

Honors Program students and faculty present at national conference

BAYTOWN, TX — Imagine a place where tweed jackets, black-rimmed glasses and excitement for learning abound. Three Lee College faculty members and two Honors Program students immersed themselves in this culture of ideas during the 51st annual National Collegiate Honors Council Conference held this month in Seattle, Washington.

Instructors Georgeann Ward and Jerry Hamby, along with former students Drew MacKenzie and Mandy Ray, were invited to present a session on a unit that Ward and Hamby teach in the unique Honors course, “The Human Condition.” The seminar-style class combines the disciplines of English and Humanities, emphasizing open discussion and encouraging students to ask bold questions and engage in critical thinking about the world in which they live.

The Lee College group — which also included instructor and conference attendee Dr. Portia Hopkins — was selected to present from hundreds of applicants at colleges and universities around the country. Hamby and Ward discussed the pedagogical and logistic aspects of using experiential learning in their class, while MacKenzie and Ray discussed its impact on students.

“When I started the Human Condition, I thought I wanted to get my certificate,” said Ray, who is majoring in Drug and Alcohol Abuse Counseling. “However, after a month in the class, something in me shifted and I realized I wanted a degree — letters that would follow my name.”

A first-time participant in the conference, Hamby was most impressed by how well established and accomplished the Lee College Honors Program is in comparison to many other schools. MacKenzie shared similar sentiments after reflecting on his experience.

“I had never been to a conference like this before, so it was exciting to see such a community of scholars,” MacKenzie said. “To be welcomed into that community was quite an honor.”

In addition to presenting their work to colleagues and peers, the Lee College faculty and students listened to a keynote address by award-winning author Sherman Alexie, visited museums, took walking tours of downtown Seattle and absorbed as much information as possible on their four-day trip.

“Lee College provides amazing opportunities for students, showing them just how far their education can take them,” said Ward, who also serves as coordinator of the Honors Program. “I am grateful to have such a supportive administration that values student learning both inside and outside of the classroom.”

For more information about the opportunities available to students in the Lee College Honors Program, visit www.lee.edu/honors.