strange to acknowledge that our college is about as old as we are. When we were taking our first steps at NJIT, the Honors College was right there with us, with President Fenster and Albert Dorman acting as the watchful parents. Since then, the Honors College has grown from a small brainchild to one of the most well-respected colleges at NJIT.*

The roots of the Honors College can be traced back to the original Honors Program established by NJIT in 1985 with Dr. Richard Sher as its first director. There were just twenty-eight students enrolled in the program's first semester, but that number increased nearly sixfold by 1990. The following year, Ruth Baker was appointed as the second Honors Program director and she, along with Dr. Dennis Donahue, Dr. William Mech, and President Saul Fenster, began to lay the foundations for the college. But the Honors College as we know it today would not exist if not for the tremendous generosity of

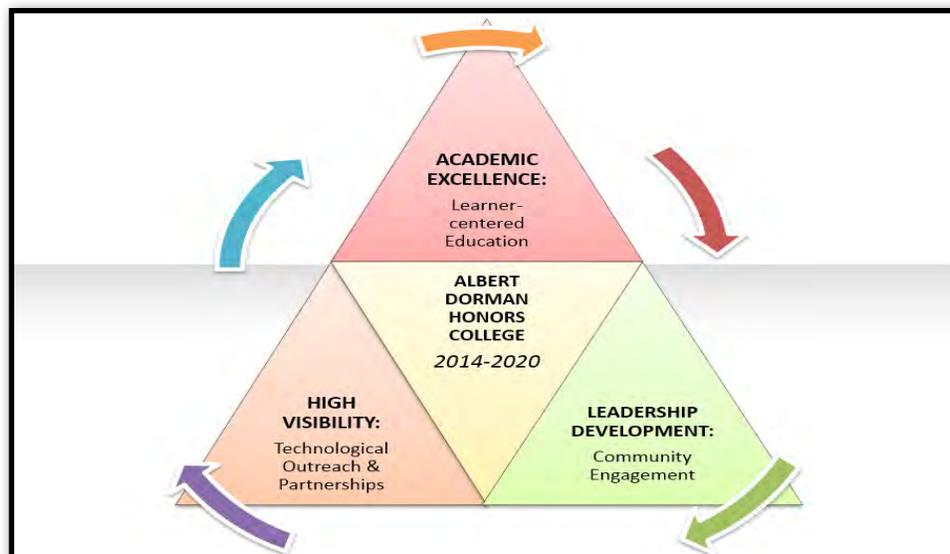
Albert Dorman. With his support, the Albert Dorman Honors College was officially consecrated in 1995 with Dr. Joel Bloom as its first dean. Fast forward twenty years and everything is coming full circle. Dr. Bloom is now the president of NJIT and the Honors College has officially named Dr. Katia Passerini as its new dean. As of this publication, the Honors College boasts its largest ever student population, with over 650 Honors Scholars enrolled in a myriad of majors. In addition, the Honors College now offers thirteen different accelerated tracks along with various BS/MS programs. But the College

is no longer just a scholastic setting; it strives to mold its students through colloquia and community service. These opportunities provide students the possibility of broadening their horizons and learning about topics outside of their major. Although these changes have improved the student experience and education at the Albert Dorman Honors College, the most obvious development has been the recent crucial change in the Newark landscape. Just as many Honors students were leaving their homes for NJIT, the Honors College was outgrowing its tiny quarters in Fenster Hall.

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As a result, the Honors Residence Hall was built in 2013, bolstering the bond between Honors student and campus. The Honors building, or Evergreen as it is referred to by many students, has it all: dorm rooms, college offices, and lounges, along with a gym, market, and café. On the eve of the Honors College's twentieth birthday, the building could not be a more fitting gift to the school and students.

Yet it would be foolish to assume that this is the end of growth for the Albert Dorman Honors College. After all, NJIT's slogan is "The Edge in Knowledge" and what better method is there to push the boundaries of the university than raising the Honors College to a higher



and still more demanding level? Fittingly enough, the number twenty provides the pathway.

2020 Vision is a strategic plan that not only aspires to improve NJIT as a whole, but also serves to “guide the Albert Dorman Honors College through its next phase of excellence.” In April 2013, the Board of Visitors instructed the Honors College to generate a strategy to further advance the college. After serious deliberations over the course of the year, a plan was developed and is to be instituted from 2014-2020. This initiative centers on three key areas: academic excellence, leadership development, and high visibility.

While every college of NJIT strives to maintain a high standard of education, the Honors College always tries to be on the edge of that horizon. As a result, the goal of academic excellence in the 2020 initiative aims to propel an already terrific program to exciting new heights. A key aspect of the initiative is to develop an “Honors Experience,” which would persuade faculty across the university to increase the number of Honors courses. The academic targets also aim to increase research output across majors with the introduction of an Honors Thesis option. Furthermore, the College will search for new ways to aid Honors Scholars on a fast track towards graduate programs.

2020 Vision will also strive

to better the Honors College as an institution for developing leaders. The college plans to develop a Center for Leadership



and Professional Development, while improving internship connections between companies and the college. The plan also aims to expand service programs and opportunities. The emphasis on leadership and problem-solving will also spread into the classroom, as students will be challenged with global issues such as sustainability and ethics in their Honors courses.

