Greetings
By Dr. Anna Dilger, the Sixth ACES Honors Dean

Dr. Anna Dilger is Associate Professor of Animal Sciences, Interim Associate Dean of ACES Academic Programs, and the sixth ACES Honors Dean.

When people ask me how I got to be here as a professor at the University of Illinois, my story starts with undergraduate research. As an animal science major at Purdue University, I was interested in genetics and found a job working with a professor studying a gene mutation in mice. These mutated mice lacked a particular protein that normally slows down muscle growth. Without this protein, mice had nearly twice as much muscle as normal mice. My role in this research was to breed these super-muscular mice with those that had a mutation causing obesity. The question was — what would win — muscle or fat?

Working as an undergraduate researcher taught me many things — how to handle mice and perform laboratory assays, how to ask questions, how to analyze data, and how to manage my time. But it also opened my eyes to the world of research. I was excited to build new knowledge beyond that you can find in textbooks. I still find it thrilling to be part of discovering new things with my graduate students and colleagues in my research today.

It's this same excitement that I bring to being an Interim Associate Dean here in the College of ACES and to the James Scholars Program. I look forward to the opportunity to work with all of you in the coming year and find out about the new things that you are discovering as you complete your James Scholars programs.

Best of luck in the coming year!

Anna Dilger

From the Editor’s Desk

Welcome to the September issue of News Bytes for Neophytes! Please visit the ACES Honors Portal at http://academics.aces.illinois.edu/honors, our news blog (The ACES Honors Herald, updated weekly) at http://theaceshonorsherald.blogspot.com, and our Twitter feed (@ACESJSHP) to keep up to date on all the latest happenings.

Please feel free to contact me anytime if you have any questions or wonderings about the ACES James Scholar Honors Program and your progress within it. I can be reached at 217-244-1684 and/or rchappell@illinois.edu.

Upcoming Events

Information about these and other upcoming events is on our Honors Calendar at http://academics.aces.illinois.edu/honors/james-scholars/guide. Notices about additional opportunities...
of interest to ACES James Scholars will be shared on Twitter (@ACESJHPU) and on our news blog at http://theaceshonors shemale.blogspot.com. All of the following events will take place in the Heritage Room of the ACES Library, Information and Alumni Center.

Welcome Dinner for Freshmen and All Other New ACES James Scholars
- Wednesday, September 26th, 4:45-6:15 PM
- Presenters: Dr. Anna Dilger, Rob Chappell, Honors Advisors, Local Alumni, Inter Alia

Career Preparedness Program
- Thursday, November 1st, 3:15-4:30 PM
- Presenters: Claire Benjamin, Miranda Buss, Jean Drasgow, Julie Woolsey

Diamond Jubilee Holiday Reception for All ACES Honors Students
- Tuesday, December 11th, 3:15-4:30 PM
- Presenters: Dr. Anna Dilger, Dr. Kim Graber, Rob Chappell, Inter Alia

The ACES Collaborative Learning Center
By Mary Lowry, M.S., Assistant Dean, ACES Academic Programs

ACES students, join us for the reopening of the ACES Collaborative Learning Center! The ACES Library is the home for this new resource, created to help support your academic efforts. The ACES CLC will be staffed daily with ACES students, like yourself, who are available to help you with courses, concepts, and study strategies to help you to succeed. These Peer Mentors have been in your shoes and want to pay it forward by helping you to meet the academic challenges all ACES students face. They will offer assistance for classes both inside and outside of ACES and show you tactics they have used to do well. They have an amazing array of ideas to share with you.

This year we will offer exam prep sessions for both Calculus and Chemistry 102 and 104. See https://publish.illinois.edu/acescollaborativellearning center/home/ and view the schedule of offerings and meet our Tutor/Mentors!

