

# HONORS NEWSLETTER

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## The Honors Program

By Dr. Paris Svoronos, Chemistry

Once more the Annual Honors College Conference proved to be a grand day for both the students and their mentors.

On Friday April 18, 2008 almost 150 abstracts were presented by about 200 students from ten academic departments in the Medical Arts well area. These included mostly power point presentations as well as readings, debates and discussions as well as the electronic masterpiece demonstrations by the ECET department.

For the first time we had whole classrooms dedicated to Business, Math, English, Theater and Biology honors students. For the first time we had a music performance and four different honors foreign languages (Italian, Spanish, German and Chinese) represented. And for the first time we had power points from chemistry students' honors work in five different courses. Once more History and Social Sciences contributed with Honors contracts. Four chairs mentored students and half of the academic chairs were in attendance. The whole event lasted almost three hours with the administration led by President Marti, VPs King, Call, Hartigan and Zins and Deans Steele, Corradetti and Larios sitting in several presentations.

What was truly priceless was the confidence, self assurance and incredible poise all presenters displayed. The elation was evident in the faces of all kids who had dedicated hours of hard work for that "D Day". Ditto to their mentors who decided to undertake the task of setting the bar high and

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coaching their students to go over it. Full timers and a half dozen of adjuncts and CLTs worked diligently and were proud to see the fruits of their effort materialize. The program book was beautifully prepared by Carol Imandt and masterfully printed by Fred Feinstein.

An event such as the Fourth Annual Honors Conference provides one more proof of how our institution has changed its academic direction in the last eight years. The Honors program has become the aggregate of learning communities, cornerstone and capstone courses and a clear indication of the inevitable success of the Academies' idea. It also represents an assessment of the pedagogical successes of our young and enthusiastic instructors coupled with the seasoned experience of the old timers. Finally a great proof of collegiality, support and belief in the "team spirit" was evidenced by the decision of all kids to stay in their room even though they were done with the presentations simply because they felt it was important that they stay with their fellow classmates during the time of challenge. Yes, there are even better days ahead of us here at Queensborough. All of you are invited to the Fifth Annual Honors Conference on May 1.

## Partners in Research:

### The Honors Program and the QCC Kurt R. Schmeller Library

By Prof. Suzy Sciammarella

Students participating in the Honors Program are required to take a Library Research Workshop. This Workshop provides students with information on the resources that are available when searching for materials on their projects.

The Workshop is an introductory session to teach student researchers how to navigate through the multitude of materials available. Students learn how to use CUNY+Plus, the online catalog for books, as well as the CLICS system which allows books to be obtained from other libraries within the CUNY system if they are not available at QCC.

Instruction in online database searching is provided. The use of the online databases, both subject specific and multidisciplinary, cover a wide-range of sources as magazines, journals and newspapers.

Honors Program students are granted special permission to request materials from the Inter-Library Loan System at the Library. If a book is not available within the CUNY system, or an article is not available at the QCC Library, it will be located and requested from another college or university library in the United States.

An important part of the Workshop covers evaluating the use of materials selected from the Internet (Google, Yahoo, etc.). This evaluation process helps students to review websites and select reliable information sources.

The QCC Library Faculty are pleased to partner with the Honors Program students in helping them achieve their research goals.

## Mentoring Students at a Community College: An unusual experience

By Mihaela D. Bojin, Ph.D. Assistant Professor- Chemistry Department

I have joined Queensborough Community College as tenure-track faculty in the Fall of 2007 and have followed the trend in the Chemistry Department to expose the better students in research and conference presentation. So far, I have mentored four undergraduate students, and although the journey started as a difficult one, since they are all freshmen, their progress is remarkable. We work on two projects: 1) quantum mechanical calculations of inter- and intramolecular interactions in amino acids, specifically hydrogen bonds, associations essential in shaping proteins and enzymes, and 2) protonation states of dihydrofolate reductase, changes in hydrogen bonding patterns, and its inhibition mechanism by methotrexate.