The final aspect of the Honors College’s strategic plan for 2020 is the notion of high visibility; the Honors College wants to enhance its reputation and

reinforce its commitment to excellence. To achieve these goals, the Honors College will create a communication and marketing campaign to improve its social presence. The College will also develop its reputation still further by organizing events to showcase the numerous successes of its students. The university will also begin directing students to prestigious awards such as the Rhodes and Fulbright Scholarships. In addition, the initiative will strive towards increasing the number of international programs so as to encourage students to become part of the global community. Finally, the strategic plan aims to increase networking between all Honors College members and the Board of Trustees.

It has been a long time since the Honors College was a child, learning how to tie its shoelaces and find its way in the university world. Like many of us do with our childhood memories, the Honors College looks back fondly upon its small beginnings. But just like its students, the college turns towards the future, knowing that the sun rising on the horizon is much warmer than the moon at its back. I am glad that we will be a part of this future of the Albert Dorman Honors College. For since we are scientists, engineers, and life-long learners, there is only one direction that we and our university look to go: forward.

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# Honors Retreat

## A Student's Perspective

*Mark Neubauer*

*On the morning of Friday, August 29th, a group of excited students boarded the buses that would take them on the trip that everyone had been talking about. It is an annual tradition of the Albert Dorman Honors College to send the freshman class on a two-day retreat. The students were heading to camp at Cedar Lakes Estate in Port Jervis, a rural town in New York's Orange County.*

The purpose of the retreat is to help incoming students make the adjustment to college life. They are given the opportunity to get to know one another, as well as the Honors College administration. Friendships created on the retreat may last a student's entire college experience, and maybe even a lifetime.

With 190 members, the Albert Dorman Honors College Class of 2018 is the largest in the school's history. Before the retreat, students were split into fifteen teams with creative names such as "Hipster Hamsters," "Couch Potatoes," and "Dinosaurs Fighting with Lasers in Space." Each team was led by two upperclassmen counselors, who are also members of the Honors College. Under their leadership,

the teams competed against one another in a variety of group exercises and activities.

Cedar Lakes Estate is home to beautiful scenery, complete with nature trails through forests, green fields and the lake that is its namesake. After unloading the luggage and sleeping bags in the cabins, the group from NJIT assembled in a large field. Each team was expected to create an introduction and a team chant. A detailed schedule held all of the day's events for Friday and Saturday, including team-building exercises, meal times and free periods, as well as night activities and informational seminars.

Throughout the retreat, the fifteen teams engaged in a contest to see which team could earn the most points. A team would

receive points for winning a social or cooperative game. Esmay Padron, a freshman Architecture student, said, "There was one event called 'Water the Captain.' I was chosen as captain of my team and was wrapped in toilet paper. My teammates had to protect me with their own bodies so that I didn't get wet. It was a great opportunity to let my competitive side show, and we actually ended up winning!" The games ranged from solving riddles to "Dizzy Bat," a relay race where students stumbled their way towards the finish line after spinning in circles. Even though each team was

**With 190 members, the Albert Dorman Honors College Class of 2018 is the largest in the school's history.**

competing to win, the students showed excellent sportsmanship and respect towards one another.

Later in the day, students were allowed a few hours of free time when they could choose from a variety of activities to participate in. The camp had something for everyone, ranging from physical sports like football and ultimate Frisbee, to arts and crafts like creating tie-dye T-shirts. The weather was warm and invited many students to venture near the water's edge, where they took turns zip-lining through the trees along the lakeside or launching each other into the water by jumping on the "Blob." Others went on a hike on the nature trail that encircled the lake. The free time helped make the Retreat an unforgettable experience because it allowed students to settle down



and bond with their new friends. During mealtimes, the students sat in a wooden pavilion with the other members of their team. The food was served buffet-style and there was more than enough to eat and drink. After dinner, it was time for a presentation by Dean Passerini and the Honors College administration. The Class of 2018 was able to learn more about the Albert Dorman Honors College as well as get to know the staff that will assist them during their time at NJIT. After the presentation, students were divided by major and were given the opportunity to speak with the upperclassmen counselors from their major. The upperclassmen fielded questions about classes, professors and concerns the freshmen had about their major and college life in general.

It had been a full day, but the night was only just getting started. After all, what would a camping retreat be like without a campfire and s'mores? The air was soon filled with the crackling of firewood and laughter. A dance party was held in one of the main recreation halls overlooking the lake. From any point in Cedar Lakes Estate, the music could be heard, giving the night a festive feel as some danced into the early hours of the morning. For others (the author included), it was a time of relaxation and serenity. Small groups of students found secluded spots to sit and talk under a sky full of stars. It was the

perfect way to end a perfect day. The next morning after an early wake-up call and breakfast, students were invited to run



for the position of Freshman Representative on the Honors Student Council. The speeches they gave to their fellow classmates spoke highly of the caliber and quality of students in the Class of 2018. The last round of team-building exercises took place, and then the entire group reassembled around midday. This was the time to view a slideshow that the head counselors had put together of the many moments that had made the Honors Retreat so unforgettable.

Liam McSpirtt, a freshman Electrical Engineering major, said, "Many students come into college fearing that they won't fit in or

be able to make new friends. The Honors Retreat took the pressure off and was a place where we could truly be ourselves."

