The Honors Program–changing lives through creative scholarship
The Honors Program has continued to grow and diversify since the launching of its new format in 2016. This year, our largest number of students, 13, will be awarded the Honors Program Distinction for having completed 16 or more credits of honors work. These students will receive a commemorative medallion at the Honors Reception, an Honors Distinction notation on their transcripts, recognition on their commencement program, and a seal on their diplomas. One of these recipients, Joshua Novinger, has been named to the All Arizona Academic Team and has received a full transfer scholarship to ASU where he has been admitted to Barrett, The Honors College. Another Honors Program Distinction recipient, Rachel Hansen, has been chosen as this year’s commencement speaker. All of these Honors Program Distinction students have worked diligently in a number of majors including Biology, Communications, English, History, and Math and represent a cross section of those participating in the Honors Program. They join the nearly 50 other students who have participated in the Honors Program this academic year in courses representing a broad range of disciplines such as American Sign Language, Anthropology, Calculus, Music, Spanish, and Theatre.

The centerpiece of our program remains the academic relationships between honors faculty and students engaged in creative scholarship within General Education Courses and/or through independent study (Honors 250), allowing our program requirements to be both flexible and transferable. As of Spring 2019, the program has grown to include 59 General Education courses, 17 disciplines, and 33 faculty members who teach across a variety of venues and modalities. In this issue of The Oracle, you will read about an invaluable member of the Honors Faculty, Becky Orozco, and her commitment to restoring Camp Naco. Also in this issue, you will be introduced to two Honors Program students, Jay Melzer and Quinton Willis, who travelled to Montana State University to present their utopia projects at the Western Regional Honors Conference. These projects were completed in the program’s transferable capstone course HON 260, The Human Quest for Utopia, an interdisciplinary course which also satisfies the Humanities and Critical Inquiry/Intensive Writing requirements for our students. Such incredible opportunities for students are made possible through the generous support of the Cochise College Governing Board, The Foundation and the Administration, especially our President, Dr. J.D. Rottweiler; our Executive Vice President/Provost, Dr. Verlyn Fick; and our Executive Dean of Academics, Dr. Alan Biel. With their support, and the commitment and expertise of the Honors Faculty, the Honors Program continues to change lives. Thank you to the Honors Advisory Board, the Friends of the Program and the whole Honors team for fostering the continued growth of our exceptional Honors Program!

Mary B. Coyle
Every year, students from the Douglas and Sierra Vista Campuses have the opportunity to apply for the All Arizona Scholarship. This is a highly competitive scholarship and applicants must have at least a 3.5 GPA, write a 500-word essay about a significant project they have accomplished since starting college, and undergo a rigorous interview process. The winners receive a full-ride transfer scholarship to any of the three state universities in Arizona: University of Arizona (UA), Arizona State University (ASU), and Northern Arizona State University (NAU). Two students from each campus are eligible to win and the students who won this year represent the college well through their academic achievements and their involvement in campus life.

Yassine Fouchal is an Engineering major on the Sierra Vista Campus. He has not yet decided which school he will attend to study Aerospace Engineering. This degree will enable him to design aircraft and space vehicles. He sees this as his launch pad to a career as an astronaut. Fouchal has served as the Vice-President of the Sierra Vista Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) chapter and was the committee chair for the Honors in Action project. For this PTK contest, chapter members create and research a project that benefits the community. Fouchal’s project won number one for theme. He is also active in the Technology Club, as an historian with the Undergraduate Science Research Club, as a math tutor, and as a volunteer at many college events. Fouchal sees winning this scholarship as recognition of his dedication to his studies and he says, “It makes you want to work harder.”

Joshua Novinger is an English major, PTK member, Honors student, and former student government president on the Sierra Vista Campus. This fall he will transfer to ASU to complete his degree. Upon completion, he hopes to pursue a master’s degree in English and teach at the college level. He would be content teaching any English writing or literature classes, but would really love to teach American Literature. He credits Andi de Bellis and his fellow student government members for challenging him and being “a huge help in my winning the All Arizona.”