These projects require knowledge of prior literature, computational skills, and a critical

chemical understanding, which my students have quickly acquired. Stirring enthusiasm, independence, and motivation is vital in every research group, and I strive to inspire these values to my group. I believe that presentations at conferences and writing scientific papers are essential in setting students on a firm scientific trajectory. Two of my students, Alexdandru Pestesi and Elizabeth Cipriana have already presented their work at the 236th American Chemical Society National Meeting in Philadelphia, the 40th Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting (MARM) 2008, as well as in Undergraduate Research conferences both as power point and poster form.

Finally, my utmost research goals are to empower my students, get them excited by and interested in the complex questions associated with chemistry, as during this process we all discover original ways to think new and old problems.

## 2008 Fed Challenge Team

Congratulations to the 2008 QCC Fed Challenge Team for having competed in the November 11th New York District regional competition. Our team members this year were Rohini Gupta, Richie Hroncich, Fernando Zapata, Alexandra Gilbert, Daniel Liu, AshleyValencia, Ka Wa Lau, Hafsa Yakoob

The Fed Challenge is a nationwide intercollegiate competition sponsored by the regional Federal Reserve offices, with the winner of each region competing in a national final competition held in Washington D.C. in December. This is the seventh year of the college competition, and the third year that two year schools compete in their own division.

The New York regional competition was held on November 11th at the Federal Reserve building in downtown NYC. The list of twenty three area colleges competing included Rutgers, Princeton, Baruch, and West Point.

The objective of the competition is to promote understanding of our Federal Reserve System among college students, and while our team members did not qualify for the next round of the competition they certainly achieved this objective.



*Left to Right: Rohini Gupta, Richie Hroncich, Fernando Zapata, Alexandra Gilbert, Daniel Liu, AshleyValencia, Ka Wa Lau, Hafsa Yakoob*

Our team finished a very close second in the New York competition for two year schools (close enough that the adjudicators had to recount the scores).

The 2008 team is special because of who they are and how they came together as team. All eight of the team members are working students. All of them came from different backgrounds and through hard work and working together became a team with each person supporting one another. We are proud of what they accomplished and who they became in the process.

The team is sponsored by the Business Department and the QCC Honors Committee. Faculty advisors are Assistant Professors Christine Mooney (CMooney@qcc.cuny.edu) and Ed Hanssen (EHanssen@qcc.cuny.edu.).

## Queensborough Community College

Presents the

## Fifth Annual Honors Conference

*Celebrating Student Research and Academic Life*

Friday, May 1, 2009

[www.qcc.cuny.edu](http://www.qcc.cuny.edu)

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## Queensborough Mock Trial Team Member Wins Award

By Prof. Ted Rosen

Jacqueline Hackett of the Queensborough Community College Mock Trial Team was awarded an All-Region Witness Award at the 2009 Atlantic Regional Tournament of the American Mock Trial Association, held last week at St. John's University. Ms. Hackett, one of 11 students from the 27 teams from 16 colleges in the tournament to be recognized, was one of three students who received the highest ranking, 19 of a possible 20 points, for her performance as a witness. She portrayed the President of a news network that was sued for defamation by a former, unsuccessful gubernatorial candidate. "My 14 year-old son came to see me compete and was so proud that, although I study, work and take care of him, I can still win a prestigious award like this," says Ms. Hackett.

Queensborough, the only community college in the tournament, competed in the Atlantic Regional for the second straight year. The Queensborough team defeated City College of New York and



was competitive against teams from Temple University and the University of Delaware. Each of the teams competing in the tournament conducted the trial of the same case, twice from the plaintiff's side and twice from the defendant's side. The students on the teams participated as attorneys, presenting opening and closing statements and engaging in direct and cross-examination of witnesses, and as one of nine possible witnesses involved in the case. All students who are interested in participating in future Mock Trial events should contact Professor Ted Rosen in the Business Department at (718) 281-5488, or at [trosen@qcc.cuny.edu](mailto:trosen@qcc.cuny.edu).

