



COLLEGIUM

THE HONORS COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2026

DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Dr. Scott Huelin



One of my favorite books on the history of education is Jean Leclercq's *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*. This magisterial history takes us deep into the innovative and influential developments in Christian education as practiced in the

Twelfth Century. Most notably, two overlapping and yet divergent educational forms developed in this period: one in the cathedral schools, where logic was king and disputation was the primary pedagogical exercise, and the other in the monastic schools where rhetoric enjoyed pride of place and careful study of the *sacra pagina* (the sacred page) was the most important educational activity. One educational reform produced the highly rational scholasticism of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*; the other produced a pious devotion to Scripture as embodied in Bernard of Clairvaux's *86 Sermons on the Song of Songs*. The one held as its highest aim the knowledge of the truth, while the other aimed ultimately at the experience of God. One claimed, with Abelard *credo ut intelligam* (I believe in order that I may understand), while the other claimed, with Bernard, *credo ut experiar* (I believe in order that I may experience).

Analogically speaking, these two approaches to the liberal arts have been with us since the classical era. We see a parallel contrast between the educational movements inspired by Socrates and Plato, who championed knowledge for its own sake, and those guided by Isocrates and Cicero, for whom the purpose of education is to form ideal citizens for the political community. And of course we have much to learn from these models. Crucially, however, in the educational reforms of the 12th century we have explicitly Christianized versions of these competing modes of classical education; our medieval forbears have gone before us asking how to benefit from the intellectual riches of pagan antiquity.

I associate monastic education with the Ciceronian branch of the liberal arts tradition because its primary aim is not so

much knowledge of truth—as in the Socratic branch—but rather the formation of persons for participation in a particular *polis*. This sounds utterly counterintuitive, of course, since medieval monks are known for their withdrawal from their surrounding culture, especially its politics. But such a withdrawal clearly indicates that, for medieval monks, the monastery *was* their polis, their primary earthly political community. (In my use here, a *polis* is simply a human community centered on a shared account of the highest good. Conveniently, this is Aristotle's definition in the first paragraph of the *Politics*.) Consequently, each monastic order developed its own patterns of education to promote the virtues most necessary for that tradition's way of life: Benedictines prioritized the contemplative life, so disciplines of silence and solitude became central. Franciscans valued trusting faith, so they elevated the discipline of poverty. Each community has a shared aim and organizes its common life including its educational practices around that aim.

So far, with Aristotle's help, I've only made what amounts to a sociological claim—monastic education aimed to produce virtuous citizens for its particular *polis*—but let's see what happens if we kick this inquiry up into the theological register. In the *City of God*, Augustine aims to tell the history of the whole world through the histories of two cities: the *polis* of God and the *polis* of man, the earthly city and the heavenly city. These two cities are communities that form around two different conceptions of the highest good: "The earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt of God, the heavenly city by the love of God carried as far as contempt of self. In fact, the earthly city glories in itself, the heavenly city glories in the Lord" (DCD 14.28). To be clear, these two cities are ideal types and cannot be mapped precisely onto any earthly institution: secular kingdoms may participate most thoroughly in the earthly city, but when they practice mercy, they participate, however fleetingly, in the heavenly city. Similarly the church ever strives to mirror the heavenly city, but when it falls prey to greed or the lust for power, it unwittingly participates in the earthly city.

Medieval monasteries, despite certain practical differences among the various orders, all aimed to produce citizens of the heavenly city described by Augustine, and so their instruction

aimed at equipping them with the virtues needed for this particular *polis*. Monks learned grammar so they could read scripture. Monks learned music so they could sing the Psalms. Monks learned logic so as to better understand and teach doctrine. Monks learned rhetoric so that they might imitate divine beauty in their teaching and writing, thus making a fragrant offering of themselves unto God.

I hope this language of the heavenly city as our true *polis* calls to mind for you a variety of New Testament echoes. Abraham, the book of Hebrews tells us, "was looking forward" not to dwelling in an earth-bound promised land so much as "to the city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God" (Hebrews 12.9). Paul tells the Phillipians, "our citizenship is in heaven" (3.20), and he reiterates to the Ephesians, with a nod toward Abraham, "you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints" (2.19). Not to be outdone, Peter calls the church "a holy nation," noting that we once were not a people—a polis, a commonwealth—but now are God's people (1 Pet 2.9-10), citizens of the city of God. And, for this reason, Peter goes on to urge his readers to live as "aliens and exiles" in this current age (11).