Paulette Iniguez is also going to ASU where she will work toward a degree in Biomedical Engineering with a focus in Biomaterials. This is the study of growing organs and tissues from the body’s own cells. Her dream is to be a surgeon and continue research on organ and tissue regeneration. On the Douglas Campus, she was the Vice-President of Fundraising for the PTK chapter. She is also involved in the Research Club, Cochise College Yearbook, the Disaster Relief Club, and TRiO, a program designed to assist first generation college students. She is also a Chemistry and English tutor on the Douglas campus.

Guillermo Gamez Cordova is a Business Administration major at the Douglas Campus. Upon transferring to ASU, he plans to study Technological Entrepreneurship and Management. This degree will help him generate new ideas for products and services and learn how to start a new business. He hopes to work in the area of nutrition and help others better understand its importance. He is an active member of both PTK and TRiO. Gamez Cordova would like to thank Douglas Campus PTK advisor Angelita Bustamente for her help finding and applying for the scholarship.

From left: Dr. J.D. Rottweiler, President of Cochise College, Dr. Alan Biel, Executive Dean of Academics, Yassine Fouchal, Paulette Iniguez, Joshua Novinger, Guillermo Gamez Cordova, Dr. Verlyn Fick, Executive Vice-President/Provost.
IN LANDS FAR AWAY, IN A TIME YET TO COME, dragons guard an island in the sky and people dream in an underground bunker. These are visions of perfect societies created in Honors 260, The Human Quest for Utopia, taught every fall semester on the Sierra Vista Campus by Professors Mary B. Coyle and Kevin O’Brien. It is the capstone class for the Honors Program. All Honors students engage in this seminar to study utopias – perfect societies.

This class had its beginnings in the previous Honors Program. When Coyle started teaching HON 260 about twelve years ago, she revised course content so the students would create their own utopias. This idea came to her suddenly one day and, without knowing if the project was even possible, she asked her first class to invent a utopia.

Creating a whole civilization in one semester is a daunting task! O’Brien and Coyle agree that it is an enormous undertaking. Students must establish all the necessary components of an ideal society including government, healthcare, education, industry, food and energy sources, physical location, and the inhabitants of the community. Inventing an entire society allows students to explore and articulate their values. This civilization is then presented in essay and outline format, a Power Point, and also through a creative medium. In the past, this creative expression has taken the form of a film, video game, poem, dance, and even a musical composition of the utopia’s national anthem!

The students are not sent on this mission without any guidance. They study utopias such as the Garden of Eden found in the Book
of Genesis and Plato’s Allegory of the Cave in *The Republic*. Of course, the book *Utopia* by Sir Thomas More, who coined the term, is also read. The class also takes a field trip to Biosphere 2 outside of Tucson to see an actual attempt at a utopic society.

The Honors students did not disappoint Coyle that first semester. As she says, “They hit it out of the park” and “proved to me it was possible!” O’Brien, who joined Coyle in teaching this class a few years after she began, agrees that the class improves every year. He says that although the readings and assignments are the same each year, “each class is different because each group of students brings its own group of visions and ideas and questions to it.” This provides for the diversity among projects that allows for so much learning.

Two Honors students who recently completed HON 260 are an example of this diversity. Kaitlyn Tyler, an environmental science major, created a mysterious utopia that was an island in the sky surrounded by dragons who determined who could live there. Because of her passion for the environment, Tyler made that an important component of her utopia and the dragons could take endangered species from earth and preserve them on the island. Tyler benefited from the differences among the other utopic societies created in her class. She says, “The diversity in how people make their utopia, their world, is amazing and you learn so much from every person.”

Paul Brya is now in his first year at the University of Arizona South pursuing an English degree. For him, the highlight of the Utopia class was exploring a variety of utopias both from history and from his classmates. From this wide spectrum of ideas, he created his own definition of a utopia as “somewhere where everyone’s basic needs were taken care of.” Residents of his utopia live in a dream and in virtual reality. To power his post-nuclear war society located underneath the Rocky Mountains, Brya used a combination of solar, wind, and water energy to increase the society’s chance of survival.

In addition to creating and presenting a utopia, students also have to destroy their society. O’Brien says it is a very important part of the project because it is asking what could make the utopic society not work. Coyle says the downfall of most societies is “they are too isolated or the one thing that keeps them healthy could go wrong.” None of the students have ever created a utopia that can last. Theoretically, a perfect society sounds great! Students realize, though, that freedoms will have to be given up at some point if the structure and security of the utopia is to last.

