SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

Written by: Brooke Winters ('19)

We interviewed a senior, Luis Baca, to learn more about his honors thesis and plans post-graduation. Find out what he had to say about the whole process!

The senior thesis is something that Baldwin students at Drew are either currently grappling with or dreading as they approach their senior year. While the senior thesis may seem like a daunting task, it is entirely doable. With enough hard work and planning, Baldwin students are more than capable of completing the thesis. One of the great things about Drew is how customizable each student’s education can be, and this is a trait that extends to each student’s senior thesis. Senior Luis Baca, who is majoring in Economics, exemplifies how many different departments can come together in order to fuse a student’s interests together for a thesis. Baca, working alongside Professor Tomljanovich and Professor Sarolli in the Economics department, Professor Hill in the Computer Science department, and Professor Hess from the French department, is in the process of investigating how exposure to the global economy affects the amount of risk a company takes on. Baca states, “In other words, is a company that generates most of their revenue domestically more or less risky than one that has a large part of their sales outside the United States?” To address this question, Baca will examine data from before, during, and after the recent financial crisis, looking for any significant differences between the time periods. The fusion of the Economics, Computer Science, and French departments illustrates how interconnected very different fields of study can become during the process of creating the senior thesis.

In regards to preparing for the thesis, Baca has some strong advice for underclassmen. The key is to start thinking about a potential thesis early. Baca advises that “students should be forming connections with professors both in their department and outside their department as soon as they get on campus.” A good way to go about forming these connections is to talk to professors outside of the classroom setting, such as during their office hours. Drew professors are at a small liberal arts school because they want to interact with students. As for a timeline for the thesis, Baca recommends having an idea as to what topic students would like to research by the start of junior year. This allows for students to make significant progress during the second semester of junior year as well as throughout senior year. Planning ahead will lead to less stress in the long run, benefiting both you and your thesis.
In their junior year, Baldwin Honors Scholars spearhead one of two Junior Initiatives to demonstrate their leadership on campus. They must either join together as a group for the entire academic year to plan a collaborative event or project in the Forest surrounding a specific issue or work as one-on-one conversation partners with INTO students.

Drewids working as conversation partners complete ten hours of College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) training with the Center of Academic Excellence (CAE) and eight hours of working with an INTO student.

While other Honors events and requirements encourage Baldwin Scholars to challenge themselves academically in the classroom or connect their academic experiences in the Forest with global events and experiences, the junior initiative fosters a sense community and helps Baldwin Scholars develop valuable leadership skills.

A small group of Baldwin Scholars chose for their Junior Initiative to create a project that will impact the entire Drew community while promoting important aspects of the Baldwin Honors Program. Juniors Richa Patel and Alex Slotkin described their experience with the project thus far.

**Q: Why did you choose to come up with a project on your own?**

**Richa:** I am already a tutor for the Center of Academic Excellence as well as a writing fellow for the first-year seminars, and rather than going through the same CRLA trainings for the third time, I thought I could use my time to impact the Drew community in a different way. I wanted to come up with an idea that could help Drew students carry the values of the honors program with them well after they graduate.

**Q: What is the project?**

**Alex:** This year's junior initiative project is an international film festival. We plan on showing films representative of differing cultures which, coupled with food from these cultures, will open an educational dialogue on diversity and the arts.

**Richa:** The mission of the honors program is to position Drew students to be global citizens of the world... We are going to be collaborating with a lot of the cultural clubs on campus to best represent a snapshot of their cultural traditions.

**Q: What do you expect to be getting out of the project?**

**Richa:** The success of our event will help to cultivate a more informed, global student body. We hope to create a more accepting and compassionate environment on and off campus.

**Alex:** Much of what my group and I get out of this project will depend on the conversation Drew students decide to have about what we collectively experienced. The direction this conversation takes will be reflective of who the Drew student body is.

**Q: How have your honors experiences helped you to get here?**

**Alex:** Last semester I completed an honors tutorial in preparation for my honors thesis, in which I will—hopefully—explore the intersection between semantics and epistemology, a reflection of my two majors: English and Philosophy. Being able to bring together different disciplines, which is the product of all my honors experiences, helped me learn how different mediums (film and food, in this case) can be used to explore some larger topic (diversity and a collective human experience). Though I did not come up with the idea for the project, my honors experiences have and are helping me to see the potential of this project and the direction it ought to take.
Q: Who have you gone to for help with the project?

Richa: Our biggest helper so far has been Professor Hamilton who has attended every meeting we held in the fall and supported us through our application for the Mellon Arts and Common Good grant to fund our event. He has also done a great job keeping us grounded and realistic about the event and has provided great insight on some of the logistics of the project.

All in all, scholars either develop this sense of community by working as a diverse group with individual responsibilities for which each member must be accountable or by becoming a part of Drew's new INTO initiative inviting international students into the Forest.

Whether they choose to do the traditional group project or newer conversation partner program, the leadership skills Baldwin Scholars gain and refine through the Junior Initiative will help them succeed in and out of the Forest. Using leadership to affect the campus community or a single person, the Junior Initiative brings the Baldwin Honors program into other communities at Drew before beginning the individualized academic experience of the Honors thesis in their senior year.

HONORS STUDENTS AS PUBLISHED AUTHORS

Written by: Alex Slotkin ('17)

Did you write a 10 page research paper that you’re proud of? Have you finished a thesis chapter? Consider submitting it to The Drew Review, Drew University’s only peer-reviewed undergraduate research journal. We accept papers in any language and any field. If it’s thought provoking and accessible to readers, we want it!