## A successful story of Honors General Chemistry II class

By Dr. Moni Chauhan, Chemistry

The General Chemistry II honors class gives me the opportunity to teach some of the best students in the college. These students are dedicated, hard working, at times very passionate and willing to learn. Among these students I choose two students every year to conduct original research under my guidance in the field of "Nanoparticle Synthesis and Characterization". Since last year I have an honors student Eunchul Kim conducting research who has proven himself to be among the best undergraduate researchers I have ever had. He spends several hours in the lab every week, and is well versed with several

instrumentation techniques like electron Scanning Microscope, Infra Red Spectrometer and Proton NMR. He has already presented the results of his research at the American Chemical Society National Meeting in Philadelphia in August 2008. This year also he will be presenting his findings at National, regional and International meetings. The concept of honors classes is great as it gives us the opportunity to go beyond the text books and teach the students the "scientific research" and "scientific method". Students tend to get more interested in sciences and continue in STEM fields.

## A First Time Faculty Experience in Honors Chemistry

By Tirandai Hemraj-Benny, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

As a first-year tenure-track Assistant Professor in the Chemistry Department at Queensborough Community College. I have always found not only the staff and faculty members of this department, but most importantly, the students of this college to be truly remarkable individuals. I have had the fortunate opportunity to mentor three of Queensborough Community College's research students for the past two semesters. Toor Noori, Chi Kwan Wong and Christina Badal have been studying and investigating the purification and functionalization of Single-Walled Carbon Nanotubes for potential electronic and sensor applications. These students have always shown great interest in their research and have always been responsible individuals in the laboratory. Overall, they have demonstrated potential in becoming great young scientists.

I truly have found the experience of working together with these three students extremely rewarding and motivating. They are all ready to present their findings at the 5th Annual Queensborough Honors Conference and the 57th Undergraduate Research Symposium of the American Chemical Society-NY section at Pace University in May.



## Teaching Honors Introductory Chemistry: Ten Years Later

By Soraya Svoronos, Ph.D. Adjunct Associate Professor, Chemistry

I have been associated with Honors classes in the Chemistry Department for the last ten years. It was the Spring semester of 2000 when the first experimental course was launched and has turned out to be anything but experimental.

There is nothing more exciting than seeing our Queensborough students' progress through this program. It is certainly a unique experience to witness their power point projects as they present them at the end of the course or during the Annual QCC Honors Conference.

When these students start they have absolutely no background in chemistry. A dozen weeks later they are ready to stand up for 15 minutes and talk about a specific topic they have picked out of the course syllabus.

I have recently been involved in research with three students in the department. Although an adjunct I have been fortunate in mentoring three students in the quantitative determination

of polyphenolic compounds, such as gallic acid, in various brands of tea. These compounds are excellent antioxidants and contribute to the healthy properties of several foods. The results of this project will be presented by the students themselves at the 57th Undergraduate Research Symposium of the American Chemical Society-NY section on May 2 at Pace University and, most likely as a poster, at the National American Chemical Society Meeting in Washington DC in August..

I have been teaching as an adjunct in at least four different senior colleges and have never seen the interest and close mentorship that is prevalent in the Chemistry Department by basically all full time faculty. The extensive research opportunity for our students in the Honors Program is a unique occurrence nationally that displays the quality and teaching ability of the department's faculty.

## Taking Introductory Honors Chemistry: The Gateway to Scientific Success

By Gerasimos Couloumbes

I did not know what to expect heading into an Honors Chemistry course. I knew that the work would be arduous, but I also had positive feelings about it. Being an honors student, and taking honors courses with the supervision of credited and excellent professors such as Dr. S.Svoronos is an honor in itself.

The way the information is presented and the class is taught is straight forward and the challenge is there lying in front of you. It is your decision whether to go the extra mile and study, or fail out of it. Given the chance by Dr. P.Svoronos, it would be wise to go that extra mile for the sake of future opportunity and credentials.

