A final challenge to every Honors Scholar is to reflect on his or her experience in the Program; below are reflections by twelve graduates:

“Being able to research and stay with one specific topic for two years has been a remarkable experience for me. We students are used to the shift that occurs from semester to semester—one class to another. Ideally there is a flow from semester to semester, knowledge building atop of more knowledge, but oftentimes there is not a fluid continuity of knowledge and understanding from semester to semester. The experience of staying with one topic for an extended period of time is truly worthwhile.

My topic is one that I feel very passionate about. It isn’t a topic that corresponds with my major and it probably won’t help me get a job in my industry—it is simply a topic that is important to me. The knowledge that I have obtained during these past two years does not simply sit in my head and do nothing. Instead, this knowledge has empowered my activism, which I believe is an important component to learning. To learn about such a crisis is not enough; for me, taking action is an essential corollary…

I do also believe that I have learned the importance of context in relation to meaning. For example, I have read much about poverty in Africa; I’ve heard speakers, seen videos and other presentations on the issue. However, what is most meaningful to me is to hear from the actual people who have lived the impoverished life. Why is it that we consider the “experts” to be the people who study these issues, without living them? How much can these experts truly know about poverty? I believe the people of Africa have much to share with us—including the hope that we Americans so desperately need to understand. My journey has allowed me to move more and more away from an “us and them” approach and closer towards a “we” approach. We cannot believe that we alone, America, or any developed country can, without the input of the developing countries, solve this crisis. Frankly, I think we (the individual and the country) need to get over ourselves, stop being so ethnocentric and seek to truly understand other people. All meaning is contextual.”

John Abdulla ‘08

“I have faced many challenges over my years here at Curry College pursuing knowledge. The Honors program has had a significant impact on my life; for five consecutive semesters I have lived and breathed this thesis. The discovery process, going from nothing to something, has been a great learning experience for me…From the first semester to now, my whole approach to school work and my education has changed due to the Honors program. “

Jacky Horsley ‘08

“As I look back on my long arduous journey in the Curry College Honors program I have come to several startling revelations…My ability to make meaning has changed substantially from the first semester. I now look at everything I see and hear in life more closely and from a critical lens as to assess the validity of the information that I
am receiving…Investigating a topic in-depth has shown me that things in life can be very complex, but sometimes people make things more complex than they need to be.

Sometimes the best solutions are the easiest ones. The answers to some problems do not always need to come from elaborate plans… I also learned that all meaning is contextual. As human beings we apply meaning to everything we do in our lives… The meaning individuals apply to things in the life is everything. Norms arise from the contexts in which individuals apply meaning. The reason for the difference in norms results from the meanings individuals apply to different aspects in their lives… The Honors Program has been a long journey that I at times thought was impossible, but now my journey is complete. The lessons and values I learned will benefit me in my journeys outside Curry College.”

Robert Millian ’08

“Throughout my four years of college I have been involved in the honors program in some form, whether it be in the First Year Honors Program or the Honors Scholars Program. I, like many other students involved in the programs, did a lot of work and learned something new here and there. What I ended up learning most about, however, was myself.

Since my first semester of honors, there have been thousands of things which have changed in my life, one important aspect would be my ability to interpret and form meaning in my life. This is not the kind of question one could limit and answer to a page or two, but early in my college career, I used to think in extremes, a black and white mentality. I realize now, there isn’t anything wrong with that style of thought, but what I did realize is that although thinking in black and white provides for instant answers; thinking in the grey area allows for a greater depth of information and sometimes more meaningful answers. Which bring us to the million dollar question, “Is all meaning contextual?” Of course it is, we’ve covered this topic inside and out, and not only is meaning contextual, but everything is contextual within life, the only two guaranteed constants on this earth are life and death. Everything in between the two has too many other factors involved to be predetermined.

