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PADDLE SPORTS CLUB RETURNS

SARAH BURTON ('24)

For the 2023 academic year, the Paddle Sports Club has returned to Houghton University. With many students enjoying the re-opening of the pool in the Nielsen Center, this club channels their enjoyment and provides students with another way they can utilize the pool.

One main event the club offers is a pool session, which is typically held every Tuesday night from 6:30-8 p.m. to practice kayaking skills.

Ryan Ballard, an instructor, describes the sessions by saying, "At these we will do a skill lesson right at the start and then we provide students with time to work on skills at their

own pace either by themselves or with one on one help from an instructor."

All of this is in preparation for several kayaking trips and a white-water rafting trip, which will take place later in the semester.

Ballard also explained the opportunities for learning and gaining experience from the club, stating, "It has been great refining my leadership and teaching skills through doing something that I am passionate about but not an expert in."

For students unfamiliar with kayaking or paddle sports, instructors such as Ballard are there to offer their as-

sistance and guidance.

Ballard expressed great passion for the club, providing personal accounts of how the club has allowed him to grow as a person.

For any students interested in the club or looking for something new and fun to do, he states, "I believe that students should join this club because oftentimes it pushes them outside of their comfort zones and it inspires confidence."

With leaders and instructors such as Ballard, Paddle Sports Club is an opportunity for students to learn something new while building a greater community together. ★



Paddle Sports Club Members on Kayaks

COURTESY OF BEKAH FENN

How Activate Leadership Creates Positive Change

JENNIFER PAGE ('24)

This past weekend, Houghton University held its fifth annual Activate Leadership Conference in the MVP lounge at the Kerr-Pegula Athletic Complex. During the two-day conference, students listened to presentations from Keynote Speaker Marlena Graves and Chair of Religion, Associate Dean of the



Conference attendees listen to a presentation.

COURTESY OF SAVANNAH STITT

Chapel and Adjunct Professor of Youth Ministry Rev. Dr. J.L. Miller; after which, they came up with their own proposal for positive change on Houghton's campus.

"The Activate Leadership Conference," said Rachel Wright, Director of the Office of Vocation and Calling and Associate Director of the Cen-

ter for Student Success, "is an opportunity for students to explore their strengths, develop spiritual disciplines and practices and learn how to use their gifts and talents to create positive impact as leaders in their chosen fields."

Unlike previous years, when only sophomores could attend the event,

the Center for Student Success and Office of Vocation and Calling decided to open up this year's registration to all Houghton Students. "My sisters participated in the conference their sophomore years and they encouraged me to go," said junior Will Allen. "I'm very happy that it's offered to all years now so

that I didn't miss out. I learned a lot about myself and how to work well with others who do not share my strengths."

During the Saturday session, Allen and the other attendees got the chance to propose a Positive Change Project to a board of reviewers.

"Groups of students come up with an idea of something they want to address or offer either on campus or in the community, which is their proposal for positive change," said Wright.

The students do not have to plan the proposal on their own, however. Student coaches (students who have previously attended the conference) ensure that the people on their team get everything they can out of the conference.

FEATURE: Honors Seminars

MARITH ANDERSON ('22)

With the availability of Honors seminars at Houghton University, faculty and students alike are provided with the opportunity to dive deep into various topics of interest, such as neuroscience and human autonomy, slavery and freedom, leadership, the history of animation, and more.

Houghton currently offers two First Year Honors Programs (FYHP). Whether a part of Science Honors or London Honors, students can engage with an academically rigorous learning experience and form close bonds with their peers. Professor of Philosophy and Honors Director Benjamin Lipscomb shared that this is a different approach to honors studies at other universities, which more often have their program spanning over all four years.

After becoming Honors Director about a decade ago, Lipscomb wanted to add some continuity to the experience that students in an FYHP would have, without sacrificing the program's unique first-year aspect. He could see that students loved the intense, transformative experience and missed that feeling as they continued their academic pursuits.

In an effort to maintain this type of learning environment, and to incorporate honors level studies across more than just one year, Houghton initiated honors seminars. A concern that arose in this initiation was the likelihood that honors level students would have a burdensome course load, as Lipscomb noted that it didn't seem fair for students in some majors to be able to continue their honors journey while others wouldn't due to a larger course load for their chosen discipline. This concern was resolved when honor courses were limited to 1 credit-hour and required students to meet only once a week.

He also emphasized the benefits of these courses by sharing that the treat for teachers is "working with highly motivated, very talented

students and getting to dig into a topic that you really love that you otherwise would not have had people to talk about with. And for the students is a chance to mix and mingle across years and Honors cohorts... you get a tossed salad of participants every time."

