Celebrating 50 Years of Honors

Colby Buehler, HM Staff Writer

Fifty years ago, some fifty incoming freshmen to the University of Connecticut were given the unique opportunity to make history as the first students in the UConn Honors program. On April 15th, 1964, two professors in the Department of English, Dr. Wilson and Dr. Spengemann, went to the Board of Trustees to gain support for the launching of a program geared to attract higher caliber students to the university. Helped along by the support of President Homer Babbidge, Jr, the proposal, ratified by the University Senate just days before, was received positively by the Board and it was decided that a pilot program would be started during the fall semester. The pilot program initially consisted of first semester freshmen only, but as time went on older students joined the program as well. By the second semester the program had nearly tripled and has been growing ever since.

Even in its first year, the Honors program held high standards for its students. Students were expected to achieve over 700 points on their college entrance exams and be in the top ten percent of their class. This meant that the first UConn Honors students were in the top two percent of the nation in terms of performance on college exams. Like today, these students were named as “Connecticut Honor Scholars” and were expected to receive grades of at least a “B”. Honors students enjoyed the bonuses of special library access, accelerated housing picks, and numerous seminars with faculty and guests. Today’s honors students enjoy these benefits and more thanks to the caring approach the Honors directors have made over the years.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of Honors, several events will be put on to remember how far the program has come and to celebrate its accomplishments. The first event of the year is the “Honors Program 50th Anniversary Networking Reception”. This will be held on Saturday, October 25, from 2:00 to 3:30 at the ROWE Atrium. Students and alumni are encouraged to join Dr. Lease Butts for this kickoff to the Honors anniversary celebration. To RSVP to this event, visit honors.uconn.edu/rsvp-50th-networking-event/. Additional information about the history of Honors, the current Honors program, or the 50th year celebration can be found online at honors.uconn.edu.
A New Path in Honors: Stem Scholars

Beth Lamonte, HM Staff Writer

In the face of an ever-evolving technological era, the fields of science, technology, engineering and math, also known as STEM fields, are expanding rapidly. In reaction to this expansion, the state of Connecticut is looking to increase opportunities for college students involved in STEM majors, particularly at the University of Connecticut. To do so, the state government has developed a ten-year program called Next Generation Connecticut with a sole purpose of using its resources to improve UConn’s STEM programs, research opportunities and equipment, as well as to attract faculty with strong backgrounds in the STEM disciplines. But all of these funded improvements can only be affective if they are explored and embodied by students passionate in these studies—the next generation. This all starts with the STEM Scholars of the Class of 2018, the first of many classes to be offered this new scholarship opportunity for incoming Honors Program students throughout their college experience. With $1.5 billion in government funds to use for improvements to STEM-related academics, infrastructure, and support, UConn will be able to offer these STEM scholars, as well as all STEM students at UConn, many opportunities to explore their areas of interest. For the inaugural class of Stem Scholars, seventy-nine students will explore these opportunities with the help of their new Honors Program STEM Scholar Advisor, Kaitlin Heenehan.

Though this scholarship is the newest Honors Program merit scholarship, it is one of many diverse scholarship programs that cater to specific interest groups, such as the Rowe Scholar Program that specifies in health-related professions or the Special Program in Law. Students in STEM fields are not the only promising future professionals in the Honors Program. Honors Program Coordinator Devin Opotzner has a strong background in the social sciences and is also doing her part to connect students of majors within the fine arts, social sciences, humanities and ACES by holding events and establishing mentorships between freshmen and upper-division students.