Here at Union, we never tire of saying that we offer a Christ-centered education that promotes excellence and character development in service to Church and society. When you put your Union education to work in the particular sphere to which He has called you, may you always do so as a citizen of the heavenly city, as one who shares with the saints an overmastering love of God and neighbor, as one who serves here eagerly and faithfully, but as one who never forgets where his true citizenship lies. May you continue to grow in your love for learning, and may your ongoing learning always inflame your desire for God.

HONORS
at
UNION

EXCELLENCE-DRIVEN | CHRIST-CENTERED
PEOPLE-FOCUSED | FUTURE-DIRECTED

HONORS ALUMNI: WHERE THEY ARE NOW

Amber (Kelley) Ashworth ('21)

Married to Daniel with two children. She is a certified doula and childbirth educator serving women and families in West Tennessee.

Leah Atkins ('20)

Middle school Latin teacher at BASIS Independent Dublin in California.

Nate Barnard ('24)

Actuarial Assistant at BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee in Chattanooga. He has passed five of seven exams needed to achieve associate status in the Society of Actuaries.

Jordyn (Neel) Battistelli ('17)

Graduated with a PhD in Spanish Linguistics from the University of Alabama in August 2026. She and Matt live in Tuscaloosa with their two young children.

Olivia (Shaw) Blair ('25)

Student Recruitment Specialist for online and non-traditional students at the University of Missouri-St Louis. In June 2025, she married Seth.

Abigail Branson ('23)

Pursuing a Masters in Teaching at Liberty University. She is a full-time math tutor for Elizabethtown community and technical colleges TRIO Student Support Services at Springfield Campus. In January 2027, she is getting married.

RJ Field ('26)

Human Resources Specialist at Halliburton Energy Services on the Global Compensation team in Houston, TX.

Heather Hetrick ('16)

She and JonMark welcomed their sixth child this spring. Heather is a Laboratory Specialist for Union University in Germantown.

Christian Holmes ('21)

Completed a Masters in Classical Education from Hillsdale College. He teaches at Veritas School in Richmond, VA and writes regularly for the CIRCE Institute and *Front Porch Republic*.

Ellen Howard ('17)

Completed a doctorate in New Testament at the University of Edinburgh in 2023 and is currently working on a post-doctorate in Germany at Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich.

Jordan Hussey ('19)

Completed an M.Ed in Instructional Leadership from Union University this summer. He teaches multilingual learners in Metro Nashville Public Schools.

Rosy Kannankeril ('26)

Pursuing a PhD in Biomedical Sciences at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Erin (Yunghans) Knight ('18)

Working as an ER nurse part time and recently completed a Master's of Christian Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. She and her husband are expecting a baby girl this summer.

Cate Price ('22)

Pursuing a Master of Liberal Arts at St. John's College in Annapolis, MD. This fall, she will teach 8th grade history and 11th grade rhetoric at Rockbridge Academy.

Russell Richardson ('18)

Working in institutional advancement at Hillsdale College. He and his wife have two children and one more on the way.

Katie Ritchie ('14)

In 2016, she helped plant Harbor Church in Cape Cod, MA. Ten years later, the church continues to grow.

Sam Scott ('24)

Graduated from Union University with a Master of Business Administration.

Jack Waters ('22)

Ambassador for Recruitment at Trinity Anglican Seminary. He and his wife Emma are expecting their third daughter in August.

We would love to hear from you! Email us at honors@uu.edu with your most recent news and contact information.

THE BOOKSHELF

What are Honors faculty reading this year?

Dr. Justin Barnard

- *The Mythmakers: The Remarkable Fellowship of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien* by John Hendrix
- *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning* by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
- *We Who Wrestle with God* by Jordan Person

Dr. Jason Crawford

- *Word Made Fresh: An Invitation to Poetry for the Church* by Abram van Engen

Dr. Scott Huelin

- *Jesus Changes Everything* by Stanley Hauerwas

Prof. Joy Moore

- *God's Fools: Saints, Prophets, Martyrs, and the Making of Modern Comedy* by Dr. Jason Crawford

Dr. David Thomas

- *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation* translated by Seamus Heaney, read alongside J.R.R. Tolkien's essay "Beowulf: The Monster and the Critics"

Dr. Joshua Veltman

- *Team: Getting Things Done with Others* by David Allen and Edward Lamont
- *Reinventing Your Life: The Breakthrough Program to End Negative Behavior...and Feel Great Again* by Jeffrey E. Young and Janet S. Klosko

What are you reading?
You can always email us at honors@uu.edu to chat, swap titles, or update your contact info.