Senior Skye Chaapel, who was involved in the Science Honors program in her freshman year, shared a bit about her experience with these seminars. In past semesters, she has taken a course on neuroscience and human autonomy with Assistant Professor of Psychology Dr. Alison Young Reusser, and another on bad leadership with Vice President for Student Life Marc Smithers. Currently, she is enrolled in an honors seminar taught by Associate Professor of Biology Dr. Ransom Poythress on science and the evidence for God.

"They have all been discussion-based," Chaapel notes. "As someone who prefers listening to talking, it has been a really unique experience." She values the chance to learn and develop her thoughts not only from the professors, but also from the students, noting that she "[gets] to listen to what other people think about certain topics, and a lot of students on campus have very eye-opening opinions and really sound reasoning and thoughts." As a science major, Chaapel feels that the seminars exposed her to topics and professors from other disciplines that she may otherwise have not been introduced to, and have helped her to become a more well-rounded individual.

Senior Jax Johnson shared sentiments similar to Chaapel. They have taken an honors seminar on P.G. Wodehouse with Professor of Theology Dr. Jonathan Case, as well as honors seminars about St. Augustine's Confessions and Gurus, both with Lipscomb.

Similar to Chaapel, Johnson noted the value of the conversations that can take place in the honors seminars, which they describe as "thought-provoking and interesting". They also remarked that the honors seminars "often delve in to fascinating topics", and that the honors seminars "can be a nice way to expand from the courses

within your major."

Another student who has appreciated their experience with honors seminars is Zebulon (Zeb) Thompson. He has also taken the bad leadership seminar with Smithers, and he is currently enrolled in the seminar with Poythress about science and the evidence for God.

Thompson referred to the honors seminars as "terrific". He also commented on the fact that they are "a small, focused class which often allows you to explore a niche topic well." Similar to Chaapel and Johnson, he finds that the people who take honors seminars are "interesting and insightful people, who have a variety of majors and who come from varying backgrounds." Thompson highly recommends that students take honors seminars whenever they can.

In recent years, honor seminars have been opened up to students who have a GPA of a 3.8 or above, regardless of whether or not they were involved with a FYHP. Lipscomb explained that over the years there have been students who, for whatever reason, were not able to be involved with a full-year program but absolutely would be able to handle a seminar, and he wanted to provide them the opportunity to do so if they should choose. He also acknowledged the distinct possibility that someone who had no interest in an honors program might simply be interested in a topic that's being talked about.

"I think there is something really enlivening about being in a conversation that you chose to be in," he said, "that you don't have to be in... these are some of the most uniformly motivated classrooms, and that is hugely exciting. Like the best book clubs or discussion groups, everybody is excited about what they're learning and it creates such a nice atmosphere." He feels that students who take these seminars have found great joy in now being able to carry out intelligent conversations with professors about the topics they have studied.

★

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"I loved the experience of both leading and learning about leadership," said junior Cody Johnson, one of the student coaches for this year's conference. "It was a fun opportunity to network with people I might not see on campus any other time and grow together."

"The Positive Change Project," continued Johnson, "was a cool opportunity to brainstorm (or 'ideate') with other students about how we can positively influence something at Houghton. It is a reminder to all of us

that students and young leaders have the power to implement, regardless of their position or 'the way things have always been done.'" there is no way of telling if one of the Positive Change Projects will actually be implemented on campus, there is a precedent for it to happen, since both the Mosaic Center and the Campus Groups app started as Positive Change Projects. Perhaps another idea first thought of at the conference will be implemented on campus in the coming. ★

Sudoku

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	5					2		
			1	5	2			
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5					8	9		1
			4		9		2	8
						7		

Difficulty: Tricky

Provided by Sudokuoftheday.com

Metz Misses the Mark...Again



ANNA CATHERMAN ('24)

Big Al's is dead.

The campus center's basement dining establishment is quiet. Still. Too still.

Metz calls the re-branded ice cream and hamburger shop "Sizzle and Swirl at Big Al's". The moniker change is just one of many which have resulted in many students abandoning their once-beloved hangout spot.

The changes to Big Al's and the dining hall haven't all been bad. The Poblano's bar in the dining hall is popular, and the return of hard ice cream is also

very welcome. It's become apparent that Perry's ice cream is never coming back to the dining hall in its previous all-you-can-eat format. Due to pandemic-related production cuts, Perry's no longer has the capacity to provide Houghton students with unlimited ice cream. The idea of keeping the dining hall open later was also a popular student request. Athletes especially wanted late-night dining options other than greasy hamburgers and fries.