Not only do you learn in an understanding and comfortable environment, but the advantages in being in the program is in itself bestowing. It is an excellent head start for your transcript if you plan for a four-year college. Honors chemistry has been one of the many more challenging courses that not only brings about character and academic discipline to an individual, it brings out new ideas and advancements from us.

I have immense respect for the course and those who run it, and I am grateful to be a part of it.

## Conducting Research on Ionic Liquids: An Experience at the Freshman Level

By Samantha Boursiquot

This semester has been one of the most rewarding times of my stay here at Queensborough Community College. I have always been fascinated by the world of science so taking the first course in honors chemistry (CH-151) has been an unusual experience. The class is small (19 students) and the professor Dr. Paris Svoronos has provided with a great individualized attention and with multiple testing.

I have also started conducting research under Dr. Sharon Lall-Ramnarine on the biodegradation

of ionic liquids. I am still at the training stage but I am expected to work daily during the January intersession and obtain results which I will be presenting at the American Chemical Society-NY section's Undergraduate Research Symposium (URS). This will be my first experience in giving a talk to an audience. I am a little worried but I now that my mentor will guide me to success.

I am looking forward to more honors classes and I would not substitute this experience for anything else.

## How the Honors Program Prevented me from Transferring to a Senior College

By Myoung Eun (Esther) Kim

This semester is my third semester at Queensborough Community College and so far my experiences have been way beyond my expectations.

The reason I came to QCC was because I needed to get started in college and QCC seemed like the perfect place to start based on the accounts of some of my friends who already transferred after graduating from our college. I just wanted the least amount of credits possible and transfer until. I met Dr. Paris Svoronos, the Chair of the Chemistry Department. Not only he gave me a good learning experience in his CH-151 Honors

class but he also opened up many doors for me as well.

These experiences include my summer internship with the DEP where I spent ten weeks analyzing water samples with pay. I was also given the chance to tutor my fellow college students in QCC in the course I just finished this past semester. Finally I was asked to conduct classes and teach high school students as an instructor on Saturdays through an NSF grant.

I would like to recommend this Honors Program to anyone who is seriously interested in success because this experience is the first step towards many good things to come.

### Members of the Honors Committee

Glenn Burdi – Business

Chiung Chang – Music

Michele Cuomo – Academic Affairs

John Gordon – Mathematics & Computer Science

Edward Hanssen – Business

Hamin Namdar – Electrical & Computer Engineering

Eileen White – Speech

William Marsh – English

Jeffrey Jankowski – Social Sciences

Raji Subramaniami – Biology

Paris Svoronos – Chemistry

## Why Conducting Undergraduate Research Is so Significant:

### A Reflection of a Recent Graduate

By Junior Gonzales

If someone would ask me to mention the most rewarding experiences of my Queensborough education I would almost immediately respond that conducting research with the chemistry department is ranked on top. The reason is that it has left me with a self confident feeling and the unusual opportunity to be a member of a MARC research scholarship at Hunter College. At Queensborough I conducted research on the microscale determination of the equilibrium constant of weak carboxylic acids using freezing point depression. The procedure, although simple, became tedious because the results had to be reproducible which meant that the same experiment had to be performed many, many times.

However everything was forgotten when I presented my results at four different conferences including the National American Chemical

Society Meeting in Philadelphia. I want to thank Dr. Paris Svoronos, Dr. Gopal Subramaniam and Mr. Pedro Irigoyen for the invaluable experience.

I really believe that undergraduate research is the most helpful life-learning experience that gives the students the unique opportunity to demonstrate how capable they are, to develop their critical thinking, to show their abilities in making thoughtful decisions, and ultimately to realize if they really belong to the science field. I believe the core and essence of research comes from the student and mentor's enthusiasm. The effort leads to the contribution, the exchanging, and the sharing of ideas and thoughts among student researchers, and creates the incredible degree of bonding between people of diverse origin which is so characteristic of a community college.