COURSE REFLECTION: CREATION

Jack Hewitt



Does $v = v_0 + at$ make you reflect on the ceaseless activity of our God? Do water varmints' teeth cause you to wonder at the order and precision of God? Honors Creation integrated science and religion in such a way that a Bible nerd could delight in kinematics, the dentition of woodland creatures, and the all-so-terrifying world of evolutionary biology. Dr. Guilaran and Dr. Blaschke direct the thinking of philosophy geeks unto understanding the natural world through the scientific method. Wisdom was a course in which I was in my natural habitat: I could think abstractly, read awesome old books, and I could consider how to live the happy life, as Aristotle calls it. Beauty opened me up to seeing what is visually and audibly appealing by attuning my senses to symmetry, consonance, light and dark values and more. I did not have to reason abstractly to find something beautiful, but I could look at a shrub and declare "Beautiful!" because it was. I saw God in the lovely world around me. Now, Creation was a reckoning for me both spiritually and intellectually. All of my courses have borne fruit past the days I stumbled into the Honors suite. Yet, Creation has uniquely worked on my mind and soul. Namely, I grew in my ability to see God's goodness everywhere and more importantly in everyone.

While I did not expect this, we read both scientific and philosophical works, often intertwined in one piece, and discussed them. Dissecting a frog was not the dissection on the table for us. Instead, we had the opportunity to unravel scientific principles concerning anything from kinematics to even quantum theory. Dr. Guilaran and Dr. Blaschke guided us to the intersection of philosophy and hard science. A new thing happened to me; I found myself delighting in the particularities of velocity and wave-particle duality. Not only because they revealed God's character, but because they were beautiful in their own right. As phenomenal teachers, our professors revealed God in the natural world to us. Of course, abstract thinkers would quickly assent to God's appearance in His creation. Still, I had lacked an experience of encountering God in examining the natural world. Honors Creation opened the door for me to enjoy communion with God through science. For instance, Dr. Guilaran argues that wave-particle duality is a picture of the Incarnation at the most basic unit of this physical world. For, light is comprised of both waves and particles. Jesus is both human (body and soul) and divine. Dr. Guilaran showed us God's fingerprint in physics. I do not have to look up to see God, but I can observe creation and understand the heavens in a new way. Creation is the course to search out what He has hidden in His world.

As time progressed in the course, I began to notice my newfound ability to cherish science for its pursuit of the Truth. I was confronted by the Spirit when the evolutionary biology unit began. The whole course was leading up to the study of man's origin as the pinnacle moment in God's creation. God, who wrote into the fabric of the universe His Incarnation, wrote with utter clarity His

character upon His children. I was eager to love kinematics, and biology, and even the story-building feature of evolution. Yet, I was reminded in Creation the uniqueness of man in God's ordered creation, but I was hesitant to love everyone and see God's goodness in them. The relatively simple duty of loving long equations or skull structure is nothing if I do not love man who best resembles our Creator. The Holy Spirit's conviction to love others more than I love ideas, art, and energy calculations was one that led me to hope.

Creation will be made new one day, and I long for all creation to experience the fresh life He will usher in. I desire now more than ever for the renewal of man who best resembles his Creator. Honors Creation has inserted the groaning in my heart to witness God's goodness abound in every person whom He has lovingly created. Dr. Guilaran and Dr. Blaschke taught me to love science and exploring the natural world. This by itself was proper education for my soul and mind. Dr. Guilaran and Dr. Blaschke also showed me how to love others. Whether this world is ancient or young, man was made in the image of God. Creation was made to be loved, and because of this class I now desire to love all creation more than I did formerly. All this to say, I highly recommend Honors Creation. Honors Creation is intended to work on your mind by learning the way the world works and maybe how it began. Ultimately, Honors Creation worked on my soul to love what God loves: His creation.



HIGHLIGHTS

August 2025

The Honors Community rolled out the Honors Integrative Studies program (to replace General Honors) and offered the first *Practica* and *Colloquia*.

The Honors Community kicked off the year, welcoming 45 new students, with a taco night and the second annual Honors Community Convocation. The Honors Student Association (HSA) hosted a movie night and watched *The Princess Bride*.

