



# EKU Honors Annual Report 2017-2018

***EKU***

# A Tradition of National Leadership in Honors Education

**Shalomel Achi,**  
Washington Center Intern

Shalomel Achi, 2018 Honors Scholar and public health major, received the 2018 Dean's Award as the top graduate in ECU's College of Health Sciences. During her time at ECU, she served as a Student Alumni Ambassador and as a peer mentor for incoming minority students via ECU's Freshman Academy for Diverse Students. She was also a Rodney Gross Scholar. During the summer of 2017, Shalomel was a Washington Center intern and worked with the Peace Corps of Health Services in the epidemiology unit. "My ECU experience has taught me that college is what you make of it," she said. "It was taught me to make bold steps." Shalomel is continuing her education at ECU, beginning a master's degree in public health this fall. ■





## **Omar Salinas-Chacón,** NCHC Student of the Year

Seventeen years ago, Omar Salinas Chacón entered the United States through Atlanta, Georgia.

His working-class parents, escaping a bloody civil war, gang violence and extreme poverty in El Salvador, fled to America with little more than a dream: that Omar and his brother would one day enjoy “a better life than they did ... not only live, but thrive.”

They call them “Dreamers,” these children who were brought here at a young age and, for Salinas Chacón, yet another dream came true in Atlanta. Competing against leading honors students from across the U.S., the recent Honors Scholar was named 2017 Student of the Year by the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC).

“Honors is the great equalizer in my life,” Salinas Chacón said. “Society and the law says I am not equal because of my immigration status. In Honors, I can be my highest potential because it does not discriminate. In other parts of my life, I can work hard and sometimes even harder than my peers, but I would never be able to come out on top. Honors has allowed me to be the person I want to be.” ■



## 2017 Annual Meeting of the NCHC

Thirty-one students from the ECU Honors Program presented research during the 52nd annual meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council in Atlanta, Georgia, November 8-12, 2017. As has been the case over the past three decades, ECU's delegation of student presenters this year was again the largest of any honors college or honors program in the nation at the prestigious annual event.

The conference highlighted student and faculty research presentations from across the nation and provided training and development for honors program administrators. The conference theme, "Just Honors," explored how honors students, faculty, staff, and administrators address the issues of access, equity, and inclusion in honors education.

ECU Honors not only brought a large number of presenters, but the program was also recognized with two national awards. Dr. Lisa Kay of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics won first place in the faculty research poster category of "Revitalizing Honors Courses." Additionally, Omar Salinas Chacón, a senior from Louisville, was named the NCHC's National Student of the Year from a four-year institution.

As part of the conference and in conjunction with the conference theme, ECU participants visited The Center for Civil and Human Rights, as well as the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site. ■

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# Knate Bartosch,

## National Award for Academic Achievement Forum for Education Abroad

There it was, sitting on a tree branch at eye level barely two feet away, “just as curious about what I was doing there, as I was with what she was doing.”

That was Knate Bartosch’s memorable up-close introduction to a wild crowned lemur in the forests of Madagascar. The anthropology major and rising senior spent 10 weeks last summer in the island nation off the east coast of Africa documenting the ecology and social behavior of two rare and endangered species of primates, crowned lemurs and Sanford’s lemurs, and their interactions with local farmers.



Bartosch’s project, titled “Lemurs Living Near Farmers (Year 2): Behavioral Study of Endangered Primates,” so impressed judges that he was recently named one of two winners nationally of the 2017 Award for Academic Achievement Abroad presented by The Forum on Education Abroad. Bartosch is the first college student from a Kentucky institution to earn the award and only the second student from a regional university (as classified by US News & World Report) since 2004, when the Forum began to recognize two students annually.

Bartosch, who graduated from Forest Park High School in Triangle, Virginia, in 2015, had not previously traveled outside the U.S. He said he was “astounded, then honored and excited” to win such a prestigious honor, but his faculty mentor in Madagascar, Dr. Benjamin Freed, wasn’t surprised.

“I have never before had a student gather so much data in such a short time, let alone have a student accomplish so many tasks, seize on so many opportunities, and emerge so well-rounded,” said Freed, who teaches anthropology at Eastern. “He entered the study as an undergraduate, and he emerged a colleague.”

Knate’s honors thesis will be based on his Madagascar experience, which provided invaluable insights on the process of data collection in his field. “(It) also helped immensely with my personal confidence. Making my own decisions that’ll affect the outcomes of our journey really instilled a sense of confidence in what I’m doing,” he said. ■

# By the Numbers

500

FALL 2017  
TOTAL NUMBER  
OF STUDENTS

93%

AVERAGE FIRST-YEAR  
RETENTION IN  
HONORS, 2013-2018

1000+

STUDENT  
PRESENTERS AT  
NCHC SINCE 1990

97 TOTAL 2017-18 HONORS  
SCHOLAR GRADUATES

160% INCREASE IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND  
HISPANIC STUDENTS OVER LAST 5 YEARS

~70% HONORS SCHOLAR GRADUATES EARNING ADVANCED  
DEGREES WITHIN 10 YEARS OF GRADUATION



# Educating Creative Leaders for Kentucky and the World



## SENCER Initiatives in the Honors Science Curriculum

Some EKU science faculty are working within an initiative funded by the National Science Foundation called SENCER (Science Education for New Civic Engagement and Responsibilities) to develop innovative honors science seminars. "Chestnuts and Change in Appalachia," one such course, involves students and faculty working closely with the American Chestnut Foundation and the Arbor Day Foundation. The course involved an overnight trip to EKU's Lilley Cornett Woods Preserve in Letcher County, KY, to learn about the decline of the chestnut in its Appalachian context. Students then wrote and produced short documentary films about the demise of the American chestnut tree and current restoration efforts.



