This is the bronze medallion awarded to senior ACES James Scholars upon their graduation. It bears the image of Dr. Edmund J. James (1855-1925), the fourth President of the University of Illinois (1904-1920). The inscription reads: "The hope of Democracy depends on the diffusion of knowledge and wisdom." (Photo Credit: Madelyn Thanasouras, Class of 2015, JSMT Executive-at-Large)

Introduction by Rob Chappell
Office Support Specialist, ACES James Scholar Honors Program Advisor, James Scholar Media Team (JSMT)

Taught by Dr. Bill Simmons, the ACES Honors Dean, ACES 399: Honors Seminar is a one-hour course that presents an exciting opportunity for ACES James Scholars with junior or senior standing to earn honors credit during the spring semester. The course features presentations by outstanding ACES faculty members on various topics of current interest. Students respond to these presentations through classroom activities, lab visits, stimulating debates, lively discussions, and the writing of a seminar paper.

The ACES 399 Experience
By Alicia Gardner (Class of 2013), JSMT Co-President

The College of ACES’ Honors Seminar, ACES 399, definitely tops my list of favorite college courses. Its most important attribute, in my opinion, is that it promotes learning for the sake of learning. As the students help select all of the topics covered in the course, ACES 399
provides a unique opportunity for acquiring knowledge in a broad spectrum of subjects of genuine interest.

These subjects are covered by a program of guest lecturers from ACES and other colleges at the University. A few of the topics covered in the spring of 2012 included the science of chocolate-making and tasting, barriers for preventing carp from entering Lake Michigan, art appreciation at the Krannert Art Museum, floral arrangement, and the art and science of cheese production. Such variety allows ACES James Scholars to broaden their knowledge base outside of their major field of study. The topics that are covered apply to most students on a very personal and human level, and the broad range of concepts covered ensures that there is something for everyone to take away from the course.

Even more unique to the Honors Seminar is the emphasis on onsite tours and activities. The focus of this course is on experiential learning, which gives the information a higher impact and more memorable presentation. While some courses may have one field trip to incite greater interest in their students, close to half of the class meetings for ACES 399 are onsite visits.
The low-stress environment and enjoyable yet educational subject matter make ACES 399 simply fun. In addition to the course’s design, having Dean Simmons as the instructor is a major bonus. His storytelling abilities and personable teaching style keep the class upbeat and interesting. ACES 399 is the perfect combination of interesting subject matter, presentation, and teaching. This course comes with my full recommendation to every ACES James Scholar. It is an opportunity not to be missed!