HONORABLE MENTIONS

VOL. 4: MAY 2013

“It’s okay to start small; if what you’re doing is important, the world will find a way to make you big.”- Dennis Barsema
My Experience with the ELC
Mary Walton, junior, business administration

Coming into Northern Illinois University (NIU) as a transfer student, I realized I only had four short semesters to get involved and get the most out of my college experience. I spent my first semester as a huskie working towards getting involved in organizations and in leadership roles. In the short time of one and a half semesters since starting here, I’ve gained valuable connections and had experiences that will last me a lifetime. The biggest advantage I’ve gained has been the opportunity to be a part of one of the College of Businesses Experiential Learning Center (ELC) projects.

The ELC program takes the College of Business (COB) slogan, “Where the classroom meets the business world” and puts it into practice. Companies such as McDonalds, True Value, and Navistar come to the ELC in the hopes that NIU students, such as myself, can work to solve their current business challenges. The project I’ve been working on for this semester has been with Abbott Nutrition, who you might know as the makers of PediaSure. We are working towards finding an asset tracking and data collection process to fit their business needs.

Throughout this semester working in the ELC, I have been assigned the formal role of external communications liaison and the informal role of co-team lead. These two things have been incomparable to those learned in the classroom. I have been given the opportunity to remain in constant contact with the Senior IT manager at Abbott Nutrition, as well as an international team of executives. I have also been given the opportunity to work on a cross functional team on a real life project. This taught me team dynamics and how to overcome obstacles that will undoubtedly arise. Along with these important skills, I’ve also improved such skills as time
management, communication, persistence, creative thinking, and teamwork. These skills and the professional connections I've made will help me as I transfer into the working world.

With the experiences I’ve gained from being a part of a team within the ELC, I feel confident that I can succeed in the business world and represent NIU with confidence and pride. I look forward to working on another project this fall, in which I will hold a leadership role as an assistant coach, to further develop myself as a competent and dedicated business woman.

**Presenting at the National Conference of Undergraduate Research (NCUR): Improving Attitudes Toward Breastfeeding of Moms With and Without Birth Experience**

Lexi Williams, freshman, nursing major

I think NCUR went very well. It was excellent practice for Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day at NIU, because we didn't get judged; we just got to talk to anyone that actually wanted to hear about our research. I had some fantastic conversations with all of the people that came over to my poster. Looking back, one big thing I wish we could have included on our questionnaire is a comment section. Every person I talked to was interested in hearing why the participants chose to either breastfeed or not, and what they had to say about the process. However, I think it was very insightful overall, and I hope to attend other research conferences as organized and impressive as this in the future.
McKearn Summer Fellows Program, Summer 2013  
Lauren Boddy, junior, psychology major

My interests in the field of psychology encompass eating behavior, psychopathology, and health-related issues. As part of the McKearn Summer Fellows Program, I will be examining risk factors for problematic sleeping behavior in young children. Previous research has found a negative association between short sleep duration and body mass index in young adults (Hasler et al., 2004). Although research demonstrates the importance of sleep in young adults, the identification of early risk factors for problematic sleep development in young children has yet to be explored fully. I anticipate that aspects of infant temperament, factors in the home environment, maternal parenting, and maternal characteristics will all influence sleep problems in toddlerhood. To examine the contribution of these factors to toddler sleep problems, my project will be completed within an ongoing, longitudinal study in Dr. David Bridgett’s laboratory [Infant Temperament and Emotion Regulation Project (ITERP)].

Throughout the eight-week summer program, I will interact with ITERP participants (mothers and children) at various ages (e.g., infant’s eight-month visit, ten-month, 18-month, etc.) in the lab. As part of the McKearn Summer Fellows Program, I will also actively collect data during the eight-week session. After collecting and analyzing data, I will write up my findings in an APA-style paper.

I consider myself very lucky to be able to have the opportunity to participate in a newly designed, summer research program at Northern Illinois University. I applied to this program because I felt that I could expand my research skill and interests. In the past three years, I have been a part of the Research Rookies program, the Undergraduate Research Assistantship program, and a volunteer research assistant for two professors in the psychology department.
This program will provide me with opportunities to expand my research and leadership skills over an intense, eight-week summer session.

