Happy New Year everyone,

It’s time for another newsletter and another update from the Honors College Student Council, and I’ll keep this one short. From the perspective of the council, the fall semester was a great success. Perhaps chief among our successes was the inaugural BUC Funded Alzheimer’s Association Charity Ball, which we could not have put on without the help of the Roan Scholars and Sigma Kappa. The ball ended up raising approximately $1,700 and was attended by students representing at least a dozen different student organizations. I am very grateful to all the individuals who worked to make the event possible, as well as everyone who gave their time and money in the name of a wonderful cause. Hopefully, the ball will become a philanthropic tradition at ETSU. Another notable occurrence was the pinning ceremony, where — for the first time — honors students, encouraged to do so by our administration, had a hand in running things. The hope of the administration and the council is that this involvement will continue and increase in the future. Other council-sponsored events such as the potluck and “end of the semester stress relief shindig” (it doesn’t really have a name, so we sort of make one up every time) also occurred and were generally well-received. Looking forward to the spring semester, the council is already working on ideas to make the honors social the best it can be, and other council-sponsored events such as the potluck and “end of the semester stress relief shindig” (it doesn’t really have a name, so we sort of make one up every time) also occurred and were generally well-received. Looking forward to the spring semester, the council is already working on ideas to make the honors social the best it can be, and are there a number of ideas on how to make the pinning an engaging and memorable experience for all involved. In general, my desire for the council is that we continue to make ourselves and the Honors College recognizable entities on ETSU’s campus as we seek ways to better our university and community through partnerships and events of all kinds.

Best,
Woodson Carpenter
HCSC President

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**FACULTY SPOTLIGHT**

**DR. KAREN KORNWEIBEL**

by Laura Traister

Dr. Karen Kornweibel, the director of the Honors-in-Discipline program in the ETSU Honors College, also works as an associate professor of English in the Department of Literature and Language. Although she has been at ETSU since 2007, she is originally from out west.

Dr. Kornweibel was born in Sacramento, CA and completed her undergraduate work at the University of California, San Diego before pursuing a PhD in comparative literature at the University of Texas. She held two tenure-track jobs at other universities before she moved to East Tennessee after marrying a professor who was working ETSU.

It is no accident that Dr. Kornweibel has attended and taught at only public universities. “That had been something that really mattered to me a lot was working for a public university partly because I just believe in the social mission of education...being part of this sort of social move towards providing higher education for a lot of people,” she said.

Freshmen in the University Honors Scholars program will recognize Dr. Kornweibel as the new literature professor for the class called Quest for Meaning and Values, which she teaches with philosophy professor Dr. Leslie MacAvoy.

For her research, Dr. Kornweibel specializes mostly in 19th century African-American and Afro-Cuban literature, tending to focus on race and the strength of writers who resisted racism.

“I’m fascinated by how individual writers in a variety of genres are negotiating ideas of their own personal identity and of national identity,” she said.

“I like to look back at that partly because I find it very enriching and rewarding but also because I think it’s still necessary today if you look at a lot of the things that are going on...My work does in some ways have a real social aspect to it where I want to interrogate literature in such a way that reminds us of ways that we can resist this.”

Her experience with the Honors College began when she was asked to teach a class called Honors Survey of European Literature several years ago. Then she became the coordinator for the HID English program, which later lead to her becoming the HID director for all programs in 2010.

In her role as director, Dr. Kornweibel supports the coordinators of the 21 HID programs across campus, along with keeping records, assisting students, distributing scholarships and providing enrichment opportunities.

She also helps departments develop new HID programs, some of the most recent being programs in Theatre and Dance, Communication Studies and Nutrition.

To her, one of the best parts about the HID program is that it gives transfer and nontraditional students the opportunity to be in the Honors College.

“That’s important to me because while we certainly have great honors students who come in as freshmen and they have all the qualifications that they need, not everybody’s path is totally linear, nor everybody figures out the thing that they’re best at when they’re eighteen.”