September 2025

HSA held a trivia night with prizes.

October 2025

HSA hosted Spooky Bougie Game Night complete with costumes, fancy appetizers, and board games.

The Honors Community held its annual Cèilidh at the Farmer's Market.

On Campus and Community Day, 30 members of the Honors Community worked with master gardeners at Liberty Garden Park & Arboretum.

November 2025

HSA sponsored tickets for Honors students to attend MainStage's production of *Sherlock Holmes*.

HSA celebrated Thanksgiving by gathering for a potluck in the Bowl.

December 2025

HSA gathered to watch *A Muppet Christmas Carol* and enjoy popcorn and a hot chocolate bar.

January 2026

HSA kicked off the year with another movie night.

February 2026

God's Fools: Saints, Prophets, Martyrs, and the Making of Modern Comedy by Dr. Jason Crawford was published by Bloomsbury Academic.

HSA sponsored tickets for MainStage's ten-minute plays. Later that month, HSA collaborated with MOSAIC to host a trivia night.

March 2026

HSA gathered for volleyball and pizza on campus.

Students in the Beauty class traveled to Chicago to tour the Art Institute of Chicago and attend the symphony, while students in the Justice class visited the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis.

April 2026

Due to popular demand, the Honors Community held yet another Cèilidh at the Farmer's Market.

HSA sponsored tickets for MainStage's *Fools*, and the Friday before finals, they gathered for pizza in the Honors Lounge.

Students from the Beauty class shared their work — including musical compositions, dance, poetry recitations, and visual art — at a gallery reception in Union's theatre.

The Honors Community held its annual end-of-the-year banquet with over 100 attendees. The Randall Bush Scholarship for study abroad was awarded to Ainsley Boatright, and the Koinonia Award was presented to Alana Williams for significant contributions to the communal life of Honors.

May 2026

The Honors Community celebrated the graduation of 36 students: 26 General Honors, 4 University Honors, 3 Discipline-Specific Honors, 1 Honors Fellow, and 2 Honors Scholars with a Minor in Honors Integrative Studies. The Honors Fellow received a silver stole, and the Honors Scholars received gold stoles.

July 2026

In partnership with several regional private schools, the Honors Community hosted the 2nd annual West Tennessee Classical Educators' Conference at Union entitled "The Love of Learning and the Desire for God" with over 80 attendees.



ALUMNI REFLECTION

Allison (Schiebout) Marsch

"If all there is to gain in life is suffering, then what is all this waiting for?" says a lyric from The Oh Hellos album *Dear Wormwood*. It's a good existential question: how are we spending our temporary time on earth? How are we spending our suffering?

It's tempting to fritter life away, waiting for the next form of entertainment, distracting ourselves by any means necessary from the sorrows and joys of life, moving quickly and superficially between novelties. Whether fruitful or wasteful, the necessary rhythms of adult life are often difficult and boring. Death, unemployment, and financial burdens gnaw at the edge of adult existence. The news cycle batters us; no one has anything *interesting* to say. It's easy to want to clock out of life and into a distraction of choice. Personally, I love a brainless sitcom, and that's my healthier alternative to doom-scrolling Instagram. How can we move through the difficulties of life attentively, while still respecting our human need and desire for change and restoration?

Pasted in the front of the notebook I kept during Wisdom is an abridged copy of Psalm 90. Verse 12 reads: "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. / Return, O Lord! How long? Have pity on your servants!" My Bible study worked through Psalm 30 this week. Psalm 30:6 says, "As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved." The footnote on Bible Hub for this verse stated that prosperity can dull spiritual awareness and tempt us in three ways: i) to forget our dependence on God, ii) to foster in us a false sense of permanence, and iii) to blind us to the brevity of life. These excerpts from the Psalms give us the antidote to our self-imposed spiritual clutter: we have to remember we are wholly temporal, and wholly dependent on God. The Honors program helped me explore two components of this antidote by teaching me to cultivate presence and to live seasonally.

What does it mean to practice presence? I have a specific memory from Beauty plenary of our whole

class lying on the floor in the upper classroom of the Bowld. Dr. Crawford was teaching, and I think we were reading Dante at the time, but to be honest, those details are hazy. What I do remember is my acute sense of presence in that moment. I remember the scratchy feel and dusty smell of the low-pile carpet, the sound of my breathing and the breathing of those around me. I remember feeling tired, halted: frozen in a moment in time. Perfectly temporal, perfectly mortal. So in this moment, what type of chair are you sitting in? Can you see a window? Are the leaves changing yet; are the cicadas still screaming? Are you hungry? Thirsty? What are you worried about? Who was the last person that made you laugh? Recognize that all this is passing; number your days that you may gain a heart of wisdom.

