Quadrille
A Newsletter for Alumni, Students, and Friends of the LSU Roger Hadfield Ogden Honors College
Summer / Fall 2019
I hope you enjoy catching up with the fast-moving Ogden Honors College in this issue of our award-winning newsletter the Quadrille.

I’m thrilled to feature our 2019 graduate Staci Shelby, who this semester will start at Harvard Law School, and alumna Alyson Neel. Please also check out a short piece on donors Beau and Natalie Fournet, whose generous scholarship has made it possible for some of our best first- and second-year students to attend LSU and the Honors College.

This issue also highlights one of our faculty members, Dr. Kerri Tobin and her course on "Homeless in Our Community," LASAL Scholars’ experiences with tailored internships, and fun photos from our inaugural Thesis Day Crawfish Boil.

We’re set to welcome our largest incoming class to date, so I’m sure the next issue will include many more stories of student success.

Thanks for all you do to support the Ogden Honors College, and please stay in touch!

Jonathan Earle
Roger Hadfield Ogden Dean
What does it take to get accepted into Harvard Law School? Ogden Honors College class of 2019 graduate and Frisco, TX native Staci Shelby is attending Harvard Law School in the fall. She shared how her experience writing a thesis through the Ogden Honors College and her involvement in LSU activities contributed to her success.

Tell me a little about yourself and your time at LSU. Why did you choose to attend LSU?

I am from Frisco, Texas, and received a B.A. in French and a B.A. in Political Science with a minor in African & African American Studies. The first time I visited LSU was the summer before my sophomore year of high school. My family actually visited for my brother who is two years older than me. During the visit, I fell in love with the people who were extremely welcoming, the strong sense of culture in Louisiana, and the football. Because I went to an all-girls school for nine years, I never truly experienced football or school spirit. LSU easily filled that void. I also learned about the Ogden Honors College and thought that it would be the perfect place to get a balance between a large school environment with small, interesting classes that challenged me academically. I picked LSU because I thought I would be able to succeed academically but also have a balanced life filled with organizations, football games, and community service. As a freshman I joined Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (AKA) where I was able to find a meaningful community within LSU. In addition to AKA, I served as a Greek Ambassador, Res Life Change Facilitator, and member of NAACP.

Has the Ogden Honors College helped prepare you for your next steps? If so, how?

The Ogden Honors College helped prepare me for my next steps by challenging me to look at situations from others’ perspective. During my time at LSU, I took HNRS courses on subjects like civil war memory and the enslaved people that Georgetown University sold to avoid bankruptcy centuries ago. These subjects were sometimes controversial, but they forced me to think from another person’s perspective. Another valuable lesson that I learned as a member of the honors college is attention to detail. As a future law student and attorney, attention to detail is crucial. While writing my thesis and several papers for different classes, I gained new editing and revision skills.

Tell me about your thesis. How has that whole process helped you?

I wrote my thesis about how the Me Too movement has dealt with the issue of prostitution, and I argued that in order to accurately follow the original goal of the movement, it must argue for the legalization of prostitution. Beyond editing and research skills, the thesis work, due to my subject, taught me a lot about how disenfranchised people’s issues are discussed (or not discussed) in academia. The process of researching, writing, and editing has reinforced the importance of time management and taught me how to divide my work and time in order to avoid cramming as the due date approaches. Essentially, the process helped me get a better understanding of discipline and a better understanding of how to think about those who make decisions that the culture might deem as shameful.

Were you involved in anything or participated in any activities at LSU that helped prepare you for this next chapter?

I would say the most meaningful activity I was involved in at LSU was my sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Eta Kappa Chapter. The organization forced me to reach high levels of professionalism and organization while allowing me to give back to LSU and Baton Rouge through various projects. My time as president allowed me to serve as a representative and advocate for the chapter and gave me the opportunity to work with various members to facilitate programs and events. I believe that the teamwork opportunities in the sorority laid a great foundation of skills to help me as I progress into law school and eventually a law firm.

Do you have any advice for students deciding whether or not to apply to the Honors College?

I would advise any LSU student to 100% apply to the Ogden Honors College! It’s an opportunity to get access to unique, smaller classes and to a new network of intelligent students. For me, the Honors College was be perfect way to get both academic rigor and course diversity while also enjoying the large campus and LSU culture.

Any advice for students graduating and starting the application process for law school?

