

# News

## Honors Students Head West

Sarah Kiser, Associate Editor

This week 70 students, one Honors alumna, nine faculty members and one staff person set out for Asheville N.C. for the annual Honors Fall Trip. They left Sept. 23 and returned Sept. 25, having explored Asheville, the Biltmore Estate, and a variety of topics across all disciplines.

The overall importance of the honors trip is "being more well-rounded," said Meredith senior Katie O'Dell. "You get to find something you're passionate about and explore it, but also you get to learn about things you wouldn't typically learn about."

After their arrival on Friday last week, the group took a tour at the Biltmore Estate. Saturday morning was spent with faculty in mini-courses. Every year students do reading beforehand, then conduct research with the mini-courses and make a presentation to share on that Sunday morning, so they get to see all the research that's been done that weekend. Saturday afternoon small groups ventured out to explore downtown Asheville and the surround-

ing mountains. Some went to Chimney Rock, and some to Maggie Valley.

Students could choose from nine mini-courses in topics such as tuberculosis sanatoriums in 1900s Asheville, homemade Appalachian yogurt, conservation and ecological restoration, or literary adaption of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, to name a few.

"Usually I go for the education ones... but they had one this year that was so interesting I couldn't not pick it because it's studying the movie *Dirty Dancing*," said O'Dell. The 1987 classic film was partially filmed nearby at Lake Lure.

This year is O'Dell's fourth and final time attending the fall trip, and her first year on the planning committee. She helped to plan the activities, especially what students could do in their free time on Saturday afternoon. She came up with mostly free options like a walking tour of architecture, museums, and a thrift shop with an in-house museum on ghost paraphernalia, different ways to explore the city.

"I like how we have free time to go ex-

plore on our own because that's when most of the adventures happen. I remember when we went to Charleston S.C. we stumbled upon this festival that there's no way we could have known about otherwise."

Meredith sophomore Catherine Jones participated in the biology/chemistry mini group with Dr. Powell. It was "about yogurt making and how it applies to being in the Appalachian area where everything is self-sufficient especially in olden times," said Jones. They learned about the bacterium and chemical processes that go into making yogurt. "Because," explained Jones "bacterium make acid with what's in the milk itself."

Jones also described her visit to the Biltmore Estate. "It was huge; it was gorgeous," she said. "What stuck out with Biltmore was the fact that someone had at some point that much money. Walking into even their dining room there was this ...mantel piece. It's just a mantel but it reached all the way up this 20 foot ceiling and there was a

carving of a war scene in it."

Jones, along with others, explored downtown Asheville. "There were a lot of interesting people." She laughed. "This guy had a parrot on his arm. I have no idea why. He was just walking by and the parrot was just bobbing its head, a beautiful brightly colored parrot. Another guy was painted all bronze like he just came from pretending to be a statue. There was someone dressed like Avatar. I don't know what was going on, a lot of interesting characters." As an extra activity on Friday night, the honors students had a hoe-down with folk music. They learned several square and line dances along with the waltz.

In addition to learning new dances, the Honors Trip is also an opportunity to meet more honors students. "The two big opportunities to meet people in the honors program are the honors downtown meet up and then the Honors Trip," said O'Dell.

## Clinton health a non-issue, says Meredith professors

Sarah Smerko, Features Editor

Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton has been under significant scrutiny ever since she became ill at a 9/11 commemoration ceremony, and her doctor revealed that she had pneumonia. In a CNN report Clinton's doctor, Dr. Lisa Bardack, said that Clinton "was put on antibiotics, and advised to rest and modify her schedule."

Clinton's pneumonia diagnosis has given right-wing conspiracy theorists and conservative media a field day. Conspiracy theorists think that Clinton's health is on the brink, and have even gone as far as to suggest her team employing body doubles to keep up a ruse of a healthy presidential candidate. Conservative blogger Brian Joondepth of *The American Thinker* argues, "These health concerns are not a big deal if they involve the 68-year-old woman living down the block, but they do if the 68-year-old woman is the potential President of the United States, Commander in Chief of the U.S. Armed Services, arguably the most powerful

leader in the Free World." Joondepth goes as far as to claim Secretary Clinton's health episode as "the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back."

