

Spotlight on Honors Service Events

By: Christopher Whittall, HC XVI

The weekend of Friday November 16 through the 18th marked the occurrence of numerous service events throughout the campus of West Chester. Many students found solace in the abundance of community service hours available prior to the Thanksgiving break and as they filled their service forms with entries they managed to fill the community of West Chester with joy, dancing, and greater awareness of hunger. In particular, students participated in the Sleep-out for Hunger, Dance for a Chance, and the Hanging of the Greens.

While most West Chester University students spent their Friday evening on the 16th of November tucked warmly in their elongated twin sized bed, a substantial group elected to sleep in the Residential Quad on this particular evening. The Sleep-out for Hunger aims to raise awareness of hunger and homelessness within the wealthy community of Chester County.

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Alumni Interview: Austin Gross

By Brittany Baumeister, HC XIII

What differs on the West Chester University campus from when you attended school here?

I was walking around campus on the first day of classes, and this place is simply buzzing! The energy seemed to be more tangible than I remember from my days here as a student. While the Academic Quad has pretty much the same layout of buildings, the new residence halls provide a totally different feel on the residential side of campus. There's an assortment of buildings where there used to be grass and sunbathers, who seemed so ever-present in the warmer weather that I wonder if maybe they just built over them and they're still down there in the basement, studying away and working on their tans through the windows.

While the main Academic Quad feels largely unchanged, my impressions of the new Swope Music Building is that it seems fantastic for serving the students and faculty in their musical pursuits, from the classrooms to the music studios to the performance halls. When I was a student, the music faculty were not all housed in the same building, so it feels nice now to have everyone under the same roof. And although the physical space has changed, the energetic vibe seems simply to be a fresher version of itself. So for me, even though the building has changed, it's nice to have the spirit of tradition alive and well in the people who inhabit it.



Can you tell us more about your journey from Honors College student to doctoral student?

Frankly, it feels great (and a bit surreal) to be back doing the very thing that inspired me to do what I'm doing, all in the very place where I was inspired to do so in the first place (well, a little further over on campus...).

The approach of the Honors College prefaced my thinking in my doctoral program through its seeking a kind of interconnectedness among disciplines. While the Honors curriculum did this with relation to the larger community, I have also come to see the benefits of this approach in my own field of music. Rather than considering certain musical disciplines separately, oftentimes linking performance, musical creativity, historical practices, and knowledge of musical theory can enliven our pursuits, where these different facets end up mutually reinforcing one another. So, while this approach in the Honors College helped lead me toward being a more informed citizen, it also helped to lay the template for my working toward a kind of comprehensive musicianship, something I began in the music program at West Chester and continued in graduate school at the Eastman School of Music.

What is your favorite memory from your time as a WCU student?

It's hard to pick a favorite memory from my time as a student at West Chester, since multiple choice questions are of course harder to answer when it feels like there are too many options to choose from. I think that I'd have to say it's simply the cumulative memory that is my favorite, of day-to-day life with my Honors and music classmates, music-making in "old Swope," and simply walking around outside on campus in nice weather, appreciating the atmosphere and walking forward.

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Students chose to sleep outside to endure an act similar to the sad realities of many homeless and hungry individuals in Chester County. Students found their toes near frozen but the event accomplished its task. As Ben Doersom put it, “The sleep out was a fantastic experience and made me feel like I helped raise awareness throughout Chester County I now better understand the plight of so many homeless individuals in the area and hope to participate in similar events in the future.” The cold ground provided little comfort for the participants of the Sleep-out for Hunger, yet many students managed to spend twelve hours outside, awaking only in the wee hours of the morning to return to the comforts of residence hall living.

Hanging of the Greens runs each year through the Chamber of Commerce of Greater West Chester and aims to beautify the town by hanging greenery and bows for the holiday season. The event occurred on Saturday, November 17th and upon completion community members and students alike found pride and jubilation in the wonderfully decorated store-fronts. According to Honors College Freshman, Marissa Giovinazzo, “Hanging of the Greens was a lot of fun and a great way to connect to the borough of West Chester. It was really exciting to see how beautiful the town looked afterwards.”

Saturday proved to be a particularly busy day for eager students as it marked the second annual Dance for a Chance, a sixteen hour dance marathon raising money for various charitable organizations. This year’s marathon occurred in the Sykes Student Union ballroom, beginning in the morning and running strongly through the night. The event again successfully raised a substantial sum of money—donated funds totaling \$1100. Coming in first place, the team of Erin Yentz and Ana Amand happily chose to donate their winnings of \$500 to the Four Diamonds Fund, an organization focused on fighting childhood cancer. Other donations included \$300 to COCINA, \$100 to both the National Kidney Foundation and the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, and \$50 to the Children’s Miracle Network and Our Little Roses. The participants in the sixteen hour marathon battled tired legs, hips, and eyes, but ultimately achieved a fantastic feat as they contributed funds to highly motivated charitable organizations.

