

Webmaster's Note

The Carol Andreae Haynes Sophomore Achievement Award is bestowed each fall semester on a Sophomore ACES James Scholar lady who entered the Honors Program as a freshman and has composed the most insightful essay of 500-1000 words about her learning experiences during her first year on campus. Named in honor of the award donor's maternal grandmother, its object is to encourage the women of tomorrow's professional world to reflect on and share their experiences as Freshmen ACES James Scholars in a meaningful way.

The winner of the fall 2004 essay contest is Meg Dill, a Dietetics major in the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition. In recognition of her essay, Meg received a cash prize and a copy of L. Frank Baum's classic fantasy novel, *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus*, one of Mrs. Haynes' favorite books from her childhood days. Meg's prize-winning essay is reprinted below with her permission. – RHC

The Most Valuable Things That I Learned During My Freshman Year in ACES

***By Meg Dill, Sophomore ACES James Scholar, Chancellor's Scholar,
& Editorial Assistant for CURSUS HONORUM***

I remember my first night on campus after moving in as a freshman. While I was moving in, the apartment was bustling with people: dads putting together shelves, moms arranging things in the kitchen, trying to make our place look settled enough for their expectations; my siblings standing about, trying to stay out of the way as people laden with boxes rushed past them; even my grandma and a few cousins had managed to find room enough amidst the mess of stuff to come in and look at my new place. But now, the apartment was quiet, and as I lay on my bed and reflected on the day, the magnitude of what was happening rolled over me. The prospect of living on my own, in a new place with girls I hardly knew, totally removed from my family and the life I knew was exhilarating. The independence I felt filled me with a sense of freedom that I had never felt before. Going into the year, I thought that I would learn about being independent and living on my own. **Looking back on it, I actually learned about how I can't make it through life on my own and the importance of family.**

During the first few weeks of school, I enjoyed taking control of my life and shaping it how I wanted. I had a bike, which I used to learn my way around campus and the surrounding area. One day I biked over into Champaign to interview with a family that hired me to care for their newborn. I was paying for most of my expenses with money that I had earned in high school, and with a source of income and a means of transportation, I felt like I was close to being entirely independent. However, a few months into school, my bike was stolen, and suddenly I wasn't as autonomous as I had fancied myself. I was at a friend's house when my bike was stolen, and I had to ask for a ride home. I was no longer free to do and go wherever whenever, and suddenly I was dependent on other people for help. Some of my friends spent an hour biking around campus searching for my bike; another friend brought me a bike from home that his family didn't need any more. That experience taught me that I can't get along in life alone. **As much as I try to be entirely self-sufficient, it is impossible to make it through the ups and downs of life without people to share them with and to look to for support.**

At the end of first semester was the JBT Scholarship Banquet, for which my parents made a special trip just to attend. At the banquet, we sat with Karl Gardener, in honor of whom my scholarship was donated, and his wife June. The Gardeners were very interested in my life – how my studies were going, why I chose to study Dietetics, my family, everything about me. Not only them, but many of the people I met that night expressed sincere interest in my future. As cliché as it may sound, it was nice to have people express interest in my life and to receive their encouragement. At the end of the school year, the Gardeners invited me to their home for dinner, which was another sincere expression of their interest in me and my life. My interaction with the Gardeners showed me how much I need the support of other people. **I am incapable of providing myself support and encouragement, and so I have to have people in my life who will fill that need.**

Looking back on my freshman year, I am thankful for the experiences I made and for the people who supported me, encouraged me, and taught me how much I need them. Living at the University without my family nearby, my roommates, friends, and all the people who care about me are my family. **The most valuable lesson that I take away from my freshman year is that I can't live separate from others, but no matter where I am, I need family.**