As much as I have highly disliked the workload I have amassed in the last month, between my paper and presentation I really have learned a lot. I learned no matter how much you have read and researched a topic, the study will just never end… But I then realized, all these other doctors and scientists must have faced the same dilemmas when they were working on their papers. Hopefully, someone will use my research, to shape their thesis someday, then I think I will wear my accomplishment on my sleeve.

I also learned, the most important part of the three year project wasn’t the presentation, the paper, or the grades. It was the knowledge of myself, and realizing I can step into bigger shoes and fill them in. I will also remember the great friendships and help and how sometimes, admitting your weaknesses and lack of knowledge in the field isn’t the injustice, I realized not asking for help and guidance is the bigger wrong. I
know my thesis and library advisors were the biggest helps not only through the honors program, but throughout my entire college career, maybe even my entire educational career.

Well, I hope my informal style and conversational ramblings weren’t too annoying for you to read through. I also hope I answered the questions you posed to me and hope these can help future honors programs at Curry College. Thank you for the experience and the belief in me and my thesis, even when I didn’t have much to show. Thank you again.”

Andrew Aroyea ‘08

“The day that I received the invitation to join the Honors Program at Curry College remains vivid in my mind. Up to that point I had always believed that I was just an average student, that I had nothing beyond the ordinary to offer. However, the invitation to join became the first step in what would become a memorable journey. At times I felt frustrated and more often than not, I felt that the task could not be completed. However, the feeling I felt upon completion of my presentation was priceless. It was an indescribable feeling which will remain with me forever. For the first time in my life, I understood what it meant to have a huge burden lifted off your shoulders. And for the first time in my academic career, I was truly proud of myself.

I began The Honors Seminar feeling confused. The book *Siddhartha* was a mystery to me. What could this book, a novel about a man long ago, have to do with researching a thesis topic? I was unaware of the journey of self-discovery that I would go on that Spring semester. Obviously my first intuition was to jump into the research. However, what I learned in The Honors Seminar would be both a valuable and necessary tool in reaching the end point.

The Honors Seminar taught me to find both my academic self and my personal self. Through its assignments I learned to explore the inner me. More importantly, I learned to always look deeper into everything. Is all meaning contextual? I now know what I didn't know before - the reason why that question was asked and the answer to it, although I must admit that question sure baffled me for a long time! With each and every assignment I learned more and more about my style, both personal and academic. I found that I could do things that I had never done before. For example, I saw more than just a painting; I saw a whole story. I learned that there is not always a straight forward answer. And most importantly I learned that I too, could do what I never thought possible.

Perhaps what was a vital part of The Honors Seminar was Dr. Hunter's involvement. Besides his very friendly and approachable character, having two professors voice their opinions was priceless. It is perhaps the only time in an educational experience where a student receives an assignment back with two comments. And two people, with two very different personalities, explaining the same thing is extremely rewarding. In fact without Dr. Hunter's involvement, I believe The Honors Seminar would not have been as profiling.

Obviously from my above comments the most important process of this program
was completing The Honors Seminar. However, Honors Research I also played a vital mechanics role. In this class I was taught how to research. And not just sparingly research, but thoroughly research a topic. It was very informative and the right start to begin my research... from the very beginning of that class I felt like I was on my own. Perhaps the most important aspect of the Program Director's job is that he is available for help. This was never a problem; the director was in his office 90% of the times I looked for him. Overall he was extremely helpful. Any question I had was answered, and if he couldn't answer it, I was directed to someone who could. Every detail of the Honors Program was mapped out by him from the very beginning - nothing was hidden. And most importantly he understood that everyone has a personal way of doing things. The Program Director was very accepting of my timeline of getting things to him. Without that, the thesis procedure would have been even more stressful... I would like to thank you, Doctor Warners, for the opportunity that you gave me; for the guidance and support. And above all else, for believing in me.