**My Experience with the ELC**

Sara Oberchain, junior, management major with an emphasis in leadership and management

As a transfer student, I wanted to get involved with many opportunities that fostered learning and growth. I am the type of person that is always seeking challenges. I am also the type of person that believes that if you are not challenged or uncomfortable, you cannot possibly be learning. For this reason, I decided to apply for the Experiential Learning Program, a program that is offered through Northern Illinois University’s College of Business. The Experiential Learning Center (ELC) brings together real companies and a cross functional team of 6 members. The company has a challenge that it would like the team to work on and create recommendations. The team has the course of the semester to come up with a solution to the company’s challenge. The ELC attracted me with its real business world experience and the opportunity for growth as a team mate, as a business partner, and more importantly as an individual. This experience is nothing like student’s gain from just being in a classroom. It is so much more.

I am currently working on a project for Do It Best Corporation, which is a hardware and lumber company. The scope of our project included taking a list of about 70 IT applications and creating a process to rate them in comparison with the other applications. This process included calling the owners of the applications to find out about how their application works. Then once this
rating was established, the team computed a return on investment for each of the application. Given that I am a management major and that this project is heavily focused on the return on investment aspect, I was out of my comfort zone a little bit which provided me an opportunity to grow. However, I took a leadership role within the team and was able to foster my current skills. I was able to reiterate how important time management is, I was able to enhance my communication skills, both internally within the team and externally to the executives of Do It Best, and I was able to demonstrate my determined and persistent personality to create a recommendation that I am proud of.

As I look to my future, I know that this experience will be something I can look back upon and know that this was a great choice for my personal and professional development.

The image that is posted in this story is a team picture with a few executives from Do It Best Corp.

---

Created for Dr. Hoffman's U.S. Constitutional History course (Hist 380) as an honors project for the mini-section.

Thomas Bouril, Brandon Phillips, Emmanuel Almaraz, and Ashley Roti

Dr. Hoffman’s instructions to us were that we could do whatever we wanted to do, a task that is much more difficult than it sounds. After discussion, we came to the consensus to do street interviews, asking random people general constitutional questions.

The purpose of the video is to provoke discussion among our class and among those that watch the video. Included is a copy of the questions that we asked. Look over them, answer them for yourself, and compare your answers and opinions to those who participated in the video.

You might be surprised to find that you know more or less than our averages. You might find someone that has the same opinion as you or has a completely different one. The point: check out different perspectives and plant the seed to seek the answers to the questions.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhqIPLjpdmE

Questions for Honor’s “Man on the street” project Technical questions (Fact based)
1. What are the 3 branches of government?
2. Which branch has the task of interpreting the Constitution?
3. How many Justices currently sit on the Court?
4. Who is the current Supreme Court Justice? Can you name any other justices?
5. How does someone become a Supreme Court Justice? What are the qualifications?
6. How long is the Constitution (just the articles)? If I printed a copy of it offline, about how many pages would it be?
7. What is the Bill of Rights?
8. What document governed the nation before the Constitution was adopted?
9. Which amendment made slavery illegal?
10. How many articles does the Constitution have?
11. How many Amendments to the Constitution are there?
12. Any idea when the last amendment passed? If so what was it?

**Open ended Belief (non-political)**
13. How important is the Constitution?
14. Do you believe that the Supreme Court is influenced by the beliefs of the American people, or that they influence beliefs of the American people?
15. What Supreme Court cases do you know? Which do you consider the most important?
16. Do you think it is important to study constitutional history? Why or Why not?