Replacing meal exchange with extended dining hours turned out

"Friends would gather to study, play card games, or just talk. Lines used to wrap around the post office during busy times. Now, it's rare to spot more than a dozen people at Big Al's."

students at Big Al's each night has declined dramatically. Friends would gather to study, play card games, or just talk. Lines used to wrap around the post office during busy times. Now, it's rare to spot more than a dozen people at Big Al's. And ex-

nights, they have a few options, but many nights they're forced to choose between either tacos or pizza.

Oh, and there's no more free ice cream, not even the soft serve that was present last year, an issue which was heavily protested at the beginning of the academic year.

Dining services are tricky for any college campus, especially one as rural as Houghton.

Students can't easily get off campus for a healthy meal or for socialization. Houghton thrives when students band together as a community. Cliche, but true.

With a few changes, Big Al's could be an important part of that community again. Reviving Big Al's wouldn't take as much effort as some might claim. Bringing back meal exchange would be an instant boost. Many students would welcome back the old Sunday-Thursday meal exchange, but a hybrid approach could be a

good compromise. Preserving the new extended dining hours while also allowing students to use one or two meal swipes per week at Big Al's would be the best of both worlds.

Restoring menu items that students miss and adding new ones could also help. Buffalo chicken sandwiches could make a triumphant comeback. And maybe, just maybe, some healthy options. Salads? Gluten-free buns for hamburgers?

The smallest change to dining services that would bring the university the most goodwill, though, would be returning our soft serve machine to the dining hall, thank you very much. ★

Anna Catherman is a junior majoring in Communications and minoring in Writing and Equestrian Studies. When she's not reading, writing, or riding, she can usually be found baking gluten-free dairy-free delicacies, playing, or watching the latest Star Wars release.

Have an opinion
you want to share?

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SPEAK OUT!

Letters to the editor
should be less than 600 words

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The mission of the Houghton STAR is to preserve and promote the values of dialogue, transparency and integrity that have been the ideals of Houghton University since its inception. This is done by serving as a medium for the expression of student thought and as a quality publication of significant campus news, Houghton area news, and events.

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Book Review

Nothing More to Tell by Karen M. McManus

Julia Collins ('26)

Karen M. McManus has written some incredible books, and *Nothing More to Tell* (2022) has a mystery, family drama, romance, and of course, a dead teacher.

English teacher William Larkin was murdered when Brynn and Tripp were in eighth grade. Brynn's family moved away until her senior year, when Brynn came back to the town of Sturgis to solve the mystery of her teacher's death. She works as an intern for the true crime show *Motive* while she attends school at St. Ambrose; the K-12 private school where Mr. Larkin was killed. As the anniversary of Mr. Larkin's death is approaching, the school plans to design a memorial garden, and during their time picking out flowers, Brynn is partnered with Tripp.

Tripp was one of the three students who found William Larkin's body. He remembers the interviews with the police where he tried to protect one of the other witnesses, Shane, because Shane had touched the murder weapon (a rock). Now in senior year, Tripp and Shane are good friends. Tripp's boss tells him that he should help with setting up Mr. Larkin's memorial garden so he can recover from the trauma of be-

ing at the crime scene, which he does reluctantly.

As the story goes on, Brynn and Tripp visit a gardener, Mr. Solomon, who gives them advice on how to set up the memorial. When they find him dead, they realize that there's something bigger going on.

Murder investigations are tough. After being ostracized, assaulted, and held at gunpoint, Brynn is desperate to find out who killed Mr. Larkin. And with Tripp's help, she does. After calling Mr. Larkin's old boss, they discover that he was not on good terms with his family. Brynn finds his father, Dexter, who was unaware of his son's death. Furious, he comes to find Brynn and Tripp at a school dance, where they finally figure out who the killer is, and it's not who you would expect.

This book was complex and intriguing. I would rate it an 8/10, as some parts were predictable, like the plot of Brynn and Tripp developing a romantic relationship. But other parts, such as discovering the identity of the killer, were outstanding. *Nothing More to Tell* is a great book that I know Houghton readers would enjoy. ★

Artist of the Week

Lexi Brown ('24)



Lexi Brown grew up with a love for photography instilled in her by her mother, who is the primary reason she has pursued art. Lexi started out sketching anything that caught her fancy and moved on to photographing as she got older. Lexi loves exploring new mediums like ceramics and pastels as well. ★

