There was planning. There was anticipation. There was…class? Three months ago when the professors first told the freshman about the tradition of dinnering and watching *A Christmas Carol*, most were slightly roused but still quite preoccupied with the galumph of books to read and papers to write. At the time, we were working on our first research paper, a big hunk o’ granite that we had to patiently chip away at, no matter how much we just wanted to smash it or abandon it on some other poor college student’s dormstep. Some thought it would never end, others never wanted it to be due. But it was. And we moved on.

The professors threw Annie Dillard at us like a ball of mud and sand. Fine time to give us an existential crisis. But isn’t that how life is? You jump over one chair and now you have a whole couch to traverse. We have to keep moving, stopping only to listen to the wind and imagine lots of little dots.

We grappled with Dillard, life grappled with us, an essay was spoken. After submitting that final essay, I felt a relief—I had written what I needed to write for me, and I know many of my peers felt the same way. The faculty retired and the next day we celebrated. Most of us had class around the time we were supposed to meet at Maggiano’s, but all arrived and dinner was inviting and lively. We all were then rushed over to the theater (some trying to wait for their dessert to never arrive) and after a bit of a seating mishap, the musical began. I personally savor theatrical performances, and so I enjoyed the piece greatly (especially since I had neither read nor watched *A Christmas Carol* before). The musical was a pleasant way to close our first semester writing seminar, fortifying our sense of honors community. The next day, the trio of tremendous TAs made us cry, the professors made their farewells, and the students were left to evaluate.

And now, as the semester is coming to an end (one more day of finals!), we look onto a break from academia—until we begin the reading for next semester.
We Say, They Say: Imagine an actual or fictional community today that makes it easier for people to be good and flourish. What are its most important features?

The discussions on our Honors board continue to excite lively responses and interesting ideas. This round our question came from Dr. Leininger. See what students have said and what Dr. Leininger's and Dr. Taylor's answers are, and stop by the Honors study room to see what our next question is!

Words from Dr. Leininger
In the U.S. today, I imagine:
1. a constitutional amendment to publicly fund and limit all campaign spending to identical amounts;
2. incentives for environmentally sustainable technologies, transportation, lifestyles, business practices, etc. that are far greater than unsustainable ones;
3. a ratio limit between salaries for highest and lowest paid workers;
4. incentives for new residential and commercial developments to experiment with new forms of meaningful and sustainable communal living;
5. incentives so that health care spending must maintain a healthy ratio between dollars spent on end of life care for the terminally ill vs. preventative care for vulnerable populations.

Words from Dr. Taylor
In a general way, we might wish to live in communities that are humane, in the sense of the famous line from the Roman poet, Terrance: "I am a human being; I consider nothing human alien to me." If vulnerability--physical and moral--is a part of the human condition (I think it must be), then avoiding or overcoming the thousand habits we have for alienating ourselves from this vulnerability becomes a mark of our humanity as communities. The alternative is collective coarseness and brutality.

I think that one specific (and important) measure of health for such communities, then, is their capacity to allow for failure. By failure, I don't mean, "Oops. My bad." I mean spectacular, train wreck failure, that kind that inspires what Gail Mazur calls our "deep rage for disappointing ourselves." Especially given our situation, one formed in so many ways by a despotic ethos of success, the magnanimity and gentleness required for this kind of tolerance seems to me a particularly humane ambition.

Questions or comments? Email Connie at cgates@regis.edu, James Persichetti at jpersichetti@regis.edu, or Michael Sucharski at msucharski@regis.edu.
“Education can classically be defined as the process of completing oneself.” These were the first lines that I wrote for my first college assignment, for a freshmen seminar class entitled “The Idea of a University” in the Honors program taught by Dr. Palmer and Dr. Bowie. Looking back, five and a half years later, I realize how true those words really are and how little I understood of what they meant at the time. Whether it was reading Blessed Cardinal Newman’s Idea of a University, Annie Dillard’s For the Time Being, Plato’s Phaedrus, Dante’s Commedia, Yevgeny Zamyatin’s We, Victor Frankl’s Man’s Search for Meaning or any other of the many great literary classics we discussed in the Honors’ classes, from my first days at Regis I was deeply affected by the themes in our classes that sought to form us not just as scholars, but as human beings. “Education can classically be defined as the process of completing oneself.” Really, until I reached Regis, education was for me a means to end. As an aspiring pre-med student, buried in chemistry and biology classes most of four years at school, the honors and philosophy classes I took were a welcome respite and an opportunity to go deeper into my own humanity and understanding of the world. It was ultimately this movement toward a greater self-discovery and fulfillment, and a realization that I was called not only to receive but more importantly to give from the education that I received, that led me down the path that I pursue until this day, one that I really did not expect. The aspiring pre-med student from freshman year, that sought something for himself, became an aspiring missionary by his senior year, seeking something for others, albeit imperfectly. I could blame the Honor’s classes and discussions, most notably in my senior seminar class with Dr. Tom Leininger, for continuing to question my motivations—which placed my goals for personal success in the forefront of my life—but that would be the wrong thing to do. I am instead eternally grateful, for in many ways my eyes were opened to seeing the world in a new light during that time, to seeing other people in a new light. Since my graduation in 2009 I have spent the last five years in Lima, Peru, working as a member of a Catholic religious order, only recently returning to the states a few months ago. I continue to work as a member of that Religious order here in Denver serving youth and the homeless through several different projects, including one that now works with Regis called Christ in the City. Was it the end that I expected or aspired to at the beginning? Definitely not. But is it the right one, the culmination of a personal search for purpose and fulfillment? Definitely. “Education can classically be defined as the process of completing oneself.” I can honestly say then, that I was educated. Of course, I do not claim to be finished in that process, by no means. If I have learned one thing over these last five years it is that while I have something to show for my education, I still have much more to learn, cannot be afraid to step out of our “comfort zone.”