My advice to students starting the application process for law school would be to stay organized and informed, to remember that you are in charge, and to remain positive. I suggest creating an excel sheet with all schools and appropriate deadlines, fees, application requirements, and waivers to help stay organized and ensure you don’t miss anything. Also, during the process, there can be a lot of pressure from people to influence when you apply or where you apply and the most important thing to remember is that it is YOUR process.

Graduate Spotlight: Staci Shelby

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Alumna Alyson Neel Seeks to Elevate Less Told Stories of Women in Myanmar

Alyson Neel has continued to soar to great heights, eight years after we last interviewed her.

“A lot has happened in the past eight years, most of which I don’t think 22-year-old me would’ve foreseen,” Neel said.

After graduating with College Honors in Political Communications from LSU, Neel left Baton Rouge for an internship in Istanbul with the intention of staying for a few months and then moving to DC to work on Capitol Hill. Instead, she stayed in Turkey for 2 and a half years, working as a staff reporter for the then-largest English language newspaper and freelance writing for outlets like The Washington Post and Outside magazine, among various other international publications.

“The Ogden Honors College taught me to think critically and be entrepreneurial, and those two things have prepared me to dive right into unknown territories, take risks and do everything I’ve done thus far in my career - as a journalist in Turkey, gender policy advocate in the United States, and most recently children’s book author in Myanmar,” Neel said.

Her work in Istanbul inspired her to take more action in her future endeavors, leading her to advocacy work with some of the most politically active women’s rights advocates in Turkey, and to receiving her master’s degree in public policy from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University.

At Princeton, Aly worked directly with administration there as well as with Louisiana Senator Jean Paul “JP” Morrell in Louisiana to help reform how higher education institutions address cases of campus sexual misconduct. She also spent time advising the Office of U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin on the intersection of gender, health, and economic policy.

Most recently, Neel has been living and working in New York City. She was working for the United Nations Foundation there when she realized that in advising international advocates on how to navigate the UN to advance progress on the national level, she mostly drew on her experience in Turkey. She felt as though she needed more field experience, and that her lack of knowledge in the Asia-Pacific region was a particular professional weakness.

Neel received a fellowship through the Luce Scholars program that allowed her to move to Yangon, Myanmar for a year to support a local women’s organization there. About adapting to this new environment, Neel said that she got very comfortable being wet, from both the heat and monsoon season, and she spent much time trying to tackle the language in Myanmar.

“Mustang is an incredible country with a rich, complicated history, and necessarily some of the most resilient people I’ve met,” Neel said. “Yangon, where I was based, is beautiful and a little rough around the edges, which I loved about it.”

Her work led her to an unexpected extra six-month stay, as she worked to move her book, “Girl Power in Myanmar,” as far along as possible. Neel was inspired by all of the incredible women she was meeting whose stories were not being told to write this bilingual children’s book celebrating the stories of 14 extraordinary women — with diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, and occupations — rocking their communities across Myanmar.

The first shipment of the book has nearly sold out in the United States; a second, much larger shipment has arrived.

“Something my Myanmar colleagues and I bonded over was the lack of books we read growing up about strong female protagonists, full stop,” Neel said. “So, I did some research and I learned that, like many developing countries, there’s an underdevelopment of children’s literature in Myanmar. Of those, I found fewer than five non-fiction books for kids, and none about powerful Myanmar women.”

While female leaders in Myanmar like Aung San Suu Kyi are known widely, there are many other powerful female leaders in Myanmar of which people have never heard. Neel wanted to give recognition to those women in her book, and let them serve as positive role models to the children who would get to read about them. Namely, Neel writes about Zarchi Win, a factory worker with no political connections or experience who managed to successfully lead strikes of several hundred fellow factory workers.

“I often think about where I’d be if I hadn’t gone to Istanbul for that internship, which my first Honors College professor and now mentor encouraged me to do. I almost didn’t go,” Neel said. “And I now consider it a pivotal part of not just my career, but also my worldview and the person I’ve become.

To read more about Neel and to follow her journey, go to www.alyneel.com. You can buy or learn more about “Girl Power in Myanmar” at www.girlpowerstories.com.
Donor Spotlight: Beau & Natalie Fournet

High school sweethearts Beau and Natalie Fournet had deep ties to LSU growing up, and after graduating from the university both knew they wanted to do what they could to improve the school they loved. They chose to do so by investing in the “brightest students with the greatest ambitions.”