## Honors Thesis Research

The honors thesis seminar remains a generator of many of the top undergraduate achievement research achievements at EKU, as well as a springboard for many students into their professional lives and/or graduate study. A record 114 honors theses were presented and deposited in 2017-18. For the second consecutive year, honors thesis projects swept the EKU Library's annual Undergraduate Research Awards. Thesis topics reflected the wide range of students' majors and interests, including everything from "Carbon Neutral Construction in Residential Buildings," to "How Archaeology Has Changed the historical Narrative of Kievan Rus," to "Ripple Effect: An Examination of Surfing as a Force for Social Change."

# Transformational Leadership Serving the Campus, Community, and World

## Sidewalk U.: Nogales, Arizona & Mexico

This January's Sidewalk U. course was perhaps the most daring, innovating, and rewarding one in the eight-year history of this remarkable curricular initiative. Taught by Dr. Elizabeth Underwood and Dr. Tom Butler, and assisted by honors director Dr. David Coleman, this year's course traveled to Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora (Mexico) to explore firsthand some of the most controversial issues of the day, including immigration, deportation, the border fence, and NAFTA. The staff of the Hogar de Esperanza y Paz (HEPAC) children's center served as community partners on the Mexican side of the border. They provided students access to a shelter that assists recent deportees from the U.S., a *maquiladora* factory that is common in the Mexican borderlands, and a session in which students were able to meet with fellow Mexican college students at Nogales Technical University.

On the U.S. side of the border, the students had an opportunity to speak at length with Sheriff Tony Estrada of Santa Cruz County, AZ (the only Latino sheriff in the entire state) about how the border has changed in his 50 years of service in law enforcement in the Nogales area. They also visited the nearby Tohono O'odham reservation to explore the impact of border issues on the large Native American population of the region.







## Trailblazer Grants

Trailblazer Grants are designed to assist honors students in their second or third year with the cost of education abroad or education away experiences. These grants of up to \$1500 are distributed via an application process that asks students to describe how their experience will contribute to their educational and professional goals. A total of 13 students received Trailblazer Grants for travel during the spring and summer of 2018, and they used that funding to study in five different countries and four national parks through the Partners in the Parks program.



## Partners in the Parks

Rising senior Stuart Jones attended an NCHC Partners in the Parks experience during the summer of 2017. Partners in the Parks is an outdoor experiential learning program at national parks across the country that offers unique opportunities for students to visit areas noted for their beauty, significance, and lasting value. Utilizing a \$500 honors program Trailblazer Grant and a \$500 stipend from the Southern Regional Honors Council (SRHC), Stuart attended the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument program and presented about his experiences at the 2018 annual meeting of the SRHC in Arlington, VA.

Five students traveled across the country to Partners in the Parks programs during the summer of 2018, visiting the following national parks: Hawaii Volcanoes, Glacier, Bryce Canyon, and Olympic. All have received Trailblazer Grant funding, and three received additional funding from the SRHC.

**#EKUHONORS  
STUDY ABROAD:**



# A Culture of Service

EKU Honors remains deeply committed to serving not only the ECU campus, but the local and global communities as well. The student leaders of the Honors Student Advisory Committee (HSAC) coordinate highway cleanups, outreach to local nursing homes, and volunteer opportunities at the Madison County Humane Society. This year's "Sidewalk U." honors course took ECU Honors students to Nogales, Mexico, where they spent two days working with local kids at the "Hogar de Esperanza y Paz" (Home of Hope and Peace) children's center in one of that border city's neediest neighborhoods. Honors students also continue to be leaders in service organizations across the ECU campus. This year's new "Chestnuts and Change in Appalachia" honors science seminar worked closely with the National Arbor Day Foundation's chestnut tree restoration project.



# Building Opportunity

## Give to EKU Honors

Support the EKU Honors Program by giving to the Bonnie Gray Society Endowment. Established by alumni at the time of founding director Dr. Bonnie Gray's retirement in 2008, this endowment provides a permanent source of financial assistance for students who attend the innovative Sidewalk U. study away programs each year. Sidewalk U. takes students on learning adventures to locales across America and even into Canada and Mexico. Lives are changed and horizons broadened by these cultural odysseys, and the Bonnie Gray Society Endowment helps make them possible each year.

- ▶ Visit [www.alumni.eku.edu](http://www.alumni.eku.edu) to give to the **Bonnie Gray Society Endowment**.
- ▶ Click "**Make a Gift**," choose to "**view all giving opportunities**," and search for "**honors**" to easily find the endowment.



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## HONORS

### EKU HONORS PROGRAM

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