Annual retreat at Cho-Yeh Sept. 26-27

“At the retreat everyone makes friends that they keep throughout their time at San Jac. I always joke that the honors lounges get a lot louder the Monday after the retreat,” commented Honors Program Director, Eddie Weller.

Traditionally the retreat features a guest speaker, a movie, and skits. In addition everyone likes the free time out in the woods. The campfire, featuring s’mores, is also a big hit.

The cost of the retreat is $25 and can be paid at the honors offices. Call Ms. Janna Barton at 281-929-4614 to sign up.

The Honors Program will host its annual retreat September 26-27 at Camp Cho-Yeh near Livingston, Texas. Once again the retreat will use the Phi Theta Kappa Honors Topic as the theme of the gathering. This year the topic is: “Frontiers and the Spirit of Exploration.”

Each year honors students from all three campuses gather to explore the honors topic with their peers.

Berlin-Munich planned for May 2015

The Honors Program will be offering a trip to Berlin and Munich in May under the leadership of Dr. Abbie Grubb. The tentative cost for the trip is $2000. The trip will be tied to courses in the honors program in which each participant will enroll. These will be finalized this summer.

Students will take the course in the spring semester during the trip. Highlights will include the Brandenburg Gate (pictured), Checkpoint Charlie and the Berlin Wall, the Pergamon Museum, Potsdam, Dachau Concentration Camp, and the Neuschwanstein & Linderhof Palaces.

Applications will be available in August, with the first installment due September 15. Begin saving now!
“Every step we took, every stair we climbed was worth every single second of our time. . . . It was my past, it is my present, and it will be a part of my future,”

Lee Davis

Students from the Honors Program, as part of a Western Civilization II class, spent a week in Paris in mid-May under the direction of Dr. Katy Rudisill.

The trip included such notable sights as Versailles, Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower, the Arch de Triomphe, the Paris Catacombs, Sacre Coeur, and the Louvre.

This was the first international trip for the Honors Program, but not the last (See below).

In addition to the many history sites, students toured some of the finest museums in the world. Everyone had to visit da Vinci’s Mona Lisa as well as other old masters at the Louvre, while the Musee d’Orsay offered some of the finest impressionist paintings and the Musee National de L’Orangerie housed Monet’s famous Water Lilies. Perhaps the catacombs were the creepiest site, with millions of bones lining the long underground trek.

The opulence of Versailles explained without words the coming of the French Revolution. And the beautiful architecture, dating back in some cases nearly a millennium, was amazing, from Notre Dame to the Eiffel Tower. According to Rudisill the students “performed brilliantly while there, living like Parisians, intermingling with the locals, and taking in the sights and history of the City of Lights.”

Arch de Triomphe, the Paris Catacombs, Sacre Coeur, and the Louvre.

Honors Program Courses are REAL

Honors courses are taught by some of the best professors at San Jacinto College in small classes limited to eighteen students. Yet what makes the classes even better is that they are all REAL.

The REAL acronym highlights the four areas that the Honors program through its classes and activities build:

- Research
- Enrichment activities
- Academic rigor
- Leadership

Academic rigor. Will be a hallmark of every class, allowing students to delve deeper into a subject. In addition they will also include two or three of the other areas. Research will be done in a mode appropriate to a professional in the discipline. Enrichment activities might include trips to museums or government buildings, in or out of Houston. Leadership might come from Service Learning, for instance.
Meet the Honors Program Coordinators

While honors students may take courses at any college location, each campus has a coordinator to oversee programs and activities. These three coordinators are the heart of the program.

At the North Campus, Maria Donaire-Cirsovius is our longest serving honors coordinator. An historian who specializes in Latin American (she was born in Guatemala), she is “ABD” (meaning all but her dissertation for her doctorate) from Texas Christian University. At San Jac she has been instrumental in the success of the Social Science Alliance (SoSA) which has sponsored academic activities such as Hispanic Heritage Month and the student book club. Affectionately known as “Ms. D” to her students, she has successfully built a strong program of classes on the North campus. Her office is 8.122—next door to the Honors Office.

Cindy Sledge, leads the South program for her second semester. A psychology professor who once served as a counselor for children involved in child abuse, she is ABD from Fordham University in New York City. A mother of two pre-teens, she also served as a Phi Theta Kappa co-advisor before becoming the honors coordinator at South. A strong advocate of undergraduate research, her students presented at several venues last year, including the Great Plains Honors Conference in Fort Smith, Arkansas. The newest coordinator, is actually returning to honors after several years off. After earning a Ph.D. from Northwestern University in Anthropology, Pam Maack joined the San Jacinto family full time in 1992. She has taught in the Honors Program since 1997, winning the Honors Program Professor-of-the-Year for 2001-2002. Well known for her research of the Waluguru people, she has worked with them in Tanzania on three separate occasions. On her last trip there she worked as a consultant for USAID and the International Red Cross on the effects of AIDS on families and children in Tanzania. She has also participated in numerous archaeological digs during her career. Her daughter Kate is a journalist in Lebanon.

“We have an incredible group of coordinators; without them the program would fail,” Eddie Weller Honors Program Director.

Student Research Promoted, Presented

This past year, 2013-2014, students presented their classroom research at a number of prestigious conferences. Philip Rask presented a paper on the Texas Water Safari at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR), which was held this year at the University of Kentucky. This is the premier student research conference nationally. Out of the more than 450 colleges and universities, fewer than a dozen community colleges had students present their research.

Other student presentations included the East Texas Historical Association, the Great Plains Honors Conference, the UHCL Conference for Research and the Creative Arts, and the Gulf Coast Intercollegiate Honors Conference.

One student, AJ Carrillo, has already been asked to present his paper on John Henry Faulk, as the only community college student to present at the Texas State Historical Association Annual meeting in Corpus Christi in March, 2015.

Philip Rask at the East Texas Historical Association meeting in Nacogdoches.
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Why Not the Best?

The San Jacinto College Honors Program offers academically talented and highly motivated students special opportunities for enriched learning and recognition. The program provides a stimulating range and depth of scholarly pursuits within an interdisciplinary context.

The Honors Program also offers students the opportunity to receive scholarships, to make presentations at local, state and national conferences, to be published in the Gulf Coast Consortium Intercollegiate Honors Journal, to attend cultural events, and to interact with other academically motivated students.

Graduation Important Milestone

Students at community colleges who are planning to transfer to a university often ask, “Should I graduate?” The answer is a resounding YES for numerous reasons.

First, no one knows what the future holds. Before a person is able to graduate from a university, “life” may step in with a crisis or opportunity that keeps someone from finishing their four-year degree for several years. If they have not graduated from San Jacinto College, then all they have to show for their work is a high school diploma. If they graduate with an AA or AS, employers know they have completed a major goal.

Surprisingly the greatest increase in income is for those earning an associates degree compared to those with a high school diploma. The degree can make a difference in earnings for a lifetime.

In addition, universities look more favorably on transfer students who have completed a degree. It is an indicator that a student will complete what they start. This attitude will help students to be accepted and to earn scholarships.

Graduating also says something about the student—they have completed a tangible goal. This is an accomplishment that many people do not complete. It is not the end of a dream, but an important step on the way.

Any student wanting information on graduation should contact the honors office or their campus coordinators.

2014 graduates at Reliant Stadium for the first combined San Jacinto College graduation.