The departure from Camp Cedar Lake Estates was anything but sad. Among the incoming freshman class, there was a shared sense of belonging to something great. The students were leaving with newly-formed friendships and lasting memories, about to start life's next adventure.

On the behalf of the Albert Dorman Honors College Freshman Class, I would like to extend a special thanks to the Honors College staff and the upperclassmen counselors for making the weekend retreat possible. Through your hard work and planning, you made the Retreat a truly memorable experience and helped us in our adjustment to college life. We hope to see this tradition continue for many years to come!



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# Interview with Dr. Joel S. Bloom

**President, NJIT**

*John Vito d'Antonio-Bertagnolli*

*Dr. Bloom put aside a half-hour in his busy schedule to meet with me for this 20-year retrospective issue of the Newsletter. We spoke off the record for a few minutes about the history of the Honors program and the creation of the Honors College. Dr. Bloom was the founding Dean of the Honors College, a position that he held from 1996 to 2012, when the Board of Trustees appointed him as the President of NJIT.*

**Which job do you prefer, President of NJIT or Dean of the Honors College?**

In the totality of it, it's the Presidency, because you can effect more change. The Presidency is a significant opportunity to continue to move NJIT on a path of continuous improvement. However, on a daily basis, I miss the opportunity to engage the Honors College students.

**Is there something that you learned during your experience working as the Dean of the Honors College that you apply on a regular basis as the President?**

Absolutely, yes. Being the Honors College Dean gave me the opportunity to spend more time with the NJIT students. In my

Vice President role, while I could engage students, I didn't have the opportunity to do it in an intense way. By having access easily to the Honors College students as their Dean, it reaffirmed my experience of some best practices for educating students. Much of what students learn is certainly in the classroom; however, co-curricular learning like conducting research, performing community service, and serving on projects enriches the student's learning experience. So, the Honors College is just an affirmation of what I believe, and still believe, about how we all learn. There's always some didactic instruction, somebody lectures us, we get to practice with it, but when we get to really do it, which is what I think the Honors College has mastered, that is how we truly learn and retain what we learn. Another affirming lesson



***\\ If we can't attract and succeed on behalf of the students, there is no University. //***

learned from both of my NJIT roles is, the first thing that we must think about when we take any action on this campus is what is the impact on our students. It always has to be students first. If we can't attract and succeed on behalf of the students, there is no University.

**Where do you see the Honors College in ten years? Is there anything specific that you would like to see accomplished?**

I look forward to many more alums of the Honors College having a significant impact in industry, in their communities and globally. I'm sure some of them will wind up in leadership roles across industry, healthcare,



government and at academic institutions, as teachers, researchers and administrators. I see the Dorman Honors College as a pivotal experience for many of the students that results in the alums having very successful careers. And again, the opportunity to give back to their community, to their profession, to their academic institution, as well as to continue to support the Honors College, with their treasury as well as their time, to come back as mentors, as board members and employers.

**I was reading about the history of the Honors College earlier, which named the people who were here at the beginning. Ms. Chipepo has been here for an exceptionally long amount of time. Do you have any particularly fond recollections of working with her over the past twenty years?**

Ms. Chipepo is the spirit of the Honors College. I would see her at the end of many long days, her having been in the field recruiting students, and the average person would return to the office probably dragging themselves through the threshold of the doorway. Ms. Chipepo would bound in at the end of the day with the same high energy she had at the beginning of the day. She was energized by the students she met, the interviews she had, and her thinking about the prospective freshman class. She is always so positive, so very spirited. These are my very fond recollections of Ms. Chipepo.



**What do you think is the biggest change that the Honors College has undergone in the past twenty years?**

The physical location of all of the Honors College in one place. Some half dozen years ago, as we continued to grow the Honors College, we were getting a lot of feedback from the students that there were two Honors Colleges. There was the Honors College, which was ultimately located during its growth on the fourth floor in Fenster Hall, and the social facilities that were attendant to what was on the fourth floor, and then there were the Honors students clustered in the residence halls. The honors students who were residents stayed in the residence halls, and those that were commuters stayed on the fourth floor. The commuters often felt they were disenfranchised, estranged from the learning communities and camaraderie that was being formed in the resident halls. Several years ago, a couple of us attended a national honors

conference and learned about residential honors colleges. When we returned to campus, we initiated conversations with the Honors Board of Visitors, students, faculty and others and reached consensus that a residential honors college would bring the commuting population and the residential population together in one building with the necessary social, studio and lab facilities. In addition, we included the administrative and advising offices within the building, thereby creating a true honors college community. I think that's the biggest change.

*The Board of Trustees recently renewed Dr. Bloom's contract for an additional five years. We look forward to his continued support of the Honors College.*

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# Alumnus Interview

**Katrina Hornstein**

*Elizabeth Castro*

Since 1985, students have walked the path as Honors Scholars to graduation. Many of them have accomplished great things while here at NJIT. In this article, we get an opportunity to talk with Katrina Hornstein, one of these extraordinary alumni from the Class of 2010. Katrina spent her time at NJIT studying hard and playing volleyball with her teammates who became her close friends. After her graduation, Katrina went on to receive her Masters in Aeronautics and Astronautics from Stanford. Although Katrina left the Honors College a few years ago, she still remembers the school that helped shape the professional she has become.