In taking on this new position, Heenehan will act as a secondary advisor to these seventy-nine scholars, getting to know each of them personally as she meets with them each semester. Along with the advisors that these scholars have within their majors, Heenehan will be available as a source of information and opportunities that include the vast areas of interests within the STEM disciplines. Wielding her experience as an Honors Program staff member and alumnae, she will now channel her efforts into a more specific category within the honors program. She looks to learn more about the career goals, ideas and interests of these individuals and will connect them to activities and academics that will cultivate their passions. These STEM scholars represent a portion of the estimated 60% of the 2,000 students within the Honors Program who are currently pursuing a STEM degree. For this reason, she would like to continue to extend her advisory skills to any STEM major within the Honors Program as well, and is ultimately here for all students, no matter their discipline. She wants to ensure that the 40% of the Honors Program that are not pursuing STEM are still being united through initiatives to connect students within majors such as humanities, social sciences, fine arts and ACES.
Stem Scholars continued.

Her role as a connector for students and opportunities will be an invaluable asset to the STEM Scholars that she will be advising. Once she has learned about the goals and interests of her advisees, she will introduce them to activities and people that align with their passion for STEM academics. Not only is Heenehan looking to connect the scholars with faculty and activities, but also she wishes to unite them as a group that shares a passion for STEM fields. The diversity of the STEM disciplines will be instrumental in expanding the horizons of these eager students, with majors as various as math, marine science, physics, turf grass and soil science, nutrition and nursing. She is looking to utilize the state-funded push for improvements to growing STEM fields and education, helping these scientifically-minded students find their academic niche in college as well as in the post-school world where they will apply their knowledge to fix real-life problems. As a step in preparing the students for their career paths, Heenehan will also be assisting in discovering topics for new courses that will be tailored to the interests of the STEM scholars and students. With high hopes for building bridges between students and alumni of the STEM disciplines, Heenehan is pulling together an Honors Women in Engineering Alumni Panel to provide students and alumni with opportunities to establish relationships with those who share passions within the STEM community. The introduction of the Honors Program’s new STEM Scholarship Program adds to the numerous academic scholarship opportunities that UConn offers its students. Kaitlin Heenehan, as STEM Scholar Advisor, will be involved in launching this program successfully to do what it’s funding intends—to innovate the science, technology, engineering and mathematic fields and inspire the students who have a passion for discovery within these fields.

Kaitlin Heenehan’s office is located in Rowe 405 and appointments can be made to meet with her on AdvApp under enrichment programs.
Ask Jonathan

Dear Jonathan,

I am having some serious roommate struggles. We’ve been living together for about a month now, and we still don’t know each other. The only times we ever really talk is to exchange pleasantries or to let each other know when we’ll be back if we go out. She just seems uninterested in getting to know me or any of the new friends I’ve been trying to make. Should I confront her about this? I’d like to get to know this girl, we share a bedroom for crying out loud, but she just seems uninterested.

-Living with a stranger

Woof!

Getting a new roommate, who is often a complete stranger, is one of the more exciting aspects of adjusting to college life. It can be the making of a life-long friendship. That being said, not all roommate pairings are successful. The housing survey is used to match up roommates as best as possible, but it’s not a guarantee of compatibility. However, that doesn’t mean you should give up on forming a solid relationship with your roommate. Not everyone is immediately comfortable getting to know new people, and it is likely your roommate just needs some time. Try to avoid being confrontational, this rarely helps in any type of relationship. You could try and make an effort to do more things together, grab a meal, join a club, even just strike up a conversation and ask questions about what’s going on in her life, you’ll start connecting more. If you find that you still feel uncomfortable living with your roommate, there are Room Change applications online at reslife.uconn.edu. As long as you keep up a good attitude you’ll be fast friends in no time.

Random Facts

- The largest silver nugget ever found was discovered in Colorado in 1894 and weighed 1840 lbs.
- A mini marshmallow inside the bottom of a cone, can drastically reduce ice cream dripping.
- Beavers have orange teeth.
- A borborygmus is the sound your stomach makes when it is grumbling.
- J is the only letter not found on the Periodic Table.
- Koalas have unique fingerprints, like humans.

Photo Credits:
From Top to Bottom
UCONN Library
Kaitlin Heenehan, Honors Office
Office of Undergraduate Research
University of Connecticut

Honorable Mention Staff:
Colby Beuhler
Beth Lamonte
Ellie Lauri