**Beliefs about the Constitution**
17. Do believe the Constitution should be interpreted as a living or adapting Constitution, or be viewed within the original context in which it was written?
18. Do you believe the Second Amendment is being viewed in an inaccurate context from its original purpose?
19. Do you believe we’d be better under a new document written for the present political and social situation? (Is the Constitution outdated?)
20. Do you think the Supreme Court should be elected? Why or why not?
This month’s focus of Honorable Mentions was to pinpoint what it means to be a Huskie. I couldn’t think of any better way to portray this than by highlighting NIU Cares Day. For those of you who do not know already, NIU Cares Day is a campus wide service event that takes place mid-April in which student organizations sign up for a morning (or afternoon) of service. These service activities can include painting a house, raking a lawn, running a registration table for a charity event, among others. It is one of the only times I have felt that NIU really connects with the DeKalb/Sycamore community. Whether you are Greek or Non-Greek, Athlete or Artist, everyone lends a hand to their brothers and sisters in need. During this event, it has always humbled me when you can see the gratitude in the eyes of the person you have just helped. It doesn’t have to be much, a simple yard project or even a conversation will evoke this emotion (and believe me it is obvious to see). This really helps block all of the negativity surrounding our campus, even if it’s just for one, single day. We are seen as more than just students seeking degrees; we are seen as caring, considerate fellow residents of DeKalb/Sycamore. If you haven’t signed up to help out with NIU Cares Day this year, please greatly consider it for next year. If you are already signed up to help, prepare to be changed. Prepare to feel a sense of accomplishment like no other. Prepare to work with new people and ease someone else of a burden they may be having. We are all really privileged to be at the point we are today, it’s time to pay it forward. However, NIU Cares Day is only the start. You don’t need an organized event to make a difference. There are opportunities to help those around you if you are sensitive to them. Open your eyes, or a door for someone, and be the change you want to see.
“Do you want to hit me, son?” The answer, of course, is no. Not even the Devil himself could possess me and make me do that. To be honest, I can’t even remember exactly how I got myself into this situation. A moment ago, I was asking a fellow trainee about ranking structures, and before I knew it, I had an irate drill sergeant screaming in my face. He reamed me out in front of the entire squadron, but that’s not the worst part. During the course of the shouting treatment, I involuntarily flinched, and my Military Training Instructor, Staff Sergeant Griffith, pulled me aside and cornered me. His demeanor immediately changed to a more placid tone that was somehow more menacing than the over-the-top display he put on for everyone else. It is here that he asks if I want to strike him. With every atom in my entire body trembling, I manage to spurt out (in the proper way, of course) that I did not. His face is about three inches from my own. I can smell the odor on his breath from the eggs and hash browns that must still be digesting in his stomach. I don’t think I have ever been this terrified in my life.

* 

The pain explodes in my face leaving my cheek feeling hotter than mid-day in Death Valley. It came so suddenly that I became momentarily incapable of any rational thought. I shake my head to clear the fog. Still slightly dazed, my eyes follow the trajectory of the boy who just slapped me and kept walking. He didn’t even say anything. To the best of my knowledge, I have
never wronged him in any way, yet he still felt the need to physically harm me. His name is John, and he and his friends are the “punks” of our middle school. This is my eighth grade year but my first year in this particular school. It didn’t take longer than five minutes to tell these guys were trouble, but I had no issues with them, until today. Seeing the world through a shade of red, I can feel the white-hot rage beginning to churn inside me. I try to move or say anything, but my body betrays me. It must know how intimidated I truly am. I am forced to leave this incident behind and decide to just avoid John like Al Capone avoided taxes. Unfortunately, like Mr. Capone, I couldn’t keep up with that for long.

About a day later, the one friend I had made thus far invited me over to his house. What I didn’t know is that he also invited John over. The two of them had been best friends in elementary school but had drifted apart over the years. On this day, they decide to bury the hatchet, much to my dismay. John still makes me feel smaller than a speck of dust on the top shelf of a tall book case. I proceed as cautiously as possible.

There is no big confrontation at my friend’s house. He just wants us all to be friends, and it turns out he is right: we all became good friends. To this very day, John is still my best friend.

*

I am terrified. It is a cold, damp spring morning during my time in third grade, and the last thing I want to do is cross the threshold into that miserable place that everyone calls school. With tears cascading down my face, I plead with my mom to let me return home for that day. I am just not prepared. I haven’t finished my homework. Even worse, my third grade teacher, Mrs. Spellman, makes Cruella DeVille from 101 Dalmatians look like a saint. She likes to scream more than a hotheaded manager of a major league baseball team.

Earlier that year, I had been so intimidated by her that I was afraid to even ask permission to use the bathroom. My entire morning was spent with my bladder about to burst, until it could handle no more. I wet my pants and spent the rest of that day reeking like the men’s restroom at a remote gas station on the side of a highway in Kentucky.

My mother still makes me go in to school and face the tormentor who haunts my darkest nightmares. I slowly step through the glass doors designated as the entrance. The hallways inside seem elongated and distorted like a fun house at a carnival. Every one of my peers seems to be slyly sneering in my direction as I meander on by. After what seems an eternity, I reach my destination and timidly walk in, but, as it turns out, my class has a substitute teacher that day.
“Do you see this?” inquires the enraged man in front of me. He is holding a nearly vacant trash can. Vacant, save for a lone crumpled-up tissue.