## **What do you remember most fondly about your time at NJIT and the Honors College?**

A few of my fondest memories about my time at NJIT include: playing volleyball – these girls were my first friends as I entered school and some are just as close now as they were while we were teammates; working for the Yearbook – it was spectacular to see it grow from a 5-person effort to a 20-plus person team that focused on quality photography, journalism and business practices. The Yearbook office became a home to many of the new students who joined, and their enthusiasm for a club and product I helped grow was amazing.

## **How do you explain to others what NJIT has to offer?**

I believe the experience at NJIT is what you make of it – it isn't a prepackaged program at a typical big name school. My most valuable moments at NJIT were not necessarily in my courses or at social events, but in individual interactions between my professors, teammates and classmates. If you want to float through college, it isn't the university for you; but if you are willing to dig a little deeper then you can extract a greater learning experience through the people you meet and the opportunities that become available to you than you might at many other schools.



## **What would you deem to be your greatest achievement while at NJIT?**

I had a lot of small, personal victories at NJIT – and it was certainly an honor winning the Presidential Leadership Award – but I feel that my greatest accomplishment was the development of the Yearbook. I had a lot of help and was lucky to pull in an enthusiastic crew, but during my two years as editor we turned our books into the publisher on schedule for the first time in many years, incorporated uniform fonts, themes and layout techniques, and expanded the business side to sell more books than ever before. As I mentioned already, the group grew from a very small set of overloaded people to a large club with dedicated journalists, photographers, editors and marketers.

## **Finally, what words of inspiration would you give to someone who was graduating out of NJIT's Honors College?**

Any individual graduating from the Honors College had to put in hard work and show a level of determination beyond the average student. That meant putting themselves up against the toughest classes, experiencing many failures and recovering from each. No matter what is learned in the classroom, that determination and perseverance is truly what makes a successful professional and I encourage every one of them to keep pushing their own limits in their field of study and every aspect of life!



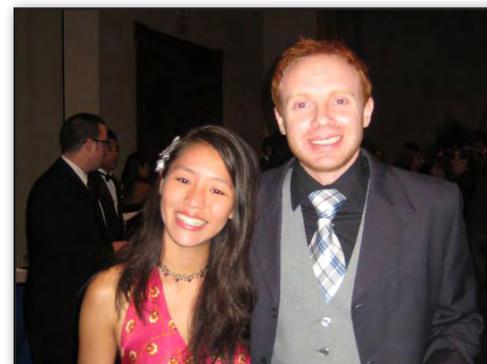
# Alumnus Interview

Geoff Cox

Mounika Ponakala



In 2003, Geoff Cox graduated from NJIT's Albert Dorman Honors College as a Computer Science and Applied Math double major with a 4.0 GPA. During his time at NJIT, Geoff was president of the Honors Student Council and studied abroad in Singapore. He went on to found the website UrShelf.com, an "eBay for textbooks" with his friends, then later founded another software company. In the following interview, Geoff talks about his aspirations when he first entered college and how his time at NJIT has helped him achieve so much in his professional career.



**Do you remember what your aspirations were when you first came to NJIT as a freshman? Do they match up with the current state of your career?**

Even before I attended NJIT, I dreamed about starting my own company. I spent a lot of time working on pet projects because they excited me and I had a chance to work with some great professors and classmates at NJIT who helped me expand my perspective.

After NJIT, I started an "eBay for textbooks" called UrShelf with a few of my Pi Kappa Phi fraternity brothers. Working on UrShelf was fun, but I learned that business and friendship don't always mesh well. So with that in mind, I headed off on my own to create a PHP library and framework called FORMfields. Shortly afterwards, I started using FORMfields to develop software for trade shows and founded GoExpo.

**How do you think your time at NJIT and the Honors College prepared you for your career?**

I remember collaborating with other honors students and in retrospect, some of those interactions were very similar to the way we come to together in

teams to solve problems in the business world. I was also fortunate enough to be part of organizations like the Honors Student Council and Residence Life, where I was exposed to the process of leading groups of motivated individuals. The meeting discussions these days aren't about making sure that there is pizza at the meetings to encourage attendance, but the recipes for successful leadership are still pretty similar.

**You were an honors scholar, president of the student council and a 4.0 student, how did you learn to balance your time in college?**

That's a lifelong lesson and something that I really struggled with my first couple years. Interestingly enough, what helped me the most was when I studied abroad in Singapore my senior year and got a chance to really think about what is important in life. Even in today's globalized world, people's value systems are drastically different. Perspective is everything and when you realize what's important, like family and friends, it's easier to clear other things off your plate.

**What is the most memorable**

**event from your time as an Honors scholar?**

The single most memorable event for me was the opportunity to study abroad in Singapore. Just ask my friends... when I came back from Singapore, I was seriously considering going back to Asia after I graduated to drive a taxicab and just travel. I was fascinated with how differently I viewed the world after traveling.

**What challenges did you face in building your career and how did you overcome them?**

I learned to pivot. To succeed, you need to have a game plan, but life is unpredictable and things change quickly so you have to be willing to adjust your plans. You need to take a step back and reflect on what you are doing on a daily basis. Is the thing that you are working on feasible? Do you have realistic expectations?