Is it though?

Dr. Whitney Manzo, associate professor of political science, weighs in. Manzo says that "the whole issue with Hillary's health has been blown wildly out of proportion. She was sick, she kept going because it's an important time in the campaign, and unfortunately it fed into odd conspiracy theories that the far right had been circulating about her." Manzo continues, "I would also say that the debate over her health is entirely sexist. Donald Trump (70) is older than her and claims he's entirely healthy, Bernie Sanders (75) is quite a bit older than her and some people have suggested he replace her, and Ronald Reagan was older (69) than she is now (68) when he was elected and no one questioned his health. The common factor must not be age, then, but gender. The undertone is that a

woman can't handle the rigors of the presidency without getting sick, and is therefore unfit."

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has promoted conspiracies about Clinton's health, often commenting on her health himself. During Monday's first presidential debate, Trump said that Clinton "doesn't have the look [and] doesn't have the stamina" to be president. How has Secretary Clinton responded to continual debates around her health and if she is fit for the job? Clinton's response to Trump last night says it all. She argued back, "As soon as he travels to 112 countries and negotiates a peace deal, and a cease fire, a release of dissidents, an opening of new opportunities in nations around the world, or even spends 11 hours testifying in front of a congressional committee, he can talk to me about stamina."

Dr. David McLennan, professor of political science points out that health concerns have posted legiti-

mate concern in presidential elections in the past, citing Franklin D. Roosevelt as an example, but are not an issue of concern in this election. McLennan comments, "Hillary Clinton's health issues are not significant and, for about a week, it was a media frenzy, fueled, in part, by the Trump campaign and conservative bloggers. Her past and present medical issues are not unusual for her age and would not cause her difficulties in performing the duties of president."

Based on last night's debate performance, it is safe to say that Clinton isn't backing down anytime soon.

<http://www.vox.com/2016/8/18/12505078/hillary-clinton-health-stroke-conspiracy-fake>

<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/09/hillary-clinton-health-conspiracy-hysteria/501293/>

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/09/11/health/hillary-clinton-health/>

## A Little Leap for a Big Species: Giant Pandas No Longer Endangered

Katrina Thomas, Staff Writer

Animal lovers, rejoice: on September 4, the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) announced that giant pandas had been bumped down from "endangered" to "vulnerable!" The uplifting news also happened to follow the birth of twin cubs at Zoo Atlanta the day before. Pandas' new status is the result of hard work to breed them, reforest destroyed habitats, protect their remaining homes, and increase the number of reserves. Additionally, in 1981 and 1988, China

passed legislation banning skin trading and poaching (respectively), which used to be large problems (officials looked into 115 illegal fur trading cases in 1988). From 2004-2014, the wild giant panda population had increased by 17% to a total of 1,864. As of now, reserves are home to nearly 1.4 million hectares of habitat and about 67% of the wild panda population.

However, people still need to do their part to keep conservation going. It took 26 years to take this species

from "endangered" to "threatened," habitat fragmentation is still an issue, and climate change is predicted to wipe out over 35% of giant pandas' remaining habitats within 80 years. Additionally, many animals are still endangered, and some, including four of the six great ape species, are at the even worse "critically endangered" level. In summary, giant pandas no longer being endangered is good news, but it's also important to continue supporting conservation organizations and main-

tain the environmentally conscious perspectives that got the animals here. Information for this article was found on [www.wwf.panda.org](http://www.wwf.panda.org), [cnn.com](http://cnn.com), [national-geographic.com](http://national-geographic.com), and [worldwildlife.org](http://worldwildlife.org). To learn about how animals are classified as vulnerable or endangered, visit [iucnredlist.org](http://iucnredlist.org).



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