“What exactly am I looking for?” I reply. I know he is angry but do well in hiding my fear. His beady black eyes size me up from his shiny, hairless head. Although I can’t detect a whiff of liquor on his breath, I still know he’s at least five drinks past his limit. He only gets this angry when he’s inebriated.

“YOU DIDN’T TAKE OUT THE GARBAGE!” he screams in my face. I’ve seen this before. My stepfather, Adrian, cares about only two things: soccer and household cleaning. On a frigid night in late January approximately three years ago, Adrian came home in the wee hours of the night and noticed a single dirty dish in the sink. He proceeded to barge into my mother’s room and began screaming. Amidst the sounds of struggle, I heard my mom yell to call the cops. As my younger brother and I ran to find the phone, my stepfather charged after us with the intensity of a heavy-weight boxer in the first round of the championship match. He struck my brother as I tossed the phone to my mother. Here is where my memory fails me. The next thing I remember is the police arriving and arresting Adrian, finally giving my family a moment of peace.

For some reason my mother forgave him. I did not. Nothing really changed after that. He would go on miniature tirades about the chores around the house, but as long as we conformed to his rigid cleaning schedule, we remained safe, until he started drinking. Now, over three years later, a similar incident was about to unfold.

“I took out the garbage half an hour ago. There’s only one tissue in there,” I proclaim with my voice unwavering. I am sixteen now and have more confidence in myself. My muscles have strengthened and so have my convictions. Despite this, terror still creeps up my spine, feeling colder than the clammy hands of Death.

At this point, he grabs my shirt and tries to drag me into the kitchen. The shirt rips with the force of his pull, and his hand slips away. To avoid further damage, I voluntarily follow him to the kitchen, where he bears down and backs me against the counter. A knife rack is directly behind me, granting me a small semblance of solace. The electricity in the air makes the atmosphere thick and stifling.
“Do you see this? This is how angry you make me,” he says while bringing his closed fist an inch away from my face. It’s trembling like an unstable bomb about to let loose. I do not back down.

I have no idea where this would ultimately conclude. Fortunately, my mother is there to intervene. She comes between us and gets my stepfather to calm down again. A short time later, they finally got divorced. I haven’t seen him since.

* 

“Get back in line,” states Sergeant Griffith after explaining to me how he has the right to defend himself if I choose to attack him. It took me at least four times saying “No, sir” before he would let me go. He never hit me, and I never hit him. Soon after, my military career ended with me being separated during basic training. I was only in for two weeks before they deemed me unfit for military service.

I know now that it was just a scare tactic that I’m sure he’d used before. In that moment, however, I couldn’t help feeling infinitesimal, backed into that corner. I wish I could say that no one has ever made me feel that way but know that I can’t.
This piece is about a child's imagination and their dreams for the future. One of my earliest memories as a child was when I was in preschool and I was swinging as high as I possibly could.

Mid-swing, I saw one of the strangest things I had ever seen: the moon in the day time. To a four year old, this discovery created the same level of excitement as if I had traveled to the moon itself. I ran around recess sharing my knowledge with anyone who would listen and I will never forget that feeling of accomplishment.

This is something we should all carry from childhood into our adulthood. We need to remember what lead us to this moment in education and recapture that curious child within all of us.
An Ode unto My College Life
Ben Donovan, sophomore, political science

What do I do now?
High School is done, it’s in the past
Everyone is gone and free at last
College awaits us each and everyday
While our last, true summer whittles away
The people I’ve met I won’t soon forget
But I’m not finished just yet
I’m certain there will be many more just over the hill
That will be climbed by sheer power of will
That hill is August and it is here
It’s time for me to go off to a new school year

Here I am all alone
Back down at the bottom of the totem pole
My nerves much more than I could bear
A constant prickle in my hair
I tried to become one with their glee
But all that partying just wasn’t for me
I had to work like no one would
To realize the success I knew I could
I made new friends and all was good
Basking in glory wherever I stood
But soon summer rolled around again
And I had to return home like all good men
Working was hard and strange to me
I’m certain anyone would agree
That one’s first job is never easy
Except when pursued whole-heartedly
That is how I managed to cope
With the utter shattering of all of my hope
That I would ever have a restful night
Until I left again for school in another fortnight