### Being in the Honors Program

By Sherranette Tinapunan

The very first time I handled tutorial workshops was more than eleven years ago back in high school – helping students with math problems. For my sincere commitment to the students I helped, I was honored with the \*Outstanding Service Award\* as a peer tutor. This experience has left such a good impression on me that when Dr. Paris Svoronos was looking for chemistry workshop PLTL tutors I immediately grabbed the opportunity. Taking on the challenge of tutoring chemistry was a daunting task for me. Despite all this, I felt that embarking on this difficult task was worth

achieving because I truly believe that I will benefit more from this experience than the students I will be assisting. I can honestly say that my interactions with the diverse group of students have taught me to communicate better and how to 'think on my feet' faster, which I believe is a very valuable skill that I should strive to develop throughout my life. But most importantly, I am inspired to try harder and to do more by those students who show up regularly and are committed to achieving their goals.

## English-102 Honors Introduction to Literature, Fall 2008

By Kathleen Vargas

I was taking a challenge started with at QCC with an honor's class. I was never an honors student but I said to myself, "what the heck let's try it. It's not going to hurt if I don't try something new." I was first scared because I thought I wasn't going to fit in, thinking I wasn't smart like the other students. But two weeks passed I felt like I fit right in. .

By Hamel Chandly Duplan

Honor classes are more student oriented. The classes don't function like regular classes. We are always doing some extra intellectual work. I took psychology as an honor class and it worked to my advantage because I had the choice to replace an exam with a project. The project counted as an exam. Also, I took chemistry 120 honors and we did something similar. We had the choice to present something at the honors conference, which would give us 10 extra points averaged to the final exam.

By Felecia Gordon

I have to admit, at first I was a little skeptic about the whole honors class thing. My skepticism developed into nervousness which then triggered anxiety. I knew this would not be a walk in the park and I realized what taking an honor class meant for me, being that I have to take twelve credits all at once; t had to adjust my school- work attitude. It turned out to be no so bad, very different from what I was expecting.

The teacher is funny and the classmates are nice and friendly. When we have to do group work they help you out like you are one of them. I would like to take another honors class next semester, and I would recommend you to take an honors courses because the class is small and the environment is great. You would never fall asleep in any of the honor class because I sure didn't.

The whole point of the program is to help students to achieve more while helping them to keep a good GPA. I will do my best to keep my honors status and I hope my professors will help me do so. I was a little bit anxious to take English honors, but it turned out to be not so bad; I am doing ok. Lately I fell behind with my work due to other intensive classes but I'm looking forward to catching up and possibly get an A.

It was superb. It was a little laid back, that is until I realized that the real work came near the end. The experience was great; I met some really talented peers. I do not regret signing up for this, my first honor class. My mind was truly stimulated. This honor class really broadened my literary perspective, it enlightened a genre I never knew existed. I love learning and being introduced to new things especially when these things are different from usual. Now I have the urge to be a part of more honor classes.

## English–102 Honors Introduction to Literature, Fall 2008 continued

By Bianca DeMars

Being an honors student is not only a privilege in the sense that it results in impressive credentials. It is also a privilege in the sense that you, as a student, do not only have one teacher. In an honors class, your classmates are your teachers as well. The input of these intellectual individuals is valued just as highly as a professor's. There is, thus, exposure to so many relevant perspectives and so many forms of brilliance. The learning experience is so rich, flowing with ambition and interest. It is a class environment, at

By Reese Thompson

Because I consider myself an untraditional student due to a variety of reasons, I don't know how representative my experiences will be. However, I have to say that the one Honors class that I am in, EN-102, is an absolute blessing. After sitting through one class with my originally scheduled EN-102, I really considered walking off campus never to return again. From a student's point of view, there are very few options in a class that they find unchallenging. Sitting in a crowded classroom among college age students slouched in their seats, while the teacher rambles on about "Theme" and "Composition" (two concepts I learned about in third grade), I could either kill myself or become one of these slouching, blank-faced students. Of course, neither of those are attractive options. I don't mean to disparage any of the teachers or the students. College is not a learning environment so much as a series of tightly scheduled hurdles you have to jump with the ultimate goal of a diploma, a job, whatever. Students want good grades while juggling any number of economic/living situations

last, that does not reek of bored, captive audience. There is, instead, the overall vibe of want.