To describe this program to someone who has not attended college would be quite difficult. Today, as I get ready to graduate, the learning of high school seems like a distant memory. To me the learning process is the one I have spent the past four years doing. However, I would describe this program the same way to a college student invited as I would to a non college student. It as a program that allows you to be you. Because the student is given the opportunity to pick any topic that the imagination allows, it is a program for everyone. Each and every student in the Honors Program chooses a topic that they have passion for. It is not a program that forces you to sit down and memorize; it is a program that lets you explore, in deep detail, something that catches a passion within. The Honors Program at Curry College is not just another classroom experience. From it you learn about you, find your weaknesses and your strengths; your talents and your failures. The Honors Program is, above all else, a life lesson.”

Erin O’Connor ‘04

“...The challenge of the Honors Program was different. The central question “What is your passion?” stopped me short. Who, after all, is Patty Miley? What does she think? What does she want to learn about? These are difficult, life-changing questions.

So, I asked myself, “What do you enjoy?” What would you do if you were free to do anything? That answer was easy- put back the recliner and read Harry Potter. But, where would this take me? Coincidentally, I was studying Carl Jung in one of my Psychology classes, and had come across Joseph Campbell’s ideas in other reading. This was the impetus I needed! What an opportunity to be able to apply my Psychology background to my own “passion”! The Honors Program challenged me to approach my research using strict academic guidelines. It challenged me to be thorough! It challenged me to back up my ideas. It taught me the importance and discipline of real research. It forced me to become, for the first time, a real student.

The road was not an easy one, and more than once I wanted to give up. Certainly there was an easier way to get a degree! Why was I spending my summer reading Carl
Jung instead of sitting on the beach? However, I developed a real passion for Joseph Campbell and his ideas, which I probably would not have investigated at this time in my life. His Hero Journey was my own! I now recognize more easily the mentors in my life, dismiss the threshold guardians as mere distractions, and know that I am on my own personal journey. I now know that those who challenge me are likely my mentors, and that they will take me in a direction which both develops and strengthens me as a human being. Thus, participation in the Honors Program has been my life journey, certainly full of peaks and valleys, but ultimately one of the greatest challenges of my life. It has given me the confidence that I can face future challenges, because I have already come through the underworld of self doubt and presented my message to all those who cared to listen.”

Patty Miley ‘05

“Investigating my honors thesis has influenced me even more to continue to pursue my interest in researching film history. After carrying out the thesis I do believe that the interest regarding classic theatrical films is there amongst fellow students and professors. Even though there are books which present this information, I feel that since I know and care about accurately presenting this history I should continue my research on various film history topics and someday publish material to help preach the importance of these films.

...I do feel that meaning is contextual and in a way this has influenced me to carry out my independent film studies research (finding a way to connect every film from the 1920’s through the 1960’s and relate it to society or a topic), as well as other things such as other art forms, literature, how people act, etc. and relate it to my life. I personally and honestly have found the honors program here at Curry helpful in developing my study skills and personality and when I leave Curry I intend to bring all of this knowledge with me off to graduate school.”

Jonathan Boschen ‘08

“This journey has been the most rewarding and difficult experience I’ve been on in my entire education career. In the beginning of this journey, I always felt the Honors Scholar Program would help me as a student to reach for the best and never for less. In the end, I can honestly say I am honored to have been a member of this program because it has had a major positive influence on my education here at Curry College.

I was afraid and uncertain about joining the Honors Scholar Program because I’ve heard so much about the requirements that one needs to fulfill before completing the program. As a college student I felt I needed to be challenged and joined the Honors Scholar Program unsure about what lied in front of me. I realized in order to be seen and stand out amongst the crowd was to embark on a journey that most people feared. I stopped being afraid and let life take its course… My first four semesters in the Honors Scholar Program I struggled to find a thesis that was important to me and worth my effort. I went from a broad topic that had no ending to a topic that lived inside of me. This is where the real journey started and its unfortunate that I didn’t realized it in the beginning. It wasn’t difficult catching up on the work because the topic was something I breathed and lived. This is what made the journey so much more easy and rewarding.
As I started to embrace my new thesis, I realized the Honors Scholar Program was merely my vehicle, which helped me bring my thoughts and research to a polished piece. At times I felt like giving up on this journey because I felt I couldn’t develop an exceptional thesis that would be worth researching and structuring. I realized I’ve come too far to give up and run away from the possible. I also realized that I wouldn’t have been recommended or accepted into the Honors Scholar Program if the individuals didn’t believe that I was capable of handling the course work… At the end of the journey I’ve discovered that the Honors Scholar Program was nothing to be afraid of. The Honors Scholar Program helps an individual choose the path they want to take. It’s all about selfmotivation and applying oneself to the work.”