But this does not mean that this project is not a success or is not useful. Building utopias is a way of “examining more closely this society through the lens of another,” as O’Brien remarks. Students who take this class learn about themselves and their values because their ideal societies reflect what they believe in and cherish. Coyle says students always comment that they learn a great deal about themselves and about their contemporary society.

They have a chance to look at this society and to see what is wrong and how they would change it and if it is even possible to change it.

Even though creating a utopia in one semester is a viable project, as Coyle found, sustaining a utopia is impossible. However, there are definite benefits to studying the impossible. Brya says, “Just because something doesn’t exist or can’t exist doesn’t mean it’s not worth striving for.” Broadening their knowledge base, finding new ideas, and collaborating with others who have different ideas are all benefits students gain from studying perfect societies. It is by looking at the perfect that we can hope to make ourselves better and improve the world around us.

While this is the capstone class for the Honors Program, all interested students can take this class as an elective. Students with a minimum GPA of 3.5 and 12 transferable credits are eligible for a tuition waiver. You will be inspired in this class, you will learn from your classmates, and you will brainstorm creative ways to make your society better!
At the end of March, two Honors students, Quinton Willis and Jay Melzer, presented their Honors projects at the 2019 Western Regional Honors Conference at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana. This is a yearly event in which Honors students from various colleges and universities from thirteen western states showcase their accomplishments. Over the years, different schools have hosted this conference. For past conferences, Cochise College Honors Students have presented in Park City, Utah; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Spokane, Washington. Willis and Melzer presented the utopias they created in the capstone class for the Honors Program, Honors 260, The Human Quest for Utopia.

Willis named his utopia "Urbis Tor," a combination of Latin and Irish meaning "city hill." He was conscious of the Biblical reference in Matthew to the city on a hill and also intended it to be an allusion to John Winthrop's injunction to "be a city on a hill" to the founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The utopia is based on Christian principles and set 500 years in the future. There is no monetary system and its basic needs are met through molecular conversion. In this way, the inhabitants of Urbis Tor are able to take material from space and convert it into whatever they need.

Melzer presented his utopia as a fictionalized essay written by an inhabitant of Nar Shol, a continent on the planet Nar. The people of Nar Shol live on flat, table-like, granite mountains surrounded by coastal rainforests. They travel by submarine through cenotes (sinkholes) interconnected by underwater caves. The planet is sustained by solar power and the people live in harmony with the land. Gender identity and the concept of marriage are very flexible. Education is funded by the government and mandatory from 4-20 years old. Melzer says that his utopia could come apart when the inhabitants choose their own rights over social stability. He also says that both extreme individualism and collectivism can be dangerous and a balance between them is ideal. He gained greater "confidence in my own principles and convictions" through the completion of this project.

A highlight of this year's Western Regional Honors Conference was a day-long guided excursion to Yellowstone National Park with sightings of buffalo, elk, and big horn sheep. A wildlife biologist gave a talk about the balance between the wolf population and other species in the park. O'Brien was particularly astonished by the proximity of boiling hot springs to thigh deep snow! Willis, who loves to travel, enjoyed visiting Montana and Wyoming which he otherwise may never have seen.

All around, the professors and students had a great time. O'Brien says, "As always, it is a pleasure spending time with our Honors students and watching them present at the regional conference." Coyle was as excited as the students and says, "It is an incredible experience to watch them challenge themselves and courageously step outside of their comfort zones." Willis appreciates the support the Honors Program receives from the College, the dedication of his professors, and active participation of his peers which made this possible. Melzer stated, "my college experience wouldn't have been half as fulfilling without these opportunities for deeper involvement and scholarship."
Faculty Spotlight

Cochise College history and anthropology professor Becky Orozco was leading historical tours to Camp Naco in Naco, Arizona for Elderhostel, now known as Road Scholar, when something happened that would give her a dream and consume her time for the next twenty some years.

The EPA was involved, fires raged, she spoke to mayors, city councils, and elected officials in Washington. She's received hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants. Now all she needs to fulfill her dream of restoring Camp Naco is to meet “the right person or win the lottery.”

