From the Editor’s Desk

Welcome to the November 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.

In this month’s newsletter, we have an article for you about Dr. Edmund J. James (after whom our Honors Program is named); profiles of a recent alumna and a new faculty member; information about prestigious scholarship opportunities; and a feature article about scientific poetry in the ancient world. If you would like to contribute photos or articles to future issues, please contact me at the phone number and/or email address below.

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 rchappel@illinois.edu.

Upcoming Events

Information about these and other upcoming James-Scholarly events is on our Honors Calendar at http://academics.aces.illinois.edu/honors/james-scholars/guide. All of the following events will take place in the Heritage Room of the ACES Library, Information and Alumni Center.

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

Turning the Wheel of the Year: Exploring the Ties That Bind Agriculture, the Calendar, and Astronomy
- Thursday, January 24th, 3:15-4:30 PM
- Presenter: Rob Chappell
Features from the Grove of Academe

The Scholarship Starting Line
By Dr. David Schug, Director, National and International Scholarships Program (http://topscholars.illinois.edu)
Reprinted and Updated from The ACES Honors Messenger 1:3 (October 2016)

ON YOUR MARK: Here we are, another grand semester of classes, requirements, and student clubs. It's important to earn good grades, follow well-intentioned rubrics, and find positive ways to hang out with friends who have similar interests. Yes, do these things. But also, consider how you want to create knowledge, nourish your soul, and further humanity. What are your most important goals in life? What is a problem in the world you would like to help solve? Have you started working on it? What tools and collaborators do you need to help further your vocation?

GET SET: The National and International Scholarships Program would like to have a conversation with you about how to best spend your time at Illinois. We'll discuss strategies to better engage with faculty, make your transcripts resonate, and explore real opportunities for deeper community engagement. We assist University of Illinois students and alumni in applying for nationally competitive scholarships. Most awards are open to students in any discipline who are at the top of their fields. Others are more specialized and may have GPA requirements below the range of ACES James Scholars, such as scholarships for those interested in the environment, public service, graduate school, study abroad, or government work.

GO! Call 217-333-4710 or send an email message to topscholars@illinois.edu along with a few times you would be free to meet with one of our staff to discuss these opportunities and how to embark on them. A grand adventure awaits!

Rediscovering President James and the Honors Programs That Were Named After Him
By Rob Chappell, M.A., Editor
Adapted and Expanded from the 2005 Edition of the ACES Honors Handbook

Dr. Edmund J. James (1855-1925) was the fourth President of the University of Illinois from 1904 to 1920. This photo appeared in the 1912 edition of the Illio yearbook.

The ACES James Scholar Honors Program will be celebrating its Diamond Jubilee (sixtieth anniversary) year in 2019. This article is the first of many that will appear in subsequent issues of our newsletter about President James and his legacy of academic excellence, which is enshrined in the Honors Programs (and campus landmarks) that bear his name.
The ACES James Scholar Honors Program is named after Dr. Edmund J. James, President of the University of Illinois from 1904 to 1920. Among many other accomplishments, President James commissioned the construction of Lincoln Hall in 1909 (the centennial year of Abraham Lincoln’s birth) to house the College of Literature and Arts (eventually renamed as the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences). He is also remembered for his visionary challenge to the Board of Trustees in 1912, urging that the University build a research library to house a projected collection of at least one million volumes. The University Library, completed in 1927, now houses over fourteen million volumes and is the second largest academic library in the United States.

In honor of President James’ commitment to academic excellence, students who complete all requirements of the ACES James Scholar Honors Program at the end of each academic year receive the designation “Edmund J. James Scholar” on their official transcripts.

We are looking forward to celebrating our Diamond Jubilee throughout 2019. Commemorating six decades of cultivating the future on South Campus provides us with a wonderful opportunity to reflect on prior achievements and to lay a firm foundation for the sustainable future of our world. Today, we look to the current crop of ACES James Scholars to provide leadership and innovation as the 21st century unfolds.

---

**New Faculty Profile: Dr. Taylor Ruth, Assistant Professor of Agricultural Communications**

By Kayla Vittore (CPSC Major, ACES James Scholar Class of 2022) and Mackenzie Wells (ANSC Major, ACES James Scholar Class of 2021)

One of the College of ACES’ newest additions is Dr. Taylor Ruth in the Agricultural Communications Program. Despite her busy schedule, Dr. Ruth was gracious enough to take the time to sit down for an interview with Kayla Vittore to talk about her role in her department, upcoming classes, and a little about herself.

This is Dr. Ruth’s first year serving as an Assistant Professor, and she is very excited to offer two new classes this upcoming spring semester. These classes will focus on communication skills within an agricultural context. This involves distilling a topic from the highly technical, jargon-filled form used by professionals into a concise, more comprehensive form using layperson’s terms. As of now, the classes will be at the 300 level, available for any student in any major, and will have no prerequisites. In addition to her role as a professor, Dr. Ruth is the co-sponsor of Illini Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (ACT). This club focuses on professional skills (such as cover letters and photography) and brings in guest lecturers to educate its members. Though ACT is an RSO through the Agricultural Communications Program, anyone who has an interest in communications within an agricultural context is welcome.