Beau graduated from what is now the LSU E.J. Ourso College of Business with a bachelor’s degree and went on to Harvard University to obtain his MBA. He earned his bachelor’s degree in just three years, with a full course load, several part-time jobs and being a founding member of the Pi Kappa Phi fraternity. Natalie received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from LSU’s College of Human Sciences and Education.

In 2017, Beau and Natalie Fournet gave a non-endowed, immediate-use gift to the Ogden Honors College that was used to set up the Beau and Natalie Fournet Scholarship Fund. “We wanted the benefit to be immediate and maximal, so we did not do an endowed gift,” he said. “We had a high sense of urgency to change the lives of students, so an immediate-use gift was the most strategic route for us.”

Ogden Honors College Dean Jonathan Earle was especially thankful for the Fournets’ gift. “The Fournets are extremely knowledgeable philanthropists – they knew these scholarships could be used right away, to lure some of the best students we’d accepted away from other great colleges. I couldn’t be happier they have kept the scholarships going for the past two years.”

The Beau and Natalie Fournet Scholarship is a four-year scholarship awarded to incoming freshmen, and was first awarded in 2018 to Olivia Charouleau, Revathi Menon and Zoe Long.

“The scholarship has made my attendance at LSU financially possible,” said Charouleau, a biological sciences major. “I am grateful for the opportunities I have received to expand my learning through challenging courses in the Ogden Honors College.”

Menon said the scholarship enhances her experience at LSU and dive deeper into her field of study. “This scholarship has provided me with the financial help that I needed,” said Menon, who is majoring in International Studies. “One of my goals at LSU is to travel abroad and enrich my learning experience by taking courses in another country. I wouldn't have been able to even look forward to this goal without the Fournet family’s generous help. I plan to get as involved as possible in LSU and give back even more than what it has given me.”

Beau and Natalie live in Dallas, Texas with their six children. Beau, managing director and partner of HBK Capital Management, also serves on the LSU Foundation Board of Directors.

If you would like to join the Fournets in helping to make an impact on the Ogden Honors College community and students, please contact Miles Garrett at (225) 578-6868 or mgarrett@lsu.edu.
The LSU Ogden Honors College graduated 113 students and recognized outstanding seniors during the Ogden Honors College Spring 2019 graduation ceremony.

The graduation ceremony, which was held in the Music and Dramatic Arts Building’s Claude Shaver Theatre, recognized all Honors College seniors and also awarded the students who completed an undergraduate thesis.

Eighty of the graduates wrote and defended an Honors thesis, with 18 of these earning upper division honors distinction and 48 earning college honors and upper division honors distinction.

The class of 2019 includes a Udall scholar, who was the first LSU student to win this award twice, and a Truman scholar finalist. In addition, three students were selected to participate in the inaugural governor’s fellows program, eight graduates have been selected to Phi Beta Kappa, the oldest distinguished honors society in the United States, and six were members of LSU’s Tiger Twelve class.

Many members of the 2019 Ogden Honors also graduated with Latin honors: 17 graduated cum laude, 11 graduated magna cum laude, 47 graduated summa cum laude, and 34 of Ogden Honors graduates were university medalists.

The four students who received the Honors College Outstanding Thesis Award include: Chase Anselmo, Connor Burruss, Joshua Campbell, and Kristen Vicknair.

Madelyn Smith and Corey St. Romain won the Leo and Insa Abraham Award, which is granted to two outstanding Honors College seniors each year. Madelyn Smith and Morgan Johnson won the inaugural CC Dubois Award. The CC Dubois award is given to students who demonstrate sustained commitment to LSU and broader communities and passion for serving others through research and leadership.

To view all photos from the graduation ceremony, visit facebook.com/LSUHonorsCollege.
Homelessness can often seem like a problem without a solution. In Assistant Professor of Education Kerri Tobin’s course “Homelessness in Our Community,” Ogden Honors students are learning in depth about the challenges residents of Baton Rouge face finding safe, decent, and affordable housing.

Dr. Tobin has been studying homelessness as it pertains to the educational needs and experiences of youth for the last decade. In her research, she’s become familiar with how the issue impacts people of all ages, as well as policies and programs we use in the U.S. to try to alleviate it. The most striking thing that she’s found in her research, however, is the lack of public knowledge on the demographics of the homelessness.