Friendly Reminder: Earning Honors Credit for Your Coursework with an Electronic Honors Credit Learning Agreement (eHCLA)

ACES James Scholars are required to complete four courses with honors credit before they graduate. Freshmen are expected to complete their first course with honors credit during their first year in the Honors Program. The vast majority of H grades (the transcript notation for honors credit earned) come from Honors Credit Learning Agreements (HCLAs). The Honors Program’s electronic HCLA (eHCLA) system, which can be accessed from its web portal at http://go.illinois.edu/ACES_HCLA, allows you to prepare an HCLA request and have it sent directly to your instructor. The instructor can then review the HCLA request and respond with approval or else request additional information from you about the proposed HCLA. Finally, the HCLA proposal is reviewed by Rob Chappell, the Assistant to the Honors Dean, and confirmation emails are generated to you and your instructor.

The entire eHCLA process is described in the recently updated “eHCLA Factsheet,” which is available at http://academics.aces.illinois.edu/honors/james-scholars/guide. This handout also includes information on due dates for eHCLA submission, plus some suggestions on the types of honors assignments that can be done. Questions about eHCLA policies and procedures may be directed to Rob Chappell (217-244-1684, rchappel@illinois.edu).
By no means could I be considered a prepared freshman: I came into the College of ACES almost completely blind to the nature of the college, including what exactly my major would entail. All I really knew was that I was sent to a different building than my friends in LAS to register for classes at orientation and that a brochure about the college listed “Peace Corps” as a possible career for my Agricultural and Consumer Economics major. The former of these two nuggets of information upset me greatly, as I hated feeling isolated and different; the latter was a salve as I registered for a myriad of intimidating courses, including Microeconomics and Public Speaking. My start, therefore, was neither an illustrious nor particularly enlightened one. Feelings of seclusion persisted: None of my friends, or even people that I met in the dorm, seemed to be in ACES. I felt alone on the other end as well, because no one in any of my first classes seemed to be anything like me. Being from Chicago gave me a unique perspective in that I was usually met with the question, “Why are you studying agriculture if you’re from the city?” At first, I had no idea how to answer this question; I was wholly unprepared to justify my major, even to myself. “Why am I studying agriculture?” I’d ask myself whenever I scraped together some free time to ponder my life and where it was heading. The Peace Corps was hardly a tenable plan for a lifelong career, after all! It honestly took the entirety of my freshman year in the College of ACES to develop a satisfying response.

At first, when asked that all-too-frequent question, my answer evaded the entire agricultural aspect completely. I’d respond that what I was really studying was economics or the environment. “Environmental economics,” my concentration at the time, was less of a mouthful than “Agricultural and Consumer Economics” and prompted fewer inquiries. It is apparently much more natural for an urbanite to concern herself with the environment than with agriculture.) Meanwhile, despite my confusion and hesitation, my first semester classes were moving right along, and I was moving right along with them. It turned out that I happened to love Microeconomics, even if my professor was very intimidating and a bit wacky. Economics came naturally to me; the interconnected logic of economic systems made perfect sense. Of course, there were rough spots, but overall I began to slowly realize that my almost random major choice was better thought out than I had originally suspected.

This realization was more firmly cemented when it came time to register for second semester classes. As I poured through the Course Catalog, I was struck by how many classes addressed my long-held interest in international development. “Economic Systems of Africa! The World Food Economy! The Environment and Development!” I remember eagerly shouting at my startled friends. This was what I had wanted to study when I applied as an “African Studies” major to a variety of small liberal arts colleges six months before. I knew that that major was not exactly right, because it focused on the cultural and historical aspects of one region. However, I hid my doubts because I could see nothing else offered at these colleges that even came close to my real interests. While not denying the importance of these liberal arts studies, what I really wanted was to delve into the more tangible economic and social issues. I wanted to learn to diagnose and then cure the problems facing developing countries. In short, I wanted to save the world. I did not know it then, but that cannot happen studying culture and history alone. Development starts with agriculture, and agriculture
is studied not at the small liberal arts schools, but at the agricultural colleges of land-grant universities. It was thus a stroke of luck that I ended up in ACES; it was a matter of hard work in my early courses and a matter of pursuing the opportunities offered to me (including a conference in California with the International Association of Students in Agriculture and Related Sciences) that I realized I was exactly where I belong.