Merica Guillaume ’08

“One thing is for certain, I believe in faith. I think you have to believe in something, because otherwise why are you living? Since sophomore year of high school I wanted to go to college. Along the way I wasn’t always sure how I would get there, but I had faith I would. By virtue of the fact that I am writing this paper, I made it to college, and for me just making it to college is a triumph all by itself. However, sophomore year would be a turning point in my life once again. I remember the day like it was yesterday, standing stunned in my kitchen with a letter inviting me to apply to the honors program. While my parents told me if I didn’t want to pursue this, they wouldn’t be disappointed, in my mind the fact that I was invited to apply was all the more reason to apply, find a way in to this “prestigious” program, and see what I academically could really do.

Now, to jump ahead a bit, I did in fact end up applying to the honors scholars program and got in. When I was told I was being given a spot in the program, it was another moment of triumph in my life. Until college, moments of happiness and triumph were almost never associated with my academic performance, except when I graduated high school, because I squeaked by in trig-pre calc…. It also was a turning point in my life because I believed I was called to participate in this program and it what I had been searching for, an outlet to write and speak about AD(H)D and to be able to tell people what it really is like to live your life with it.

The whole process of writing this thesis has changed me. The Honors Seminar challenged me to figure out exactly what AD(H)D means in my life and made me realize that it’s a big part of who I am and in fact it’s something that actually was an asset; my creativity and original ideas helped me get in and would eventually help me do well in all my classes. The most meaningful moment of the Seminar was after the semester was over and I found that Professor Warners had mailed my reflection essay to my parents and told them of how well I had done that semester. It meant a lot to me for someone who had just met me to now see my capability, passion, and commitment to reaching the finishing line. There are good and bad days with honors, days where you question “what am I doing?” but, also those days when your reminded of the reason your spending time reviewing all that literature and stressing over conducting those interviews, are much
stronger and experienced far more than those bad days.

At the end of the book “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the night-time,” the main character Christopher, a boy with autism, comes home after his journey and says, “And I know I can do this because I went to London on my own, and because I solved the mystery of who killed Wellington, and I found my mother and I was brave and I wrote a book and that means I can do anything.” Now, for my own spin on this:

“And I know I can do this because I got into the Honors Scholars Program on my own, and because I took this risk and I interviewed strangers and I didn’t allow public speaking to scare me off and I was brave and I wrote a thesis and that means I can do anything.”

Lauren DeGrosky ‘08

“The Honors Scholar Program has truly been an amazing journey over the past several semesters at Curry College. Although there have been countless ups and downs during the Honors courses, it would not be a remarkable journey without them. I am extremely proud of myself that I was able to stick with something for so long, even during the times I felt like giving up. Yet, if it was not for the hardships, I would not have been able to learn, grow, and become an expert in my thesis topic.

Quite possibly the most meaningful point in this entire journey was the very end. My hard work and determination has truly paid off allowing me to create something that I am extremely proud of. It is such a rewarding feeling to produce something in which heart, soul, and tears have gone into and be able to produce the final product. The support from the Honors Program and its instructors has meant so much and aided in the development of a strong thesis. I have never had the opportunity to study something so closely and it is undoubtedly one of my fondest memories at Curry College. To have the opportunity to study something that one is truly passionate about is quite rare and I am fortunate to have that experience.