“Being able to not only academically but financially support these students is very rewarding,” she added.

Dr. Kornweibel said she would encourage students, especially freshmen, to have an open mind about the future and to pursue what sparks their interest.

“I think there are a lot of students who come in thinking they already know what they’re going to major in and what that means and what major leads to what job and sometimes they need to let go of that to find their way...I would tell students not to be afraid to take risks...and to really be careful in finding your mentors.”

To close, she added one last critical piece of advice: “Try and have some fun in college, too!”

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT
ELIZABETH MORGAN
by David Floyd

When Elizabeth Morgan tried going to college for the first time, she discovered that she wasn’t ready to continue her education.

She decided to take some time off, and as it turned out, that experience gave her just the perspective she needed.

“I went hiking,” Morgan said, “and I realized how much the natural environment influenced my mood. It made me happier and put me at peace.”

Morgan decided to re-enroll in school, realizing she wanted to pursue a career focused on the environment.

Her passion for hiking blossomed into a fascination with nature and her fascination with nature in turn developed into a concern about the future of the world’s ecosystems, encouraging her to declare a major in environmental health.

But hiking wasn’t the only thing that gave her perspective during her time off from school.

Morgan also gave birth to her daughter Harper, an experience that dramatically changed the direction of Morgan’s life.

“I don’t know if I would necessarily be in school right now if it wasn’t for my daughter,” Morgan said. “I would still be hiking. ... She was really the reason I decided to come back.”

Morgan applied to the ETSU Honors College and was accepted as an Honors Scholar, receiving a scholarship that relieved a great deal of Morgan’s financial burdens.

She made friends, began her research and found ways to navigate the difficult double life of being both a parent and a student.

And as it turned out, the hard work paid off.

Morgan recently learned she was one of 36 recipients of the Greater Research Opportunities Fellowship, a national award offered by the Environmental Protection Agency that will dramatically expand the scope of Morgan’s research, providing her with upgraded resources, improved contacts within her field and a paid internship in one of the EPA’s laboratories.

The fellowship also covers several future expenses. Morgan’s Midway scholarship will only last her through the remainder of this year, so Morgan is grateful that, in addition to all the other amenities covered by the fellowship, the EPA is also paying for the remainder of her education at ETSU.

While she’s certainly quite successful now, Morgan attributes many of her accomplishments to the time she took off from school, an experience that gave her the perspective necessary to discover that she needed to pursue something that was both practical but also aligned with her passions.

“Most of the things you do in life do not revolve around natural ability,” Morgan said. “Most of the things you do in life ... come down to hard work.

Acclimating to a STEM-intensive curriculum was hard, especially since Morgan previously spent a great deal of her time foregoing science and math in favor of artistic pursuits.

“While the life of a college student is particularly stressful, Morgan believes the opportunities the EPA has offered her will act as a springboard, launching her toward even loftier accomplishments.

“Anyone in the Honors College knows you’re going to have to work regardless of what your life circumstances are,” Morgan said, “but getting this fellowship has been such a positive nod in the right direction. It’s the universe saying, ‘You’re doing good things ... all this stress is paying off.’”

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS RAISE FUNDS FOR ALZHEIMER’S ASSOCIATION
by Laura Traister

On a rainy Thursday night in November, hundreds of ETSU students gathered in the ballroom of the D.P. Culp University Center to eat, mingle and dance the night away, all while supporting a charitable cause.

The event was the inaugural Alzheimer’s Association Charity Ball, which was held on Nov. 18 and was presented by the Honors College Student Council in collaboration with Sigma Kappa and the Roan Scholars Leadership Program. The Student Government Association’s BUC Fund provided money that covered costs for food, decor and other event essentials.

Rana Elgazzar, a sophomore University Honors Scholar and honors council member, said the idea for an event like this was introduced by a freshman UHS student last year. The council kept the idea in mind and started planning to have the event during the fall 2015 semester.

They started planning during the first Honors College Student Council meeting of the semester and continued until the day of the event.

