Ben Ogle named 2005 NIU Student Lincoln Laureate

by Tom Parisi

Ben Ogle is a quick study. Given his daunting schedule, he has no other choice.

Ogle is president of Phi Sigma Zeta, the political science academic fraternity. He’s a member of the History Club, the Model United Nations Club and the Political Science Student Advisory Committee. In May, Ogle will graduate from NIU with honors, receiving bachelor’s degrees in history and political science.

Did we mention he’s taking Indonesian and Chinese language courses, has interned with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and plans to work for the government in international relations or national security?

All the hard work is paying big dividends. Ogle, of St. Charles, has been named NIU’s 2005 Student Lincoln Laureate, an annual honor reserved for the university’s top senior.

“Ben is the most dedicated student I’ve ever had in class, and one of the brightest,” says Professor Daniel Kempton, a 17-year faculty veteran and political science chair. “I couldn’t think of a more deserving student.”

Each of the state’s four-year public universities selects one Student Lincoln Laureate. The award recognizes excellence in both curricular and extracurricular activities. Ogle and fellow Lincoln Laureates will be recognized during a Nov. 6 ceremony in the House of Representatives of the Old State Capitol in Springfield.

“It’s an honor to have been nominated for the Lincoln Laureate, let alone to receive the award,” Ogle says, although he’s no stranger to winning awards.

Earlier this year, he won the 2004 Inez H. Nelson Family Scholarship in International Relations, given to one student in the political science department annually. He also took home top honors in the department’s writing competition. Last year he won the silver award in the NIU Co-op Student of the Year competition.

Political Science Professor Christopher Jones nominated Ogle for the Lincoln Laureate and says his student would be highly successful in any profession.

“Ben is among the top three undergraduates that I have encountered in my 15 years of teaching at NIU, Syracuse and other universities,” Jones says. “He possesses outstanding writing, research, analytical and oral communication skills, complemented by a keen intellect.

“Instead of setting his sights on a more lucrative job, Ben is committed to a career in public service,” Jones adds. “He’s seeking employment with the federal government in the area of national security affairs at a time when our nation truly needs talented, dedicated professionals. Ben is a student that this institution should be very proud of today. I suspect the NIU community will take great pride in him tomorrow.”

Ogle has been interested in international affairs from a young age.
Prior to graduating from St. Charles East High School, he was nominated by U.S. Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert for appointment to the U.S. Air Force Academy. But an asthmatic condition forced Ogle to change his plans.

After spending his freshman year at Purdue University, he transferred to NIU. While most students take a full load of 15 credit hours a semester, Ogle has maintained a nearly perfect grade-point average while carrying course loads ranging from 18 to 20 hours. He plans to attend graduate school on the East Coast.

“My schedule is challenging at times,” Ogle says. “But I read fairly quickly, and that helps. I’m naturally interested in foreign policy and national security, so I do well in those subjects because I enjoy learning about them.”

Ogle is looking forward to his next learning opportunity. He was selected as the university’s sole delegate to attend the Nov. 10-13 Student Conference on United States Affairs at West Point. The prestigious international conference is held annually and seeks to foster the growth of mutual understanding among the civilian and military leaders of tomorrow.

“As our post 9/11 world and with the ongoing situation in Iraq, most Americans are keenly aware of foreign affairs,” Ogle says. “It’s definitely an interesting time to be involved in this field.”

In winning NIU’s Lincoln Laureate award, Ogle was competing against top NIU seniors in a wide variety of disciplines.

Other nominees for the award included first finalist Shelby Bernard (Public Health) of Cedar Falls, Iowa; Fabiola Gomez (Elementary Education) of Elgin; Rebecca Gehrke (English teaching certification) of Joliet; Olga Garcia (Theoretical Computer Science/Computational Mathematics) of Elgin; and Erik Person (Accountancy) of Kingston.

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