Investigating a topic in such depth has truly influenced me to further my research. With all that I have learned, there is still so much more that I want to discover. It has inspired me to keep moving forward as school moves to an end. Finishing the thesis has only made me more curious about everything I have discovered and I know there is so much more information out there to learn about.

My topic on Renaissance and Baroque art has also inspired me to continue to stay within the arts world. I want to teach what I have learned to others; I wanted to attend graduate school so that I can have the opportunity to study with others who are just as fascinated by the arts I am. I have a strong desire to travel to Europe to examine the different pieces of art I studied in person. From everything I have learned over the Honors Scholar Program, I can now confidently say that, yes, all meaning is contextual. For a question that was so foreign to me in the beginning of the program I feel confident in saying that this statement has proven to be true. This question has influenced me to
make the most of my time at Curry College and within the program. It has also influenced me to use the knowledge gained from an academic background in the arts to form a meaningful experience, while challenging myself to development further. I certainly would not have been able to answer that question had it not been for the Honors Scholar Program.

I would like to take this time to personally thank you for my time in Honors Scholar Program. Being a part of this has truly given me confidence and the desire to continue to learn, even as I am nearing graduation. Without your time, dedication and heart I would have not be able to produce something that I am extremely proud of. I never would have imagined myself to be a part of something like the Honors Program and I truly thank you for seeing the light inside of me that I was unable to see myself and helping to make it shine brightly.

Thank you for helping me in going for the gold.”

Kasey Richards ‘08

“The Honors Program here at Curry College has pushed me to want to research a topic that I feel passionate about and allow me to spread awareness about an issue that is a societal problem. Everything that I have done over the past two years have influenced me in many ways. I took on a challenge that at first was very frightening but with the support of others and professors, I took on the challenge with a new attitude and went for the gold. This thesis has become a big part of who I am, and as I put in the very last final touches it is, it has become a very personal piece of art. Investigating this topic has made me want to explore the aspects of psychology and make others aware of how important this issue is. Not only to help children that currently suffering but for the children of the future because they deserve a good life too.

“Is all Meaning Contextual?” [is a] question has really made me think in terms how important this thesis was to me. It made me explore all the reasons behind how people may act and the how maltreatment effects a child’s brain and development not only in early stages but in the future as well. Being able to present my thesis in front of my peers, professors, friends and family, made me actually see everything fall into place and that was most meaningful to me out of everything that has happened during this process over the past two years.”

Erin Campbell ‘08

“The most important thing that I have gained from being a part of the Honors Scholars program is my way of approaching a challenge. I guess you could say that my paradigm for thinking and writing has changed. Coming into the program, the idea of an eighty page paper hung over my head for the longest time. How am I going to write eighty pages? Any time I did any work towards my thesis, if there were no written pages towards my final product, I felt like I was accomplishing nothing. Through working with a variety of different professors, I learned just how different each individual’s point of
view could be about the same topic. This made me realize that I had to approach this challenge my way, and nobody else’s. In this realization, I decided to write multiple short papers on different sections of my thesis. After adding a few transitions between each individual paper, they all become one final product. Being able to just take a step back, sit down, and look at the task at hand completely changed how I approached it, and made it a lot easier to complete.

… What influenced me the most about researching my topic is that it was such a personal topic. It is something that I have had as a huge part of my life for a long time. I never realized how little I knew about the subject. After researching it extensively, I am glad I have an explanation for everything I have been doing in response to sports. However, I don’t see this changing me in any way, in regards to my actions.

Meaning is definitely contextual. The question, I hate to admit, has been in the back of my mind throughout this program. I knew that it had to have some relevance along the way, so I kept it in mind. Like I said before, my approach to doing the research and organizing everything changed towards the end of this process. Before that change, I felt like I had no idea what I was doing, and where I should be going with it. Afterwards, using the same information, it was very clear and easy to put together. I had the exact same information, but my context of approaching it just changed. Meaning is definitely contextual.”

Alex Rote ‘08