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Director’s Note: December 2014

—Dr. Kleier, Honors Program Associate Director

Earlier this year, on Halloween, I had the pleasure of listening to brief “elevator speeches” of all the thesis projects of the graduating seniors. The topics ranged immensely from neologisms of the internet, to genetic testing, to an analysis of health care in the US and South Africa. Then, there were those projects that seemed formed by personal connections, such as what it really takes to write a novel to the mechanisms of alcohol metabolism, this thesis stemming from an alcoholic father’s struggle to gain sobriety. These glimpses into the thesis projects were not only intellectually stimulating, they defined, for me, what the honors program is all about. I view it as a safe space to ask questions. It also means a group of peers to help formulate and refine those questions. It was clear that many of the thesis projects had evolved with the help of peers.

In many ways, this reflected my own process of being named the Regis College Faculty Lecturer of the Year. Last week I gave an hour long presentation on an idea I’d been pondering for many years. The idea, that nature has a place in our teachings at a Jesuit University, started, most likely, from a conversation with someone or something I heard at a conference. I began to discuss this with my peers, the faculty at Regis, and especially faculty such as Tom Howe, the Honors Program Director. These conversations helped me narrow my focus, pick appropriate examples, and generally strengthened my idea, much in the same way that the Honors students are helping each other construct stronger thesis projects.

It’s no accident that the publication for the faculty at all Jesuit Universities is Conversations. Learning the valuable art of skillful conversation is something that some students already have when they come to Regis, but for many students, there is room for improvement in this craft. Many of us learn visually or through hearing something, but when we have an engaged conversation, or a discussion, the topic opens up for us in ways we would have never perceived. Just today, our director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning shared a quote by Alvin Toffler, author of Future Shock and The Third Wave. The quote read, “the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.” Conversations with our peers can help us learn, and unlearn, and relearn and lead us to deeper and richer ways of thinking.
More than the play itself, joining the freshman on one of their most exciting group adventures was truly an honor. We got to see young smiling faces and think that their whole college experience lies ahead of them, even if they think they have seen it all already. Some of us got to make new friends. Some of us wish we could have met these people sooner or at least have another couple years to get to know them.

I remember when the freshmen this year were working on their first research essay for Honors and there was an electrified tension in the air. I walked into the study room and it felt like crackling static emulated from everyone in there. It is hard to put everything into perspective, looking back four years and thinking of when I was that little ball of frantic energy excitedly reading through articles and rubbing palms against foreheads trying to figure out where the next paragraph would fit. As a freshman, this paper was momentous. This was truly when I was doing college academic work.

But now, I cannot count how many of those essays I have written and it has all fallen into a giant swash of academic travail. Now, my momentous task is writing an Honors thesis, which feels like the most difficult piece of academia I will ever do. Likely, it won't be, and I will look back in years to come and think the same thing about the thesis as I do about that first research paper: that while it felt like the end all and the be all here, it was a mere blip on the adventure of life.

What’s important is that we can share these moments with each other, even if four years can feel like an ocean of difference at times.

Upcoming Events!

January
12 - Classes Begin.
19 - Martin Luther King Day (no classes).
20 - Add/Drop Ends.
30 - Honors Luncheon at 11:30 in the Regis Room.

February
28 - Beginning of Spring Break.

March
8 - End of Spring Break.
12 - Mid-semester grades due at noon.

The Idea of a University
Continued From Page 3
and look at things in a new light, and be “Knowing thyself,” as the ancient Greek adage reminds us, is an ever-ongoing process. We must be willing to surrender our expectations for success when there is an even greater and more important calling for each of us. And in that surrender, we find what we are truly meant for. To surrender ourselves means to change the world, and it must start with myself.

I guess I have Dr. Bowie, or Dr. Leininger, or Cardinal Newman, to blame for this radical way of thinking. But all I can say in the end is, thank you.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!