

Fall 2010: Issue 5

A focus on our students

This edition of the Honor Roll focuses on our students and their experiences within the Pennoni Honors College. Over the past few years, the honors scholar experience has changed dramatically, with students increasingly going off campus to learn, and to present their work. Here are a few of their stories:



Brian Leung '11 & Neeraj Sebastian '11 presented their research at the International Neuroscience Convention in San Diego in November. This is Brian's first-hand report:



Over 30,000 people spread throughout San Diego's conference center for the Society for Neuroscience's annual meeting. My experience walking among the most renowned neuroscientists was at first intimidating, but this apprehension did not last long.

Neeraj and I ran from symposium to symposium

A Message from Dean Dave Jones

Our core mission in the Honors College is to enhance the educational experience of Drexel's best students. One way we do this is by enabling high-achieving students to gain educational experience and exposure far from campus. We offer travel courses during term breaks, and we send students to conferences to deliver papers or display posters on their research. This issue of the Honor Roll highlights three such experiences—in the words of the students themselves. Chemistry senior Brian Leung reports on the Society for Neuroscience conference in San Diego, where he and fellow Honors student Neeraj Sebastian, a biology major, presented their research on the regulation of the Amyloid Precursor Protein, which at high levels in the brain is associated with Alzheimer's Disease. Haider Hasan, a senior in the BS/MS Mechanical Engineering program, describes Mechanical International Engineering Conference & Exposition in Vancouver, where he had two papers accepted: "Numerical Solutions to the Exact Non-linear Fluid Film Equations" and "Phenomenological Estimation of Sterilization." Stephen Cantando, a senior doublemajoring in Architectural Engineering and Civil Engineering, reports on the Honors College's 1-credit September-break course on the Shanghai World's Fair. His project for the course was a photo essay on Shanghai and World's Fair architecture.

Experiences such as these build confidence in our students, as they realize they can compete and/or study on an international basis. The students also serve Drexel as ambassadors for the Honors College and University. We are proud of them.



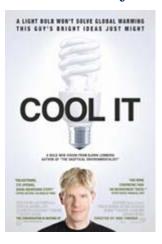
Around the world with the

trying to absorb every piece of information that we could. We were inundated with unpublished breakthroughs to high-tech neuro-gear. For example, in Alzheimer's disease, the cellular hallmarks of this disease are the presence of neurofibrillary tangles and the deposition of amyloid plaques in the brain. In one symposium we learned about how a well-studied protein, when disrupted, could lead to the presence of neurofibrillary tangles and then lead to plagues. Before, it was a preconceived concept in which the presence of either neurofibrillary tangles or amyloid plaques would lead to Alzheimer's disease. Thus, this new protein precursor indicated that there are multiple ways in which humans can be diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease - adding another strand to the complex web of Alzheimer's disease. Another exhibit that caught my attention showcased an electrode cap, which allows one to control movements on a computer.

Enjoying the amazing weather and attending symposiums were just an added benefit to our primary goal for attending this conference—the opportunity to present our project, our own scientific breakthrough, to renowned scientists. Every night, Neeraj and I would sit back and reflect upon our experiences and discuss the relationship and importance of each scientific advancement. Our conclusion: the world of neuroscience is constantly evolving, and that through this experience, we gained not only a better understanding of its intricacies, but also an appreciation of its dynamic development that, hopefully, we will one day contribute to in a large way. For this, we thank advisor Dr. Aleister Saunders and the Honor's College for their continuous support. Our advice to all honors students: do research and think big.



Students meet with documentary filmmaker



On October 7, 2010 the Pennoni Honors College welcomed Danish author environmentalist and Bjorn Lomborg for a "Lunch Conversation" about his book and documentary Cool It, which takes a look at the topic of global warming. Honors students were offered the opportunity to have lunch with Dr. Lomborg part of his

international tour. Fifteen students participated in

Honors College: Exploring EXPO 2010 in Shanghai, China

By Stephen Cantando

When you think of a place to travel to between terms you may not initially think of Shanghai, China. However, that is exactly where I spent 10 days this past September along with 11 other Drexel students. This trip was the culmination of a ten-week course offered through the Pennoni Honors College on "The World's Fairs in History" taught by Dr. Scott Knowles. In this course, we explored the origins of previous fairs and what they meant for the city hosting them. After completing a final research essay, it was our turn for the experience of a lifetime.