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A huge *Thank You* to
Drs. Kevin and Kenda
Dean for hosting their
annual HSA open house
in Princeton!

Involvement Eruption!

By: Michael Jendzurski, HC XI

Cambridge alum and Oxford professor emeritus, Hugh Allen, once noted, "Jumping at several small opportunities may get you there more quickly than waiting for the one big one to come along." During a time of magnanimous transition, the incoming students of HC XIV were expected to make sense of an Honors Student Association (HSA) speed dating commission and an overload of options at the university's Involvement Fair, all the while trying to figure out the new academic paradigm higher education affords. To say the least, the transition to college can be stressful. To alleviate some of the pressures, Matt Whittall (HC X) created the position of Involvement Coordinator, upholding the responsibility to meet individually with each incoming freshman discussing college-life adjustments, potential areas for engagement, and goal assessment.

No doubt transitions vary from student to student, but the vast majority attributed a sense of relief due to the quick 20-minute meeting they attended during the second weekend of the semester. One student mentioned, "I love the personal attention all the organizations gave me, but I could not make sense of anything; it almost seemed like I was a rock star, but I did not want to be the rock star." Often, first-year students do not want to get "over involved" at the risk of making a splash that negatively impacts their academics. "I would like to get involved more, but maybe next semester; this semester is focused on grades." There is nothing wrong with this mindset; however, studies have shown involvement with curricular activities increase academic success by teaching time management and interpersonal communication skills, as well as providing an imperative outlet for fun.

As the semester quickly draws to a close, the Involvement Coordinator will meet with the HC XIV students again to assess their past semester and probe how they view a successful tenure at the undergraduate level. The HSA presents itself as a lab to identify likes and dislikes, leadership traits, strengths. Furthermore, it offers the opportunity to incubate new ideas and build on existing programs. Many first-year students have already assumed leadership roles within the committees of the organization and that success is attributed to the chair's willingness to delegate coupled with freshman initiative. In my own interpretation of a quote by President Harry S. Truman, "A distressed student is one who makes difficulties of their opportunities while a student leader is one who makes opportunities of their difficulties."

Thank you HC XIV for a splendid first-set of interviews. The sign-up sheet, filled to the brim and then some, was a truly humbling experience for me. I am eager to reflect with your leadership growth after one semester. Be on the lookout for the sign-up sheet!!

Best of luck closing out the semester and with Finals!

Cordially,

Michael B. Jendzurski

Involvement Coordinator



CONGRATULATIONS

To everyone in HSA for completing over 1175 hours of community service this semester!!

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One specific event that does often come to mind occurred on a trip to Ecuador, on the annual Honors trip of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. Here, two students from each of the Honors programs from Pennsylvania's state schools are selected to go on an international trip, and I was fortunate to be selected as one of the representatives from West Chester University. At one point, I started handing out some snacks that I had brought along to give to local children. The joy in one of the children's faces as he ran and jumped up for a pack of Smarties is something I've never forgotten. It suggested that what may seem like a small act of kindness may be worth more to someone than you think, and not to dismiss doing it simply because it lacks grandiosity.

Did your involvement in the Honors program help you fulfill any goals?

While the Honors College helped me to fulfill goals of serving the community and working toward being a better scholar and citizen, it is perhaps the goals I made because of the Honors College that have had the most lasting effect on me. The classes, the environment set up by the community of Honors students, and our community involvement helped to cast the world in a different light, and to provide a sense of our place in it. What is a more powerful statement to me is that the Honors College not only helped me achieve my goals, it helped me to set meaningful new goals, and set me on the path to achieving these goals as well.

Can you tell us about what you'll be teaching at West Chester, and any plans to get more involved with the campus community?

This semester, I'm teaching the first level of music theory and aural skills here at West Chester. While music theory traditionally focuses on written demonstrations of knowledge about notes, chords, rhythmic patterns, and their interaction with one another in music, aural skills provides a training ground to help hear these things internally, making "reading" music less about pressing the right "button" on an instrument and more about being able to "read" the actual sound, hearing it in your head at first glance like you would hear a passage of Shakespeare in your head when you read it, and being able to write down a passage of music that you hear just like you could write down someone else's sentence.

Both courses help musicians develop their craft. In his book, *The Craftsman*, the sociologist Richard Sennett defines craft broadly, from musicians to carpenters to surgeons to parents. All of these people use knowledge to practice and hone a certain set of skills, skills which improve with increased training and experience. Tying in the Honors curriculum with my musical livelihood, I find that it is not simply the kinds of knowledge that you have that matter, but what you are able to do with that knowledge. For musicians, this can mean using knowledge of music's structure to create a phrase or a piece, or to have a musical back and forth with friends, like a musical conversation. In the Honors curriculum, it can mean going out and bringing classroom experiences to bear in making a difference in the community. Treating creativity and problem-solving as a kind of craft, rooted in knowledge and honed over time, is something that I hope to bring to different aspects of my own interactions on campus.