**What do you recommend every college student should experience at least one time?**

Study abroad. Whether you love or hate it, it will challenge your value system and shape the rest of your life.

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“To succeed, you need to have a game plan, but life is unpredictable and things change quickly so you have to be willing to adjust your plans.”





# Alumnus Interview

**Dr. Karisa Schreck**  
*Sahaana Uma*

**D**r. Karisa Schreck left quite an impression on the Honors College when she graduated as the class valedictorian at only 18 years of age, making her the youngest student ever to graduate from NJIT. After graduating, Dr. Schreck attended one of the best medical schools in the nation, the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, where she pursued an MD-PhD in Neurology. In this interview, she discusses her current lifestyle and work as a neurology resident and her time at NJIT.



Dr. Karisa Schreck with her husband, Tom (also an NJIT Alumnus) and their 13-month-old son, Gabriel.

**Was the decision to pursue an MD-PhD rather than just an MD one that was influenced by your time at NJIT?**

When I was a freshman, one of my professors mentioned that a scientist at UMDNJ was looking for a lab assistant so I volunteered for the job. I learned to culture cells, construct experiments, and interpret data. I knew then that I wanted to be a scientist, and my first laboratory mentor, Roman Shirokov, mentioned the idea of an MD-PhD. I had never heard of a combined program before but it sounded like exactly what I was looking for!

**What made you choose the field of neurology? Do you enjoy the work that you are currently doing? How is it balancing between working in the clinic and doing research?**

My last semester at NJIT I took a masters level course by Dr. Alvarez on neural networks. It was my first exposure to anything related to neuroscience and I found it fascinating! From there, my interest in neuroscience grew through medical school and I decided to do my PhD in the field of neuroscience, studying developmental

signaling pathways and their role in cancer resistance to chemotherapy. I love neurology as much as I love neuroscience, because taking care of people with brain problems is fascinating. It's also very gratifying to be able to pinpoint where the problem is in the brain and to try to tailor a therapy to help each individual person. I love what I do as a neurology resident, but almost all of my time is spent in the hospital right now. Next year, my last year of residency, I will have more time for research and I am looking forward to that. Right now I am focusing on becoming the best neurologist possible.

**Do you think the Honors College prepared you well for your graduate studies? How do you think it makes a difference for NJIT students?**

I think the Honors College was a great resource in preparing me for graduate education. My mentors pushed me to think outside the box with regards to my career goals and really inspired me with their enthusiasm.

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**// ... it's important to follow your heart as you pick a career. Remember, your job is something you'll spend more time doing than almost anything else in life. //**

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**If you had to go through the undergraduate experience all over again, is there anything you would do differently at NJIT? What kind of advice/tips would you give current NJIT students?**

I think college has become more difficult since I graduated. It's more expensive and the job market is a bit more challenging. I think it's important to follow your heart as you pick a career. Remember, your job is something you'll spend more time doing than almost anything else in life. If it's not something you'll enjoy you could be pretty miserable. At the same time, sometimes things change as you go through school and are exposed to different things. I thought I would become an Orthopedic surgeon and conduct tissue engineering research when I was applying to medical school, but then I discovered how fascinating the brain is and switched to neurology instead.

**Why did you choose Biomedical Engineering as a major?**

There are a lot of engineers in my family and I love science so it seemed to make sense starting out. As I progressed further in my education and decided to go to medical school it made a lot of sense as a major because of the biological crossover.

**What activities were you involved with at NJIT other than soccer?**

I was involved in the student senate freshman year, which was a lot of fun. I was also very involved in Interservice Christian Fellowship. I attended weekly meetings and helped organize inter-campus events.

**You were the youngest graduate of NJIT ever. Did this ever make you feel like you had an advantage or a disadvantage?**

Both! I felt naive and a little intimidated when starting

med school at age 19. It was slightly awkward when I couldn't participate in some of the group activities. I also assumed that people knew a lot more than I did. However, as time went along and I got to know my classmates that perceived barrier disappeared. Also, I do think it gave me extra time. My MD-PhD program took 8 years which is pretty average. That's a lot of schooling after completing college and I'm glad finishing early gave me a head start.

**Was there an event (not necessarily organized/formal) at NJIT during your undergrad years that was particularly memorable? Something that has stayed with you over the years?**

There were so many. How can I not look fondly back on the 5 a.m. soccer practices outside in November? Most of my memories focus on the people I got to know: hanging out in the honors lounge between classes, studying in the Oak study lounge for the MCATs, programming in the computer lab, cooking dinner in my suite with roommates, and surprising friends on their birthdays.

**How has NJIT changed since the time you were a student here? What do you see/hope for NJIT's future?**

When I was a student, we were still NCAA division II and the new student center hadn't opened yet. There have been a lot of exciting new developments and part of me wishes I could come back and share in some of that. I think NJIT is going to continue being at the forefront of technological development and in training the next generation of engineers/scientists.