Now, in my second year in the college, when asked the question of what I am studying, my answer is a proud “Agricultural Economics.” The response to the inevitable follow-up of “Why?” took a year in ACES to really develop. I am studying agriculture, even though I am from the city, because first and foremost, everyone simply needs to eat. The issues facing our food system are everyone’s responsibility, as they have the potential to affect every person on the planet. A huge part of mitigating these potential environmental or human disasters is ensuring that less-developed countries progress in a reasonable way towards food security, among other standards of well-being. This process of development starts, as everything starts, with agriculture. Thus, I study agriculture to be an effective part of the solution, rather than an ignorant consumer who only contributes to the problem. I would not be able to so eloquently justify my chosen field without the knowledge about the world and especially about myself that I acquired during my first year. 

Frankly, there is no better way to spend your time as a freshman than learning that you are studying what you love, and, better yet, learning how to justify that love against all types of inquiries, especially those that come from within.

Approaching the James Scholar Diamond Jubilee (1959-2019): An Interview with Rob Chappell
By Megan Finfrock (CPSC Major, ACES James Scholar Class of 2022)

I had the opportunity to sit down with Rob Chappell, the Assistant to the Honors Dean here in the College of ACES, and ask him a few questions. Rob has been the Assistant to the Honors Dean in the Office of Academic Programs for the last eighteen years and is looking forward to the ACES James Scholar Honors Program’s 60th anniversary this upcoming year.

• Megan: How did the program get its name? Whom is it named after?

• Rob: The program is named after Edmund J. James. He was the President of the University from 1904-1920. He was the 4th President of the University of Illinois and was the one who turned the University into a world-class institution. There are no buildings or memorials named after him on campus because they thought it would be a more honorable memorial to name the James Scholar Honors Program in his memory.

• Megan: How did you become involved in the ACES James Scholar Honors Program?

• Rob: I attended the University of Illinois, where I attained my master’s degree, and after graduation, I began working in the Graduate College during the late 1990s. I ran its Information Office for three years, and then decided I wanted to work with undergraduate students because they have a lot less scary problems than graduate students. I was hired by the Honors Dean at the time (Dean Banwart) and found my place in the ACES Academic Programs Office. The job was more enjoyable and kept me coming back year after year.

• Megan: To you, what does it mean to be named an ACES James Scholar?

• Rob: It means that we see potential in you and for positive contributions to your respective profession; it means that you are personally part of a legacy of excellence and history.

• Megan: What is your favorite aspect of the James Scholar Honors Program?

• Rob: My favorite aspect of the program is the special programming for students. When Dr. Lee was the Honors Dean, we started to provide workshops in different aspects of the program, and a few years ago, when Dr. Kalita was the Honors Dean, we added to the program to include not only workshops but to include undergraduate research seminars and work-
shops on special topics such as leadership and communication strategies.

- **Megan:** What do you see as being the best advantage of being an ACES James Scholar?
- **Rob:** From a student's perspective, they would say that priority registration is the best advantage. 😊 Starting in November, on the first or second day of registration, James Scholars get to register before everyone else in the University, pretty much ensuring that you can get all the classes that you want. I feel the real advantage of the James Scholar Honors Program is the undergraduate research opportunity. It opens the door to an experience that very few had the opportunity to participate in a generation ago. It is a way to learn, shows you how to learn in the real world, and gives you a way to start sharing what you have learned through presentations or posters. It really is the capstone experience that we want every ACES James Scholar to have.