A University of Florida alumna, Dr. Ruth has a B.S. in Microbiology and Cell Sciences and both an M.S. and Ph.D. in Agricultural Education and Communication. She also researched consumer reactions to different strategies of communicating scientific developments in agriculture, specifically attempts to use gene-editing/gene-modification to instill a pathologic resistance in Florida’s citrus tree populations. She left Florida for the University of Illinois to be a part of the changes taking place in the Agricultural Communications Program, as well as for a change of scenery. Having seen snow only a few times before moving to the Midwest, Dr. Ruth is looking forward to her first Illinois winter, as well as her cat’s and pony’s reactions to the change. Her favorite place on campus is underneath the McFarland Carillon Bell Tower on the South Quad, where she likes to sit and read. Her favorite series is Harry Potter, and she is a self-confessed Gryffindor. She also enjoys watching the seasonal changes in the Morrow Plots.
Dr. Ruth is very excited to share her love of and expertise in communications with everyone in ACES, regardless of major. She encourages students interested in improving their communication skills to write often and with effort, as well as ask others to review their work. If you are interested in speaking with Dr. Ruth or are interested in ACT, you can contact her at tkruth@illinois.edu, stop by her office in 274E Bevier Hall, or attend one of the monthly ACT meetings.

**Alumna Profile: Rylee Senesac**
(http://ryleesenesac.blogspot.com)

Text & Photo by Rylee Senesac (B.S. in ANSC, ACES James Scholar Class of 2016)

Adapted and Condensed from *The ACES Honors Messenger* 1: 2 (September 2016)

My name is Rylee Senesac, and I graduated in May 2016 with a degree in Animal Science. Clearly, I love all things concerning animals and spend a lot of my spare time with my own dogs, volunteering at a wolf ranch where I did my summer internship in college, being outdoors, and hanging out with my friends and family. My time at U of I was packed full with extracurriculars, intensive school work, and fun times with friends.

Being a James Scholar allowed me to get the most out of my college education. Without being involved in the program, I would have never taken advantage of any of the academically challenging (and rewarding) activities U of I has to offer. In order to graduate with honors, I had to present results from my own research study – something I would have never done otherwise. In doing so, I learned how much I truly love research and working hands-on with animals. I learned awesome problem-solving and analytical skills that will carry over with me as I embark on my journey into the real world.

Additionally, being a James Scholar allowed me to become closer to and interact directly with professors outside the normal classroom setting. This proved to be extremely beneficial when choosing classes to take for honors credit, deciding whom to work under to do research, and even now for when I need recommendation letters and networking contacts. I have gained priceless knowledge, supportive and long-lasting mentors, and self-confidence for the future.

During the summer months of 2016, Rylee worked for the DuPage County Forest Preserve District.

---

**THE CULTURE VULTURE**

"The Scholar-Poets" by Meg Dill Koch, R.D. (B.S. in FSHN, ACES James Scholar Class of 2007)

Reprinted from *Cursus Honorum* V: 2 (September 2004)

Poetry: music without sound.
That mysterious art that allows
Thoughts captured in the mind

To be released.
Not escaped, but rather
Preserved, secured in words.

**Two Scientific Poets: Aratus and Lucretius**

By Rob Chappell, M.A., Assistant to the Honors Dean

Adapted & Condensed from *Cursus Honorum* IX: 10 (May 2009)

The sciences and the humanities walked hand-in-hand during Classical antiquity as early researchers observed the natural world and poets popularized those discoveries by turning them into epic verse and singing them for interested audiences. Greek and Latin scientific poems could be regarded as the
precursors of modern popular science writing. Two of the most notable versifying popularizers of ancient science whose works have been preserved for us are Aratus (ca. 315-240 BCE) and Lucretius (ca. 99-55 BCE).

Aratus of Soli was a Greek poet from Anatolia (modern Turkey), and his most famous work is the *Phenomena*, a versified tour of the stars and constellations, which concluded with a description of “signs” that could be used to make weather predictions. His descriptions of the stars, their characteristics, and their apparent motions across the sky are considered to be extremely valuable. Aratus’ retellings of well-known astronomical myths and legends are very engaging, as his poetry turns the night sky into a cosmic storybook for everyone to enjoy.

Titus Lucretius Carus was a Roman poet who wrote his Latin masterpiece, *De Rerum Natura* (On the Nature of Things), to explain his understanding of the Universe. Lucretius expounded the atomic theory of matter, described the unfolding of life on Earth through eons of time, proposed that the Universe was infinite and contained countless inhabited worlds, and used logic and reason to refute common superstitions of his time. Lucretius’ teachings on atomism and the infinity of the Universe were widely discussed and debated during the European Renaissance, as they helped to inspire many pioneers of the Scientific Revolution like Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642).

Across a gulf of more than two millennia, Aratus and Lucretius present us with a timely challenge: to “think outside the box” of our individual academic disciplines to envision a holistic worldview that satisfies both the mind and the heart. They also show us how rewarding a career in science education or scientific writing can be – and how edutaining it is to learn about scientific subjects in epic verse! 😊

**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*).