

Distinction and Honors

When I came to Andrews University as a freshman last January, I had no idea what to expect. Having been homeschooled since the fourth grade, I wasn't exactly familiar with the standard lecture-format class. For me, homework had been nonexistent (you could say all my work was "homework"), and I had the same teacher all day long, including meals. I steered myself for a baptism by fire during the first month. Then someone mentioned that I should consider joining the Andrews honors program. I decided I would at least talk to the director. Thus began the most intellectually stimulating and mind-opening experience of my life, an adventure that I plan to continue.

Walking into the office of Dr. Malcolm Russell, professor of economics and director of the honors program at Andrews University, I was somewhat ambivalent about joining the program. After all, why would I want to make college life any harder than it had to be? As we chatted a bit about my high school years, and Dr. Russell filled me in on some of the basics about the program, I suddenly heard two words that quickly changed my mind, "... fewer credits." It is perhaps shallow and unscholarly of me to say, but the initial reason I joined honors was the enticing incentive of reducing my general education credits. This was particularly appealing to me since my double major in music and business administration likely means five years as an undergraduate. And though this may be good news for Andrews' financial bottom line, I was looking to cut every corner possible. So I became one of the few, the proud, the bleary-eyed who stay up all night reading Augustine's *Confessions*; I was now officially a John Nevins Andrews Scholar.

The entry-level class that all freshman honors students take is entitled Western Heritage. This class combines history and religion into one course that traces the roots of Western civilization from Mesopotamia to America, Aristotle to Freud. What results from this combination is an

engaging year of lively discussion and serious questioning of our most basic tenets. Students in my class had the privilege of learning from three exceptional teachers, Dr. Russell, Dr. John Markovic, and Dr. Keith Mattingly, every day. And they didn't just lecture. Often our entire class period turned into a debate session, with students and teachers attempting to come to grips with such questions as, "Does God have a bodily form?" and "Can we know objective

ion, honors students do not just study. In reality, I think the honors program has more extracurricular activities for its members than any other organization on campus. Besides the requisite trips to the Art Institute of Chicago and the Field Museum, we have seen Shakespeare's characters come alive on stage, listened to the incomparable sounds of the Chicago Symphony, cheered at an ice hockey game, attended a Catholic Mass, and ridden the train to Chicago.

Equally important, I've developed friendships with some of the most interesting people I have ever met.

It has been said that hindsight is better than foresight. Perhaps, had I been able to foresee all the hard work of the first semester, my choice to become an honors student would have been different. But though sleep is often short and the work seemingly endless, I will reap the rewards for a lifetime and beyond. As Harriet Beecher Stowe once said, "The pain of discipline is short, but the glory of the fruition is eternal." Honors has not only been the perfect mix of academic excellence and collegiate fun, it has also brought me closer to the Creator of wisdom and joy. Both in contemplating my own view of life and in discussing it with others, I have come to a better understanding of God and a more intimate relationship with Him. There is no greater achievement.



Standing, l-r: Tiffany Larson, Josip Benko, Byron Graves, Brendon Gobel, Cory Gregory, Tiffany Krenz. Front: Cara Swinyar

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truth?" We were forced to think for ourselves and come to our own conclusions.

The crowning work of the semester was a ten-page essay developing and expounding on our personal worldview. I believe this class is a true representation of the atmosphere in every honors class on our campus. It is one of honest intellectual inquiry and sincere discussion of our conclusions.

But academics are only one facet of the whole honors experience. Contrary to popular opin-

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