Back at school and things have changed
New dorms, new friends, so rightly arranged
But the pillars of last year remain very strong
Especially in a certain group to which I belong
Lambda Sigma is to me
What I hope it will always be
A support network of amazing students
Exercising good prudence
In order to assist those most in need
Any freshman who might justly lead

*Being Upstairs*

Madison T. Henry, freshman, communicative disorders and psychology major
They always tell you, “Fifteen minutes,” when you ask. No matter how long it actually is until you get to move into another fluorescent dungeon, it’s always fifteen minutes according to them. There are no clocks, but I still hear a ticking somewhere. Is it a bomb hidden inside the ragged shell of a human sitting beside me? No, he wouldn’t do something like that. He may be on his last limb, but he couldn’t hurt anyone other than himself. It’s probably just his heartbeat ticking, counting down the hours until he gets to taste the warm apple cider of the sun’s light again. I lean over, tap his shoulder, and start to ask him about the ticking.

“No physical contact!” the warden snaps in my direction. I slink down into my chair with fists burning a thousand degrees clenched, so they don’t “accidentally” scorch anyone.

“Empty out your pockets. Take off your shoes. Come on, guys, don’t make it harder than it has to be,” Terry said lazily. Our morning pat-down commences. I grimace at the frisker’s body odor, but luckily I’m one of those being frisked that doesn’t possess anything worth confiscating. The frisker’s presence is fleeting. Sitting down in our plastic chairs, we fill out the same sheet that we do every day after we’ve been searched. How are you feeling? What do you hope to accomplish today? What will you talk about in group? On a scale of one to ten, how strong are your cravings for drugs or alcohol? How about your desire to self-injure? The monotony is killing me. With straight, blonde hair grown out for years and blue eyes that look as if they’ve seen war, Jack sits next to me solemnly.

“Do you think they even read this shit? Honestly, I think they just do this to waste our time,” Jack whispers. Suddenly, she smirks, showing me the bottom of her paper which asks what we plan on talking about in group.

“Peanut butter, really? You don’t think they’re going to keep you here longer for ‘not taking things seriously’ like they want you to?”

“I don’t really care, dude. They can’t keep me here forever,” she says quietly. Jack didn’t seem to care about much.

Process group, the longest part of each day. About eight kids ranging in age from thirteen to eighteen are sitting against the walls on the plastic chairs that are the same throughout the building. The hospital probably got a great discount when they bought so many uncomfortable things to sit on. I can hear the tapping of the devil named Jesse before she hobbles into the room. Her three-inch high heels still only manage to bring her up to a whopping five feet. If she’s trying to increase her authority by increasing her height, she still falls short. Jesse’s the case worker assigned to all of us in this room. She talks to us with eyes paid to care and a
tongue filled with hollow phrases. *How does that make you feel? Just count to ten. What do you think that means? Put yourself in their shoes.* She says all of those things to everyone in our group nearly every time they speak. Her words become meaningless. Jesse’s words are hollow and it’s frustrating. I hate her. She’s so fucking fake. We’re forced to talk about things, even if we’d rather not. Our freshly picked emotional scabs have no chance to heal if the band-aids are continuously being ripped off. I don’t think she understands that concept.

“Hi, my name’s Madison. I’m thirteen, and I’m here for suicidal thoughts, depression, and anxiety,” I repeat for the thousandth time, with no inflection in my voice. I’m tired of this place. The residents here call staying inpatient “being upstairs.” Adolescent inpatient care is on the second floor of the hospital; maybe they think elevating us makes our existence less threatening. We all go around in our circles, no matter what time of day or which fluorescent cell we’re in, and repeat our names, ages, and why we’re here. Like an AA meeting or something, where after you introduce yourself, the group responds with a dull chorus of hellos and your name. Except here, they don’t respond. People just stare blankly, fidget, or crack their knuckles until it’s their turn to give an automatic response. Years later, when introducing myself, I will still struggle to stop myself from saying my age and why I’m there. *Hi, my name’s Madison, I’m seventeen, and I’m here for learning, networking, and a place to live.* I hear the ticking again.

“Dr. Kutahna would like to see you, Madison,” announces a nurse, interrupting my reading. I’m nervous, but excited at the idea that someone here might actually be able to help me. I follow the nurse to the psychiatrist’s office and have a seat. The small man in front of me looks worn out. He probably should have retired long before. The lavender aromatic oil on his desk is making me nauseous. I tap my feet anxiously, waiting for him to say something.