The Wisdom psalm continues: "Return, O Lord! How long? Have pity on your servants!" We are forced from our contemplative presence into a desperation for Christ's return. Our dependence on God is palpable. He promises us the seasons as we await his return, and observing the seasonal nature of life increases our awareness of our dependence on God. There are times of fasting and feasting, of weeping and rejoicing. If we fail to embrace the fasting, we won't be ready for the feasting. When we stop and see all that the Lord has provided, we are more ready to receive Him.

I stay home with my kids these days. I have a little son, Jack, and a baby, Beatrice. It's easy to distract the days away, to wait for nap time, for bedtime, for a babysitter. But my kids are intensely present in their day, inviting me to be present in theirs. And what joy! We could paint bees on paper with gouache for hours. We could collect acorns and flowers in the yard until the sun sets. Jack will let you read books to him until you're tired; he will never tire. Beatrice loves the way a piece of cloth folds and waves and will squeal with delight when she sees a shower curtain. Being home with little children is also intensely seasonal: they wake, they sleep. They

get sick, they get well. They struggle with something for a few weeks, and then they grasp it. Jack asks about his birthday constantly, and I look forward to Christmas with renewed giddiness. My life turns with the activities of the seasons: swimming, collecting leaves, baking cookies, picking daffodils. The seasons will change, and my children will change, and I will change. But God, ever unchanging, will stay the same, sustaining us physically and spiritually all the days of our lives, through the summers, autumns, winters, and sun-bright springs.

I feel very thankful for the training ground of Honors. It cultivated my presence and attention, and my attunement to the seasons, while supplying lots of books and beautiful relationships along the way. Nothing can replace being in those classrooms with those professors and students during those years of my life, when I was coming of age and working out what a future in this temporary earth looked like.

To close, I want to leave you with this verse: "So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy" (John 16:22). May the peace and joy of Christ be with you all the days of your life, until we see Him face to face.



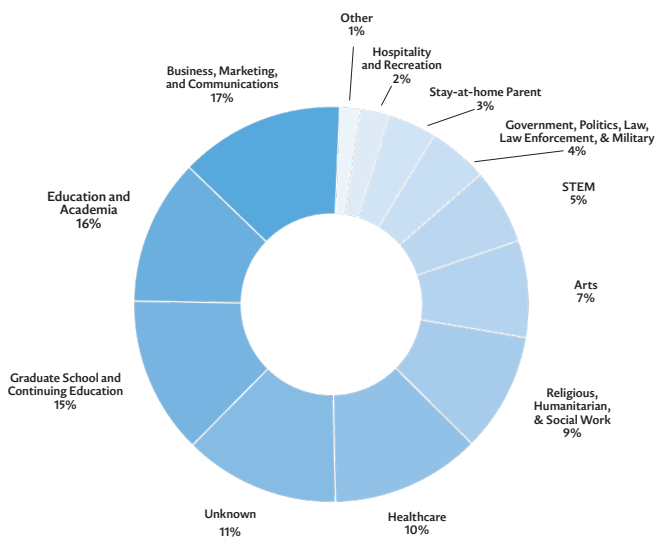


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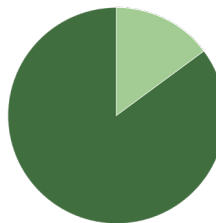
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HONORS *at* UNION

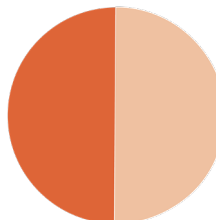
548 Graduates in 14 years



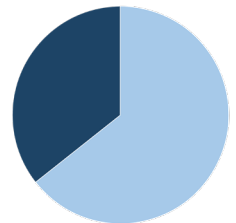
15% of Full-Time, Traditional Undergraduate, Student Body



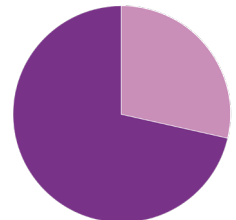
52% of Resident Advisors



63% of Debate Team



37% of Student Awards Day Recipients



177 current students in 65 different majors