“Most people are really not at all aware of any of the demographics of our homeless population – they think it’s just the panhandlers on the sidewalk,” Tobin said. “So I wanted to have a chance to journey, along with a group of capable students, deep into the topic.”

The class members completed a policy brief on an aspect of homelessness between the local, state, or federal law levels. Not only have they spent time studying services for the homeless in Louisiana and Baton Rouge, but they’ve looked at how these local services compare to those in other places.

The students crafted surveys and interview questions that they used to gauge what housed people’s perceptions are of homelessness. They then used the responses to each prepare a letter to the editor of a major newspaper about one facet of homelessness. They start by choosing which topic they’d like to focus on, and then create a presentation with some sort of interactive, game-like activity that would better illustrate their topic in a hands-on way, and then facilitate open-ended discussion.

Cody Silas, one of Tobin’s students, did his project on homelessness in college.

“It really opened my eyes to how incredibly difficult it can be for a severely financially disadvantaged student to succeed in college,” Silas said. “The dropout rates are astounding, as are the numbers of students who report experiencing food insecurity in an average school year.”

Silas and his class partner created a budgeting game where everybody starts off with $300, and they have to see how long they can hold on to their money as more and more expenses pile on. They inevitably made choices about what they found to be the most important things worthy of spending their money on, but at the same time, they had to be constantly cautious about how much they were spending, because they never knew what kind of financial issues the next day might bring.

“Our goal was to simulate what it might feel like to be in that same situation as so many other homeless and poor college students across the country, feeling that frustration and, often, hopelessness that comes from experiencing poverty,” Silas said. “Just as it was in our activity, for these students it can often feel like the game is rigged against them.”

Tobin said that through the help of guest lectures, students’ perspectives on the issue of homelessness have shifted. Guest lectures range from Randy Nichols (who was head of the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless for 16 years) to Carrie Patterson (a social worker who spent several years at Youth Oasis, the only teen shelter in Baton Rouge) to Louisiana’s State Homeless Education Director, and a lawyer at the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.

This is Dr. Tobin’s first time teaching an HNRS seminar course. She says that the diversity and willingness of her students makes all the difference.

“The main difference is in the students; they are so bright and inquisitive. It’s a real joy to work with them,” Tobin said. “I’ve got students from all years and a wide variety of majors, from pre-med to sociology. The diversity of viewpoints makes for wonderfully rich discussions!”
Not everyone gets the chance to say they had meaningful internships that they were passionate about as third-year college students. But seven students at the Ogden Honors College now have that opportunity thanks to internships that allowed them to gain beneficial insight into their chosen career paths with each internship tailored to the issue that student is passionate about through Louisiana Service and Leadership (LASAL).

The LASAL Scholars program prepares Ogden Honors College students for leadership roles in Louisiana, particularly in the fields of public service, social justice, and environmental sustainability.

Cindy Seghers, director of career development at the Ogden Honors College, helped the seven LASAL scholars secure the internships this past semester.

“The students’ internships were customized to focus on the purpose of LASAL, connecting the experience to their majors, and tailoring it to the issues they are interested in,” said Seghers.

Coastal Land Loss

LASAL Scholar Megan Guidry is a biological sciences major in her third year at LSU, doing research through her internship at The Water Institute this year.

Guidry researched the microbial ecology and environmental drivers of microbial diversity in the lower Mississippi River with Dr. Melissa Baustian. The Institute doesn’t create policies, but provides data to inform decisions to be made in coastal Louisiana at the intersection of policy and science.

“LASAL has provided me with an interdisciplinary view of climate change and land loss in Louisiana,” Guidry said. “At the WI, I get to work with people who are developing the new maps of land loss and researching new solutions.”

Health Care

Third-year student Aniko Nowakowski is getting a chance to make a lasting impact on Baton Rouge community members with her work at the Baton Rouge Primary Care Collaborative, a company that runs a medical clinic attached to homeless shelters in two different locations.

“I met with Ms. Cindy and she helped me find this unique internship opportunity that combines my passion for serving the homeless while gaining medical experience in a high-energy and compassionate environment,” Nowakowski said.

“My goal is to work in the nonprofit sector of medicine that focuses on bridging healthcare disparities,” Nowakowski said.

“I also have a passion for educating the public on how to best take care of their bodies, which is something I have the joy of doing each day during my internship!”