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**\\** Most of my memories focus on the people I got to know: hanging out in the honors lounge between classes, studying in the Oak study lounge for the MCATs... **//**





# Featured Colloquium

## Music and the Brain

*Frank Almonte*

Unlike most colloquia in which the guest speaker lectures about his or her expertise while answering questions at the end, the colloquium about music and the brain led by Mark Shapiro featured a different approach. Mr. Shapiro began by giving a brief outline of what he intended to talk about, and then asked the audience questions that, in theory, seemed simple enough to answer, such as “define the terms melody and harmony”. Many members of the audience understood the concept of various musical terms but had a hard time explaining what they meant and how they come together to form music. Mr. Shapiro allowed the answers to keep snowballing until everyone in the audience reached a consensus.

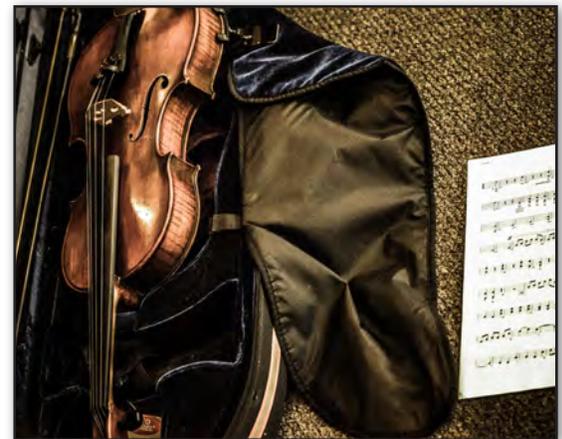
He then conducted several experiments that demonstrated a unique ability that humans have developed – namely the ability to synchronize themselves to an auditory stimulus. He had the audience clap in an attempt to have everyone clap in unison. The audience worked its way from an uncoordinated slow clap into a thunderous, synchronized applause surprisingly quickly. He then conducted another experiment in which he threw his keys and asked the audience to clap a single time as soon as they hit the ground to demonstrate a person’s ability to predict, detect, and react to auditory stimuli in the immediate future. The exercises were engaging and informational – students had the opportunity to learn about how humans evolved to use their senses as a powerful tool for survival.

Mr. Shapiro invited three students onto the stage to perform a popular



Photographs by Edmund Maciejewski

piece of American music and proceeded to describe the musical qualities that made it popular and how those particular aspects are actually quite common in music throughout the world. He demonstrated this second point by having a string band take the stage to play an old Korean folk song. Mr. Shapiro then compared the two and demonstrated to the audience how both songs, while radically different in style, had fundamental musical similarities, despite coming from completely different cultures and time periods. He explained the relationship that musical notes have with each other with respect to their corresponding sound frequencies, and how they complement one another and come together to form what the audience had previously defined to be music. It is because of those relationships that music from around the world is much more similar than one would expect; the way humans experience



sound is universal – musical ideas transcend all cultures, past, present, and future.

Many recent colloquia have been geared toward a certain group of people. This one was interesting in that it appealed to people outside of a particular group of interest by focusing on something that a majority of people at NJIT have in common: a passion for science and a love of music. It was undoubtedly one of my favorite colloquia, and I hope that we are able to continue hosting more of such high caliber.



# Honors Theatre Night



## The Colored Museum: An Inside Look into the Daily Lives of African Americans

Maryam Elhadad

**T**he *Colored Museum*, a creative and meaningful satire written by George C. Wolfe and directed by Eric Johnson, kicked off NJIT's first Honors Theatre Night of the fall semester. Consisting of eleven exhibits that were each told from a different point of view, with the very last scene, *The Party*, acting as a culmination of all the previous scenes, this play aimed to emphasize the struggles of an African American's daily life.

After a short introduction, *Git on Board*, the first scene of the play, began. The actors proceeded to wrap the audience in chains and handcuffs. Sarcastic and sad at the same time, this scene strived to demonstrate in a satirical way what the first African Americans went through when they were brought over by ship, hence the audience in chains. The next scene, *Cookin' with Aunt Ethel*, was a creative way of demonstrating African American culture. The scene presented a cooking show starring Aunt Ethel in which she cooked a recipe that was a mixture of certain aspects of African American culture, thus giving viewers an insight into African American stereotypes. The scenes then went on to exhibit the lives of African Americans throughout history. *Soldier with a Secret* demonstrated a Black soldier in the midst of the Vietnam War struggling to find the point of it all. He eventually realized how destructive the war was and what unbearable pain it was causing and so he decided to murder his comrades in order to save them from such a life of future pain. The play also presented a scene, *The Hairpiece*, which emphasized the battle between assimilation and African American pride. Then things got a little weird with the scene called *Permutations* in which a teenage girl told the story of how, while she was pregnant, her baby got turned into a large egg that sat between her legs. This scene was especially hard to follow and its sole purpose seemed to be to shock viewers.

At times hilariously ridiculous and at times sorrowful, *The Colored Museum* synthesized African American history into a powerful and provocative play that, often times, surprised the audience and pushed them to reflect upon the plights that African Americans have

and continue to face.

The potency of *The Colored Museum's* message was enhanced by the often changing scenery on stage. The actors elevated the performance to new heights through their evident emotional investment in their characters; there were no blank expressions or monotone recitation of lines.

After the play ended, honors students in the audience stayed on and attended a talk-back session with the cast and director that allowed them to ask questions about *The Colored Museum* and the work that went into bringing such a unique piece to life. The first Honors Theatre Night of the semester proved to be a successful event that offered attendees a thought-provoking look inside the daily lives of African Americans.