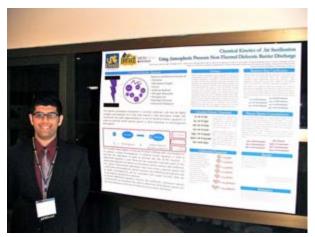
When we arrived in China after a 14 -hour flight, we took a few photos and then we were off. As we sped down the highway in our own bus, we watched the airport shrink and the skyline of Shanghai grow. From the new buildings surrounded in bamboo scaffolding to the massive apartment complexes lining the highway, we all knew we were in for something new. As we entered the city, the scale of even the city's smaller buildings makes Philadelphia look like a suburb. There were people everywhere we looked, most of them riding mopeds.

After we checked into our hotel at Jiao Tong University, we went exploring. Along the way, we ran into another Drexel student who lived in Shanghai.

this intimate lunch and conversation to discuss global warming and environmental concerns with the self-declared Skeptical-Environmentalist. Freshman Melanie Jeske, who attended the event, says "It was an incredible experience to have the opportunity to speak with someone who I really admire. The second I received the email about the luncheon I requested a spot. Speaking with him about green efforts and the direction of the environmental movement was really enlightening. I enjoyed the luncheon so much."



Haider Hasan reports on his recent presentation at IMECE: International Mechanical Engineering Conference & Exposition.



"As a Pennoni Honors College student, I participated in the STAR Research Program during my first year at Drexel. My project was very exciting —I got to work on developing plasma into a sterilization tool that can be used to kill germs on human skin, in air, in liquids, and on surfaces. This project was funded by the USA Department of Defense as part of an anti-bioterrorism initiative. I enjoyed working on this project so much that I have continued with it all 5 years of my study, and developed it into my Master's Thesis.

Recently, ASME, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, invited researchers from every continent to participate in an international congress (IMECE, International Mechanical Engineering Conference and Exposition) in Vancouver, Canada. I knew I had to be there to share my research and meet people from around the world! I submitted two projects, the first being my plasma STAR project, and the second being a project that modeled the behavior of fluid film surfaces, such as soap bubbles and cell membranes. I wrote a travel funding proposal and presented it to several As we walked, we quickly became aware that a large group of American tourists was not something people in Shanghai were used to. Everywhere we looked, people were watching us. It was a bit unreal, but we became accustomed to the attention. People were much more inclined to talk to us than we had thought, which made meeting people very easy. All of us who went on the trip have unique stories of our own experiences.

We spent four days exploring EXPO 2010, gathering as much information as we could through photos, conversations, and the many VIP treatments we received. With over 2 square miles to explore in 4 days, we were all on a mission. Each day was spent from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. visiting as many pavilions as possible. From the artisan shops of the Africa Joint Pavilion, to the amazing architecture of the pavilions themselves, there was something new to see every step of the way.

Most of the other days were spent travelling within the city to ancient gardens, museums, restaurants and the beautifully developed waterfront. It was interesting to see that what we consider Chinese food here is completely different in China. The cuisine was primarily sea food, which most of the people on the trip enjoyed. Shanghai dumplings are world famous, and we were sure to order them whenever we got the chance. By the end of the trip though, everyone was ready for some home cooking!

Visiting EXPO 2010 was an amazing experience that is sure to stay with me for the rest of my life. I gained a greater understanding of where China is headed in the future. Each of the past expos had a purpose, and this Expo seemed to be Shanghai's way of showing the world that they are committed to creating a better city for its people. With a city that is expanding as quickly as Shanghai, it will be interesting to take a trip back there in 10 years to see how greatly it has changed.





Next Steps...

The Pennoni Honors College is dedicated to the

possible funding sources. The Pennoni Honors College provided me with the support that I required in order to make this trip possible. Once at the conference, I forged new relationships with faculty and students from universities across the world, as well as with industry representatives. Now that I am applying to PhD programs, I have made contact with those faculty members I met at the conference and it has made it easier for me to complete my application to those schools. Attending this conference was the best travel experience out of the many several research experiences that Pennoni Honors College has made possible for me to have. It's good to be a part of Pennoni Honors College!

development of Drexel's best and brightest students. Your contribution of \$20 or more will help us defray the increasing costs of quality programming and fund the participation of students to cultural events and travel-integrated courses. We encourage you to visit our website (www.drexel.edu/honors) to get more information about our programs. And always feel free to call the Pennoni Honors College at 215-895-1267 with questions.

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Thank you for your interest in the work of the Pennoni Honors College.

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