Another LASAL Scholar focusing on health care is Shaya Khorsandi. With a major in biological sciences and minors in political science and business administration, the perfect internship for Khorsandi is as a student assistant to policy director Jeanie Donovan at the Louisiana Department of Health.

Khorsandi said that the internship was beneficial in that it allowed him to learn about large government agencies and how they are run. His favorite part of his internship was feeling like he actually got to make a difference in the community.

“Being in the classroom for semester after semester is great because you can learn so much from your classes,” Khorsandi said. “But when you finally get to apply it to real-world issues and problems, you finally get to appreciate the things that you have learned.”

Poverty

Adam Howe, a third-year LASAL scholar spent time during his internship planting, growing, and educating community members on growing their own locally-sourced food. Baton Roots Urban Farm is part of the “Geaux Get Healthy” initiative through Mayor Sharon Weston Broome’s office, as an effort to increase food security in the 70805 ZIP code by providing locally grown fresh food.

Howe is a biological engineering major focusing his studies on bioenvironmental engineering.

LASAL focuses on finding a resolution to problems associated with poverty in order to make life in Louisiana better for all, and that’s exactly what Howe worked toward with this internship.

“Getting proximity to problems is the best way to learn the intricacies that would otherwise be unknowns in searching for their solution,” Howe said. “This internship has given me the chance to get closer to the issue of food insecurity that exists in the neighborhoods surrounding LSU, and to play a part in decreasing its effects on one of its most prevalent areas.”

Sarah Terraciano, a third-year international studies major at LSU, works as the Latino Community Coordinator for the Gardere Initiative – a nonprofit organization that provides housing and care to help children and families that have been adversely affected by substance abuse and other social ills.

Terraciano has been volunteering with the Gardere Initiative
as an after-school tutor since her first year at LSU. She noticed the increase in Spanish-speaking immigrants in the Gardere area, and started working with the director to create a position where she could reach out and encourage families to take advantage of all the Initiative has to offer.

“As an international studies major, the internship has shown me how immigration affects my own community and the value of accessible English learning services,” Terraciano said.

Terraciano also said that working with the Initiative not only gave her the opportunity to connect her work with LASAL by being able to suggest different social services for the families that she worked with, but that she feels grateful to have the opportunity to work with them.

Education

LASAL scholar and English major Alyssa Dobson has combined two of LASAL’s focuses with her internship at LSU Center for River Studies: educating children on the coastal environment in Louisiana.

Dobson says that one of her main interests with LASAL is combining components of education to the coastal environment, and that interest is why she and Seghers chose this particular internship for her.

“My favorite part of the internship is getting to do something in which I am essentially self-directed,” Dobson said. “I come up with projects and ideas and find ways to implement them. It is challenging, but it’s something I’ve never done before.”

Business Development

As a business management student, Taylor Stirling focuses on learning as much as he can about how successful businesses operate, namely Baton Rouge businesses.

Through the Fair Share Program of the East Baton Rouge School Board, Stirling got to work exclusively with business owners who have experienced hardships or challenges by virtue of their race or gender.

“I now have a better understanding of the Baton Rouge business scene and what it’s like to operate a business in the capital city,” Stirling said. “I have also learned more about how businesses exist in and around other institutions like government and our own social structures.”

To learn more about LASAL or how you can get involved with these local, regional, and state issues, visit honors.lsu.edu/LASAL.
THESIS DAY
CRAWFISH BOIL
At left: This spring semester, we had an event to celebrate Honors thesis writers and directors on the day they turned in their theses. Thesis writers, their directors, Ogden students, faculty and staff enjoyed boiled crawfish, veggie burgers, music, and lawn games. Congratulations to students who completed their thesis this year!

Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholars
Luke Dupre
Alexandra Haynes
Todd Thibodaux

Astronaut Scholars
Sarah Dunn
Gabrielle Langlois

Barry M. Goldwater Scholars
Katie Davis
Jackson Green
Syed Akbar Zamin

Udall Scholars
Jack Green
Katie Davis (honorable mention)

Not pictured are NSF Graduate Fellowship Recipients: Grant Landwehr and Brandon Oubre (honorable mention)
Leave a Legacy

With nearly 100 naming opportunities on the Honors Campus, you can make a difference in the lives of our students.

For more information, contact Miles Garrett at mgarrett@lsufoundation.org.