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\\ The actors elevated the performance to new heights through their evident emotional investment in their characters... //





# DC Study Tour

*Jasmine Faldu,  
Ashas Pathan and  
Anna Jezewska*

*The annual Honors Study Tour of Washington, D.C. took place last May, soon after the conclusion of the spring semester. Every year it receives raving reviews from students – but what makes it so unusual and out of the ordinary? Honors students Jasmine Faldu, Ashas Pathan and Anna Jezewska share their thoughts on the experience and why you should try to join the study tour and make it a special memory of your own during your time at NJIT.*

## **What were your expectations of the study tour? Were they met?**

AJ: My expectations of the study tour were based on the overview we received when applying for it: meeting members of Congress and their staffers, being exposed to several levels of policy making, and getting a first hand look at the Capital's sites and atmosphere. However, I soon learned that it was carefully planned to be much more than that. The meetings organized by Dr. Dine that we had prior to our departure allowed us to prepare well and ask deliberate and informed questions in our meetings; it's not every day that you get the chance to speak to leaders of our country who directly influence the law. I think we did a good job of voicing our concerns

and gave them something to think about. Overall, my expectations were far exceeded because of the genuine attention and engagement we received from everyone we met on Capitol Hill.

## **Throughout the study tour, there were many meetings with Members of Congress and their staffers. Were there any you found particularly stimulating or memorable?**

AP: Meeting Congressman Bentivolio from Michigan's 11th district was a great experience because of his bold, refreshing honesty. Bentivolio bluntly shared his opinions without hesitation and encouraged us to view issues from different points of view. His self-proclaimed number

one rule is "Don't Lie!", which I think everyone can get behind. His recount of being a wartime soldier was a very humbling experience, especially in today's context of veterans not receiving the medical care they deserve. Meeting with the Congressman was inspiring because of his long dedication to public service.

JF: Our last encounter with Aaron Goldner from Senator Whitehouse's office struck me as the most stimulating of all of our meetings. He said that the gravest environmental concern for the United States, and the world, is the water supply. Ever since this eye-opening remark by Mr. Goldner, I

***\\...it's not every day that you get the chance to speak to leaders of our country who directly influence the law. //***

have been increasingly aware of the water wastage in the U.S. and the lack of water in third world countries. I have tried to limit my own use of water, as well as my family's and my friends'. This was not the only experience on the study tour that gave me inspiration or motivation to do something, but it certainly had the most significant impact on me.

## **The Washington, D.C. area plays a highly important role in our federal political affairs. As a STEM student with non-political aspirations, did you find the tour to be relevant?**

JF: I am so happy that I had the privilege to partake in this study tour because it truly opened my eyes to the microcosm of Washington, D.C. and it really was relevant. Visiting the Department



of Health and Human Services was a great experience. As a pre-dental student I was exposed to a career opportunity available to me after dental school. I was not aware of the job market in the public health sector for dentists who want to work in underserved areas. It is a personal goal of mine to work with those that are less fortunate and the opportunities and programs that were introduced to us really caught my eye.

AP: As students studying a particular subject, we sometimes tend to narrowly focus on our respective fields and ignore the broader world we live in. However, being a well-rounded individual requires both personal and societal awareness. I think the D.C. study tour is a great way to encourage that. It allows students to be exposed to the federal policy process and can stimulate students' interest in government long after the tour. It is highly important to have an idea of the current political landscape, as a functioning democracy requires an informed voting populace.

**You had dinner with several NJIT alumni who now work and reside in the D.C. area. Could you share your experience?**

AJ: The alumni dinner was truly an amazing, and maybe my favorite, part of the study tour. Jasmine and I spent a sizeable part of our evening speaking to Paige Cottingham-Streater, the sister of our indispensable consultant, Bob Cottingham, and the Secretary-General of the U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational

Interchange. Mrs. Cottingham-Streater was very open in sharing the story of her journey with us, from undergraduate school to law



school to working in the nation's capital. She stressed that it was important to follow our gut feeling and take unusual opportunities because they might lead to something we never imagined. Later in the evening, I also had the honor of meeting Frank Altoz, a 1948 NCE alum with a long and illustrious engineering career who also happens to be Polish, like me. We had a great conversation in our native tongue and it was inspiring to hear how he worked his way up from very modest beginnings.

AP: During the alumni dinner, I had the privilege of speaking with Corina Koca and Matthew Anderson, both of whom provided

valuable insight on their career choices. Corina spoke about her experience as an engineer for NASA and some of the projects and roles she has taken on. Matthew spoke about his work at the US Patent office, which I found particularly interesting because it is a career choice that I had been considering. I learned more about what patent examiners do and found out that there is actually a lot of work going on relevant to my major. Getting this information first hand from NJIT alumni was very helpful and I'll be keeping both of their experiences in mind when contemplating career choices.

**What was your favorite part of the study tour?**

JF: The 11th annual study tour was an eye-opening experience to say the least. I was exposed to so much that I had not even thought about before. I certainly discovered a new viewpoint on what happens on Capitol Hill. My favorite part was the unique opportunity to be in the real setting of the Senate and House of Representatives. It was not only a tour of their offices or what they do; we were able to see everyone in action, in their daily work. We were given the privilege to watch these politicians in their work environment and ask them detailed questions. The political processes in Washington, D.C. are definitely something all students should be aware of because I learned through this study tour that the people do have a voice. We can reach out to our senators and share our opinions – we enjoy those rights as citizens of this free country.