- **Megan:** How can students become more involved in the ACES James Scholar Honors Program?
- **Rob:** Students can become more involved by making it a two-way conversation. Visit the websites, look at the information and materials we put out, send in emails, stop by the office and say hello, tell us what is working and what is not. We want to improve the experience for students in the future, and the best way to learn what students want is from the students. 😊

- **Megan:** Are there any clubs or organizations specifically for James scholars?
- **Rob:** We do have the ACES James Scholar Activities and Communications Team (JS-ACT), which I am the advisor of. We work to edit and create publications for the monthly newsletter and social media, but there are also many honors societies that James Scholars are often invited to join. These are really great opportunities to network and to participate in community service and philanthropy. They are also a great way to network with past alumni. You can be involved in them not only when in college, but they can also be a lifelong involvement and are really great for professional development. You get to meet likeminded people who share the same commitment to academic excellence. There are some available to freshmen, which is a great gateway for a freshman to become involved in junior and senior societies in the future.

- **Megan:** What activity are you most excited about coming up this academic year?
- **Rob:** We are still planning it, but in December we will be having a holiday reception to kick off the Diamond Jubilee Year. We will have a special guest speaker, Dr. Kim Graber. She is the Director of the Campus Honors Program and a good friend to us. Also, in January I will be giving a talk on the 24th to James Scholars about the relationship between the calendar, astronomy, and agriculture. Stay tuned for more events coming up throughout the year!

- **Megan:** What has been your favorite part of working with ACES James Scholar students every day?
- **Rob:** My favorite part has been getting to know so many individual students. We have many very diverse students, from many different backgrounds and parts of the world. It has been an honor getting to know so many talented young scholars and getting to help them achieve their goals.

- **Megan:** What advice would you give to current ACES James Scholars?
- **Rob:** My biggest advice would be the three big things I learned in Kindergarten from my teacher, Mrs. Meyer. (1) Pay attention. (2) Follow directions. (3) Ask questions. These are not just good rules for Kindergarteners; they are good rules for everyone throughout life. Pay attention to opportunities; there are opportunities all around, from scholarships to trips. Read the *Honors Handbook*. Read the material that is on our website. If you don’t understand something or have special circumstances, don't be afraid to speak up and ask questions.

- **Megan:** How can James Scholar students share what they have learned during their time spent here at the University of Illinois with others?
- **Rob:** Everyone is unique, so it is an individual thing. Not all students are going to become professors or teachers, but all can do something to share the knowledge they learn. I challenge everyone to think of it creatively; it’s what makes you want to share with other people. Knowledge does not diminish when it is shared. It is not a material good, it does not cost anything to share, and as you share more and more knowledge, it continues to grow.
The Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, which opened its doors in 1969, hosts a wide variety of performances throughout the year, along with Commencement exercises in May and December. The Intermezzo Café and the Promenade Gift Shop are located on the first floor.

After attending my first Krannert Center event (the Swan Lake ballet) last spring, I was impressed by the top-quality performance at such a low cost for students. It was only $10 and a ten-minute walk to see a professional Russian ballet company preform their version of Swan Lake. Saying I was impressed is an understatement. So after that experience, I challenged myself to attend another event!

So this semester, I attended another event, but this time I experienced my first symphony orchestra. I thought it would be a relaxing break from finals to listen to some classical music and to open my ears and eyes to a new experience. Not only was I blown away, but I couldn't believe that the performers were students like me. They performed a variety of works in the concert, which lasted for about an hour and a half total, including the intermission. It was a fun experience to dress up a bit and listen to a marvelous performance for only $4!

I recommend all students to attend at least one event at Krannert Center before graduating; you won't be disappointed. It was not only exciting to do something new, but also to watch students like myself be a part of something they are passionate about. It made me not only appreciate the performance more, but also appreciate the variety of disciplines the University of Illinois provides to students so we can all pursue what we love! So for the new year of 2013, I challenge other students to open their ears and eyes to a new experience!

**Contact Information**

*News Bytes for Neophytes* is published monthly throughout the academic year for distribution to freshmen ACES James Scholars and their Departmental Honors Advisors. Comments, questions, and suggestions are always welcome and may be directed to the Editor, Rob Chappell ([rchappel@illinois.edu](mailto:rchappel@illinois.edu)).