We read every submission sent to us and discuss it at length: what we like about it, what we don’t like about it, and if it has room for improvement. To ensure that our focus is solely on the quality of your submission and not who you are, we have our corresponding editors remove your name from your work during the evaluation process in what is known as a double-blind review. That’s why we can promise our authors that they are published for the merit of their work and not their name.

If we feel that your submission is exactly what we’re looking for, we send it directly to a faculty member in the field for his or her feedback. But, as often happens, we may ask you to make revisions beforehand. Papers written for Baldwin Honors seminars make for especially good submissions because professors expect your work to exemplify what it means to be a Baldwin Scholar. As a result, your work tends to be exactly what we are looking for. We are always excited to see Baldwin Scholars in our inbox.

Our guidelines are simple: all submissions require at least 10 pages of content and a faculty nomination. Students who believe their work is exceptional should approach their professor for a nomination. What’s likely to be accepted is a paper that is well written, logical, and original. That’s not to say that if your work is not accepted it’s not any one of these. There are only so many trees in America; it would be selfish for us to use them all.

What’s in it for you? Besides seeing your work printed and a toast in your honor, publication in an academic journal is a nice addition to any resume or graduate school application. Additionally, all published authors are given the opportunity of serving as editors for the journal going forward, and you’ll make your professor smile. Talk about perks!
Feel free to pick up a copy of our most recent issue, which can be found most anywhere on campus, to see what we are all about. The Drew Review will be accepting submissions until **February 15th** for our next issue, which will be published toward the end of this semester.

Have an essay you would like to submit or a question that wasn’t addressed here? Email us at **drewreview@drew.edu**.

**FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE**

Written by: Inji Kim (’17)

Doing anything for the first time can be quite nerve wracking. This August, the first year honors students felt the same. We not only started our first year in college but also experienced our first semester in the Baldwin Honors Program. As all Baldwin upperclassmen once did in their first year Honors colloquium, we discussed what a liberal arts education really is. I still remember the anticipation and anxiety that filled the classroom when we all received a copy of Plato’s *Meno*, when we were told to read a part of it, and when we wrote a short essay about it. Writing this was definitely challenging for many of us. While it was crucial for us to understand an unfamiliar field, we also had to struggle to keep our essays under 250 words. Soon after, Arendt, Zakaria, and many other authors followed Plato throughout the semester. As a result, the honors papers were stressful for many of us. Low and behold, though, the hard work paid off; I recall my fellow first years and myself making wonderful discoveries about liberal arts education after reading through the texts and discussing them among us and professors during the hour-long group meetings every Thursday.

The colloquium included other parts as well, we watched the play *The Diary of Anne Frank* in the Shakespeare Theatre, listened to the President’s lecture, and also went to sample classes of professors who have done research at Drew. These were all unique experiences as they took us outside of what we’ve been used to in a traditional classroom and encouraged us to approach to liberal arts from different perspectives.

The program also offered us many opportunities to interact with upper classmen. At the beginning of the semester, each of us was assigned an honors mentor, whom we were able to have lunch with during the semester. The parties held in Mead Hall and the honors tea held every Wednesday were also good opportunities for us to interact with upperclassmen Baldwin scholars, giving us an idea on what we should expect from the program for the next four years. As of now, most of us are anxiously anticipating our first honors seminars for the spring semester. Once again, doing anything for the first time can be quite nerve wracking, but I am sure we will all make wonderful discoveries just like we did in our first semester as Baldwin Scholars.
HONORS STUDENTS AS WORLD TRAVELERS

Several grants were given out to honors student this past year to help them with their research projects abroad. Take a look at some of their outcomes!

“I am a senior hoping to complete my last semester here at Drew and graduate with a Bachelor’s Honors Degree in Spanish and Cultural Anthropology, with a Minor in Chinese. Last summer, I was awarded the Tuition Development Grant for $1,220.12, which I used to finance a trip to my hometown of la Cañada de Caracheo, Guanajuato, México. I used the grant to finalize my thesis research on my topic of Machismo and Latino Masculine Gender roles and its development in three separate locations (Salvador Brazil, Drew University, New Jersey and my hometown). I plan to apply for an International Student Scholarship in order to study and earn a Master’s in Chinese at Harbin Normal University in China after which, I hope to become a translator to earn enough money to go back and get a PhD.” – David Aguilar Villagómez (’16)

“During the summer of 2015, I participated in the three week Afro-Brazilian culture short TREC program in Salvador, Brazil aided by the Baldwin Honors Independent Study Grant. With this additional funding, I was able to defray tuition and travel costs as well as purchases relevant to my research project on capoeira. In my ethnographic study, I visited several capoeira schools practicing both variations of Angola and regional, observing class, interviewing capoeiristas and even participating in playing capoeira. Part of my budget went towards travel costs on the Salvador bus system, taxi services for less accessible regions and at night when busses ran less frequently, and other forms of navigation provided with interaction with locals. Once, I offered a R$20 tip to a man who walked us across town to find a specific capoeira school. Another part of my budget was also spent on capoeira related supplies. I purchased a cheap pair of white capoeira pants at a central market because pants are considered a traditional standard uniform for capoeiristas to all the capoeira schools and I could not participate in classes without them. For my research, I took two private lessons to be a participant-observer and study the physical forms, gain rapport, understand class structure and each school’s pedagogy.” – Ivy Wong (’17)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out the Baldwin’s Honors Events page for the most up-to-date information on the 2015-2016 honors programs:

http://www.drew.edu/baldwinhonors/baldwin-honors-events-2013-14-check-regularly-for-updates

INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED?

Contact Professor Louis Hamilton at lhamilto@drew.edu or Editor-in-chief Richa Patel at rpatel3@drew.edu to learn more about what you can do!