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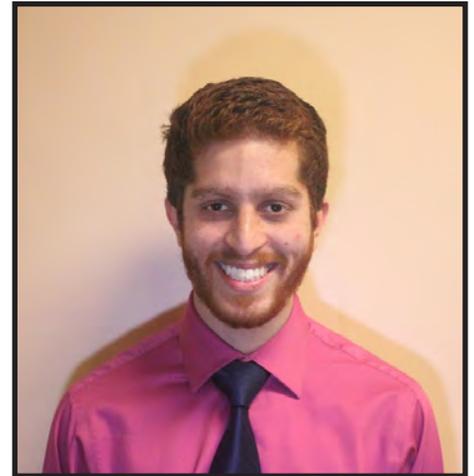
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– we enjoy those rights as citizens of this free country. //***



# Honors Student Council & 2015

*Pitambar Dayal*

As president of the Honors Student Council, I was prompted to write this short article when I realized that 2015, the year when we shall be celebrating the 20th Anniversary of our Honors College, is now just a matter of weeks away! The Honors Student Council will continue to invest its best efforts in acting as an effective liaison between the Honors student body and administration in order to address your concerns and support your ideas. This year, I have had the opportunity to meet so many new honors students, from the incoming freshman class to seniors who are preparing for graduation. Regardless of class standing, your attendance at Honors events and contributions to NJIT have helped the Albert Dorman Honors College make progress towards attaining some of its long term goals. This semester has been very productive; highlights include the implementation of the 2020 Strategic Plan and the appointment of Dr. Passerini as the new Honors College Dean.



I would like to share with you some of our projects and goals for this academic year. A common theme across all our efforts is involvement – more specifically, involvement of the Honors Student Council with other on-campus organizations, and involvement of Honors College students on campus and in the Newark community.

Recently, the Honors Student Council has been working with several other organizations in an effort to reach out to more people and promote unity amongst the students. We co-hosted Open Mic Night with the Student Activities Council and co-hosted a student-to-scholars event with the Student Senate for students interested in transferring into the Honors College. Everyone we meet comes from a different place, and by working with more people, we can broaden our perspective on how to work effectively as a team and increase our creative capacity.

One of the biggest projects we are undertaking this academic year is establishing an award that will enable students to pursue a community service project. Students can apply for this award starting next semester. We are looking for students who have been involved in community service in the past, have contributed time and effort at Honors College events, and present an exceptional idea for a community service project. The award money will be used to fund the community service project that the student will work on over the course of a year.

This effort is part of a larger initiative to increase involvement of Honors students on and off campus. Our community service committee has been working hard to keep you informed about community service opportunities. The Honors Student Council is also working on reforming the community service guidelines to require service hours that are meaningful to the student and the community.

Finally, on behalf of the Honors Student Council, I would like to say thank you to all of the students. Your questions, concerns and ideas have served as the driving force behind all of our projects. We appreciate your support at our fundraisers and events, and look forward to working with you throughout the rest of the academic year.



# The Honors Council



Carlos Morillo



Garrett Ladignon



Gregory Nistal



Kristie Varghese



Luke Schaefer



Mark Neubauer



Mohamed Elassa



Neha Syal



Omar Qari



Tania Khan



Victoria Leybova



Pitambar Dayal



# CALENDAR

2014-2015

## FALL 2014

Sep.	01	Labor Day	Nov.	26	Friday Classes Meet
Sep.	02	First Day of Classes	Nov.	27	Thanksgiving Recess Begins
Sep.	06	Saturday Classes Begin	Nov.	30	Thanksgiving Recess Ends
Sep.	08	Last Day to Add/Drop a Class	Dec.	10	Last Day of Classes
Sep.	08	Last Day for 100% Refund	Dec.	11	Reading Day 1
Sep.	09	W grades posted for course withdrawals	Dec.	12	Reading Day 2
Sep.	15	Last Day for 90% Refund	Dec.	15	Final Exams Begin
Sep.	29	Last Day for 50% Refund	Dec.	20	Final Exams End
Oct.	20	Last day for 25% Refund			
Nov.	03	Last Day to Withdraw			
Nov.	25	Thursday Classes Meet			

## SPRING 2015

Jan.	20	First Day of Classes	Apr.	03	Good Friday - no classes scheduled
Jan.	24	Saturday Classes Begin			
Jan.	26	Last Day to Add/Drop a Class	May	05	Friday Classes Meet
		Last Day for 100% Refund			Last Day of Classes
Jan.	27	W grades posted for course withdrawals	May	06	Reading Day 1
			May	07	Reading Day 2
Feb.	02	Last Day for 90% Refund	May	08	Final Exams Begin
Feb.	16	Last Day for 50% Refund	May	14	Final Exams End
Mar.	09	Last day for 25% Refund			Commencement date TBA
Mar.	15	Spring Recess Begins			
Mar.	22	Spring Recess Ends			
Mar.	30	Last Day to Withdraw			