Students are placed in the honors program not only because they're qualified, but also because they're committed. Having the opportunity to meet people of that stature is so rewarding in itself. There is the common desire to put the mind to use and fill it with information. That common ground truly nourishes the climate of the course. We each enter the room with this driven gaze. It is, truly, a unity.

and teachers want to be accommodating to the students so they might have a future. College professors should not have to do the work that elementary and high school teachers failed to do before them. Whatever it is that causes students to arrive in college with seventh grade reading and writing skills is not for me to say. However, for the student who doesn't need to learn what a "Theme" or a "Composition" is, there is no room in such an environment to apply them self. And really, the English Dept. should allow certain individuals the opportunity to skip the prerequisite courses if they can successfully demonstrate an adequate skill level. With that said, the Honors EN-102 has exposed me to non-traditional, socially progressive literature, as well as to a group of young articulate individuals speaking from different backgrounds and points-of-view. Ideally, however, the regular EN-102 should look more like the Honors EN-102.

## A Day in the Life of an (Honors) Accountant

By Dr. Glenn M. Burdi, Business

Every semester I begin each accounting class having my students introduce themselves and explain why they have chosen their major. Most students say they have chosen the field of accounting because they heard that accountants earn good livings.

Others don't have a reason. I always tell my students that every day of their lives they will have to wake up in the morning and earn a living, so they need to enjoy their work. They need to be passionate about their field of study and this passion will lead to a good living.

Each student needs to experience their field of study while pursuing their education. Internships and part time jobs lend themselves to this endeavor. In an effort to give my students this opportunity I developed a project call "A Day in the Life of an Accountant." Although this project was not a requirement of the course work, Dr. Jonas Falik, Chairman of the Business Department, suggested that students interested in the project enter into an Honors Contract. The Honors Contract required my students to chose a public company within the tri-state area and write a letter to its chairman or controller inviting themselves to spend a day in their accounting department. Many companies responded to their requests. Before their visit the students researched the company, reviewing annual reports and SEC filings. The student drafted questions and prepared for their visits. Students visited Merrill Lynch, Bank of New York, and Verizon

Upon the completion of their visits, the students composed reflection papers on their experiences. The Honors Contracts allowed the student the ability to enter the real work environment of an accountant while earning Honors credits.

The student feedback from the visits was outstanding. They were excited when they received the phone calls inviting them to the company, and meeting individuals with high-level company positions encouraged them to attain similar success.

As one student stated, "Although I have never been involved with any school activities, I am extremely proud of myself for having the faith in myself to participate in this project. There were points where I was going to change my mind, but decided not to. The entire time I knew this was my chance to become acquainted with my future. I learned so many things and felt very interested. I thought this idea was going to be boring and it was the opposite. One thing I enjoyed learning was the fact that the boring classroom material we learn in school is just the building blocks. Eventually things will seem easier and less boring."

I believe as educators it is our responsible not only to provide an academic education to our students but also to expose them to their chosen field of study outside of the classroom. The Honors Program at QCC is an excellent way to do this.

**THE HONORS PROGRAM** at Queensborough Community College is a comprehensive academic program that provides an enriched classroom and overall intellectual experience to students who have demonstrated high academic achievement. Honors scholars have an opportunity to expand their knowledge in areas of particular interest, to distinguish themselves among their peers, and to make an acknowledged contribution to the intellectual and cultural life of Queensborough. In this way, honors scholars develop the strong academic and leadership skills required in the pursuit of advanced degrees and challenging careers in New York City and beyond. Honors scholars take a combination of honors and non-honors classes, and may earn honors credits through honors contacts. To graduate as an honors scholar, students are required to complete successfully a minimum of 12 honors credits and have earned an overall 3.40 GPA. Transfer credits are not included. No special or extra fees or costs are required to register for honors classes.