Camp Naco was built as an army camp on the U.S.-Mexico border in 1919 to protect the United States from the fighting and violence of the Mexican Revolution. Vision Quest owned the camp when Orozco discovered it in the early 2000s. Vision Quest planned to build a treatment center there for at-risk youth, but when they failed to get zoning approval, they asked Orozco if she would find someone to take it. She says, “They told me that if I could find somebody who would preserve it, they’d be willing to give it up.”

That invitation was all Orozco needed to start a mission she has never given up on, even when the prospects were dim. Ironically, the future was unexpectedly brightened by the blaze of an arson fire at the camp in 2006. The EPA came and found the roofs to be made of asbestos, a known carcinogenic building material that has been banned in many countries. This only hastened the day Orozco would find a new owner.

Vision Quest would have destroyed the camp instead of repairing and removing the hazardous materials had Orozco not had a meeting with the South Eastern Arizona Governments Organization just days before the deadline. She spoke before all the mayors of the region, and what she said must have interested then mayor of Huachuca City George Nerhan. Only two days later, he called saying Huachuca City would take ownership of the camp.

Orozco immediately set to work repairing the camp site. She and a Friends Group that is involved in the restoration project got a $400,000 grant from the EPA to clean up the asbestos. The state of Arizona gave them another grant of $80,000 to put a fence around the 17-acre camp.

Although Huachuca City’s interest waned over the years, Orozco has never given up on the camp. After coming very close to having the University of Arizona or Arizona State University buy the camp, she says, “We finally got Bisbee on board about two years ago.” In her mind, it makes sense for Bisbee to own the camp because of its proximity to the location and the tourist market that is already present.

After several years of negotiations, Orozco got an email while in Kazakhstan on a cultural trip saying the deal between Fort Huachuca and Bisbee was no longer “in the works, it was going to go through.”

Although Orozco admits that Camp Naco is severely damaged and will be difficult to bring back, she is hopeful that restoration can now begin in earnest. There is a plan in place to restore each building to its original state and Orozco has several dreams for its future use. She says, “It would make a perfect border studies and art institute in which we had some museums.” These museums would highlight aspects of the longest battle of the Mexican Revolution where Pancho Villa laid siege to Naco, Sonora for 119 days. They would also pay tribute to the Buffalo Soldiers who were stationed at Camp Naco.

The camp has 23 buildings and Orozco sees the barracks as studio space for artists or as dormitories for researchers. Even though she now works with college students, she hasn’t forgotten the elderly she used to lead on tours. She says that the smaller officers’ houses could be low-income housing for seniors.

Already, there have been cultural and social events at Camp Naco. Three years ago, a country music video was filmed at the camp.
and then premiered there. Orozco says, “it was fabulous” to have 100 people at an event like that.

Orozco’s students have participated in the restoration effort. A few years ago, during the college’s Alternative Spring Break they cleaned up the camp site. She says they received a small grant to supply dumpsters which the students filled up. She remarked that it “was pretty cool” that her students were able to fill the dumpsters in only one week.

When she is not engaged in preserving this historic site, Orozco teaches history to the next generation. She teaches U.S. History from 1607-1877, from 1877 to the present, and Society and Culture anthropology classes at the Sierra Vista and Douglas Campuses.

Not only does she require excellence in her classroom, but she encourages her students to set the bar even higher by participating in the Honors Program. All her classes can be taken for Honors credit and she believes this is very beneficial for the students. She advises her students that “if they want to go on to a four-year university, this can give them a big boost.” Orozco usually has at least one student who presents at the Honors Colloquium every spring. These students are not only at an advantage if they transfer to a university, but Orozco says, “Honors credit looks really good on your transcript.”

Some of her Honors students have even had the chance to help her on her local excavation project at historic Warren Ballpark in Bisbee. This is another ongoing project of hers and she is on the Warren Ballpark preservation committee as well. Last year two of her anthropology students participated in a dig of the 110-year-old park as an Honors project.

Artifacts from this dig are displayed in the entrance to the library on the Sierra Vista campus and include bottle caps, small brooms, and glass bottles made in 1936. Orozco oversees this display and the other historical exhibits in the two college libraries. These displays include artifacts from Apache communities and ancient Chinese dynasties.

Always concerned about the past, Orozco shows her dedication to the future through her inspiring work at these historic sites and with her students.