For Immediate Release

Harriot College Students Recognized at Phi Beta Kappa Ceremony

GREENVILLE, N.C. (May 1, 2015) — On April 22, the East Carolina University Division of Academic Affairs and the Eastern Carolina Alumni Association of Phi Beta Kappa honored 27 students within the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences.

“Among the most satisfying things that I get to do as Dean is to recognize the outstanding achievements of our students,” said Dr. William M. Downs, dean of the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences, who provided welcoming remarks at the ceremony. “Today we are celebrating our most accomplished students in the liberal arts as they near the completion of their undergraduate studies.”

All of the students who were honored at this year’s recognition ceremony have a grade point average of 3.93 or higher.

Those honored, and their major areas of study, include Ajay Ajmera, biology and chemistry; Layne Barefield, biology and engineering; Ryan Beeson, political science; Megan Biller, biology; Tyler Black, mathematics; Sarah Burke, public history; Kayla Carr, history and education; Ryan Carter-Stanley, psychology; Ava Cook, English; Erin Cottrell, psychology and Hispanic studies; Martha Ervin, psychology; Elizabeth Fish, psychology; Carey Henry, mathematics, psychology and education; Michael Joy, political science and economics; Sara Kurtz, fine arts and Hispanic Studies; Kristen Martin, communication and English; Kate McPherson, chemistry; Shayna Mooney, multidisciplinary studies-neuroscience; Mackenzie Alyn Mull, Hispanic studies and elementary education; Stephen Parker, biology; Jessica Rassau, classical civilizations; Jonathan Blake Richards, history and political science; Christian Rogers, biology; Natasha Scovill, biology; Sarah Sipe, chemistry and German; Lea Taylor, biology; and Kelsey Weiss, sociology.

“This is an amazing group of young people from most of the departments in the college, who have an interesting and imaginative variety of post-graduation plans, which highlights the strengths of a good liberal arts education,” said Dr. Angela Thompson, president of the Eastern Carolina Alumni Association of Phi Beta Kappa and ECU assistant professor of history.

Founded in 1776 by five students from the College of William and Mary during a time of revolution, Phi Beta Kappa was established as an organization to promote liberty of thought and expression, scientific inquiry and creative endeavor. The founders devoted the society to the pursuit of liberal education and intellectual fellowship. The organization created chapters in New England and then gradually spread to other areas across the United States.
“Chapters and alumni associations like ours endeavor to maintain freedom of inquiry through the liberal arts and sciences,” said Thompson, comparing the society’s goals to those of Thomas Harriot, for whom Harriot College is named.

“Thomas Harriot, as a scholar, was a man well ahead of his time. He pushed forward the frontiers of knowledge and connected that new knowledge to the communities he explored,” said Downs. “We’d like to think that each of the students being recognized shares some of Harriot’s love of learning, and that you are in some way part of his intellectual legacy.”

When describing the university, Harriot College and its students, Downs said, “We’re a university that cares deeply about the quality of instruction and inspiration that our students receive in the classroom. We cultivate critical thinkers, problem solvers, effective communicators, engaged citizens and future leaders. We equip our graduates with not only the skills to chart their own professional path, but also the understanding and the empathy to make a difference in their communities. The products of a high quality liberal arts education are truly educated and they are ready for life in a diverse, globalized 21st century society.”

For additional information about the Eastern Carolina Alumni Association of Phi Beta Kappa, contact Thompson at 328-1045, or via email at thompsona@ecu.edu.

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