“Hello, miss. Tell me how you’ve been feeling, sleeping, and eating for the past few months,” he said in his heavy Asian accent. He doesn’t even address me by name, nor does he look up from my chart.

“Well, I’ve been really depressed for the past few weeks, to the point where I’ve wanted to die. I just want to sleep all the time and not talk to anyone. I don’t feel like I need to exist.”

“What about before that?” he asks, disregarding my depression.

“That’s the weird thing. I was perfectly happy. I didn’t want to sleep; I was always talking to new people and I was on top of the world,” I sighed, missing those feelings. After talking with him for five entire minutes, he diagnoses me with bipolar disorder. I walk out of his office with
a prescription for Lamictal and Zoloft, and I’m terrified. I have no idea what normal is anymore.

In art therapy, I’m dozing off. This medication is making me feel awful, like I have narcolepsy or something. I feel sick to my stomach and far away from everything, like I’m not really here. I feel emotionless and numb; I can’t cry even if I wanted to. I’m sitting between Austin and Grant, who are both seventeen. An old woman wearing a cardigan and a long, flowing skirt cheerily hands out thick, clean paper and vibrant oil pastels to everyone.

“Draw what you’re feeling today, and then we’re going to hang our pictures up on the board and explain them to the group,” the art woman instructs as she sits hunched over at her desk. I start drawing using dark colors to show the fog these pills create.

It’s time to hang our pictures up on the board. Grant hangs his up and the group tries to stifle their laughter. His picture is quite clearly a vagina. Artfully done with black, oranges, pinks, and maroon, but a vagina nonetheless. Somehow keeping a straight face, he tells the instructor that it’s a cave; luckily, she believes him. When it’s Austin’s turn, he proudly hangs his bright green marijuana leaf up on the board and claims it is a maple leaf. Austin is not as lucky as Grant.

“How much longer ‘til we get to eat?” Brenda asks the art therapist. Brenda is a Latin Queen from my town; you don’t want to mess with her. She tried to get out of here once and it took nine police officers to subdue her. She lives near Jack. I’m not supposed to know what town Brenda is from nor am I supposed to have Jack’s phone number, but most people go around the rules. We’re not supposed to have any physical contact or share any information about where we live, our last names, or our phone numbers. Everyone here has a folder, and one way we go around the rules is by scrawling our information on scraps of paper or pieces of napkin and slipping it into someone’s folder. It’s weird that we’re supposed to open up in group with other patients, but we aren’t supposed to make connections with them. My folder holds Jack’s last name, town, and phone number, as well as Brenda’s hometown. The art therapist clears her throat.

“Fifteen minutes.”

The cafeteria is littered with fake plants and broken spirits, but instead of sitting in it today, I am walking through it. About half of the adolescent ward is being graced with the ability to go outside into the smoking area with fresh air and picnic tables. It gives the illusion of freedom because we can see the sky and hear birds chirping, but we’re still contained by twenty foot walls. We aren’t supposed to be going out here; a nurse who is still being trained is in charge of
us and doesn’t know any better, though. I take a seat on top of a table and absorb my surroundings. It’s sunny and warm outside, but I still feel cold and dark. My soul is frozen; somehow even the glow of the outside world is incapable of melting it.

Perks of Being an Honors Student
Katie Perkins, freshman, medical laboratory science major

Oh… my … gosh. The heavens have opened and angels are singing glorious tunes. My taste buds have erupted in cheers for the sweet, tart, chocolaty, nutty, and fresh flavor of my strawberry frozen yogurt with fresh strawberries and a scoop of Nutella on top. Oh Pinkberry! Where have you been all my life? I thought my cheeseburger and fries from the The Pour House, a classy Buffalo Wild Wings, was amazing. But this... wow. I drift down the street towards the Second City Comedy Club trailing behind my best friends in a haze of strawberry deliciousness. The brilliant comedians in the Best of Second City show distract me from my craving for more Pinkberry with their hilarious sketches and audience participation required improv. On the way back to DeKalb, I stare out the bus window at the dreary Illinois landscape with my friends sleeping next to me and my belly full of yummy food. I formulate a pretend thank you note to the Honors program, thanking them for making this day full of friends, food, and laughter possible.