“We had approximately 12 people on the focus group alone, all with specific tasks ranging from catering, ticket sales, decorations and communication with campus organizations. Although I led the effort, I mostly certainly couldn’t have done it without the work of everyone in the group!” said Elgazzar.

Over 300 event tickets were sold, resulting in nearly $1,700. Proceeds went to the Alzheimer’s Association. The money reached this organization via Save the Brains, a student-led group founded by UHS juniors Gabriela Coronel and Caitie Duke.

The group raises funds for the Alzheimer’s Association and participates in an event called the Walk to End Alzheimer’s.

The following organizations from ETSU and the wider community supported the event by purchasing a group table: Sigma Kappa, Psi Chi (Psychology Honor Society), Sigma Chi, Students for Altruistic Actions, Wallace Middle School, Health Occupations Students of America, the Honors College administration and the Alzheimer’s Association.

Given the success of this year’s event, many people are hoping for the event to continue in the future.

“We definitely hope to make this a tradition on campus. The idea of supporting the Alzheimer’s Association in particular came from many students, especially honors
and Sigma Kappa, who are already involved with the organization, and of course the work of the Alzheimer’s Association is truly deserving of support for all they do to battle the disease in this region,” said Elgazzar.

“Also a great success was the tremendous representation of so many diverse student organizations all in one place...coming together and sharing a good time for a good cause.”

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**STUDENT SPOTLIGHT**

**MASON VAN HORN**

*by David Floyd*

When Mason Van Horn visited East Tennessee State University a few semesters ago, he realized that the university fit many of the criteria he was looking for in a college.

The campus was beautiful, the people were friendly and there were many ways for him to get involved.

Among the programs he’s discovered since enrolling last fall, the Honors College has provided him with some of his greatest and most valuable resources, offering him a decent way to continue his education after he graduated from Roane State Community College.

“ETSU had really the only honors program for transfer students,” Van Horn said. “I was trying to find a program that would continue to challenge me to grow as an individual and as a member of society.”

As a member of the Midway Honors Scholars program, Van Horn has volunteered at numerous events and has developed a strong, expansive network of friends within the college.

When Van Horn was evaluating schools during his college search, he discovered that ETSU satisfied several essential requirements: it was located in a beautiful part of the region, he believed the university was full of people who could help him continue to follow Christ and it provided him with a group of people with whom he could instantly sympathize.

“I am a very family oriented person, and several of the Midway Honors, University Honors and Honors-in-Discipline students became my ETSU family.” Van Horn said. “The Ada Earnest Honors House became a refuge for me to study, print, laugh and honestly cry over some of my courses.”

While searching for colleges, Van Horn was also aware that he needed to find a school that he could attend tuition-free.

“It is not that my parents do not want to help, but financially they cannot,” Van Horn said. “I am really a first generation college student. My father and I graduated from Roane State together and he is currently working on his undergraduate degree at Tennessee Tech University.”

Van Horn is also a very religious person and said that one of the things that drew him to ETSU was that he felt like it was a place where he could continue to profess his faith.

“I really had a desire to try and be where God wanted me to be at to grow,” Van Horn said. “My first week on campus, I felt that calling was solidified and I knew this would be where I would finish my Bachelor of Music.”

Music has been a major part of Van Horn’s life, but when he first enrolled at ETSU, it wasn’t his first choice.

“When I applied for the Midway Honors program, I applied under the English major,” Van Horn said. “I was also going to double major in music. I will say that the Lord did not intend for that to be so. I originally chose music out of obligation, but the truth is that God was right! I love studying music. It is amazing to be able to work with a program that will provide you opportunities to perform and to work with others.”

Ultimately, Van Horn ascribes a lot of his success and development to the lessons offered by the Honors College.

“I truly cannot thoroughly explain how many ways I have grown and learned new things about myself, others and the world around me while I have been in the Honors College,” Van Horn said.

“I will say that all that I have learned has led me to believe that I am truly blessed to be surrounded by caring students, faculty and staff.”