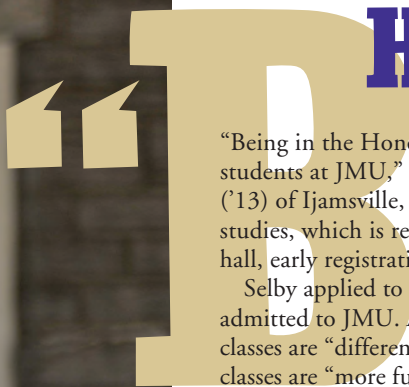






Small class sizes,  
peer challenges, study  
abroad and fun

## Living WITH HONORS



“Being in the Honors Program represents being one of the top students at JMU,” says junior accounting major Taylor Selby ('13) of Ijamsville, Md. “It shows that you are dedicated to your studies, which is rewarded with perks like living in the honors hall, early registration, smaller class sizes and honors seminars.”

Selby applied to the Honors Program shortly after being admitted to JMU. A mantra of the JMU Honors Program is that classes are “different, not more.” And Selby agrees. She says her classes are “more fun due to the discussions we engage in and the extra trust placed in us by our professors.”

Selby especially liked living in the Honors Living and Learning Center her freshman year. “It’s nice being around people who put a lot of effort and time into their schoolwork,” she says. “Freshman year we would all hang out and do work in the study lounge. It was a great way to get work done while also being social.”

Students from all academic majors are represented in the honors hall, a huge benefit according to Selby. “The diversity of majors helps a lot when you need homework help.”

In addition to hiking, horseback riding, community service projects, Relay for Life and other shared opportunities, the Honors Program staff offers the Honors Seminar Abroad: The Bloomsbury Group for freshmen and sophomores. Twenty-four students, including Selby, and two faculty members participated in the first honors experiential learning trip to London, England, in May 2010. Students prepared for the class and the three-week trip throughout the spring semester. Responsible for conducting independent research before and during the trip, students were required to share their experiences at a fall symposium with professors, students and prospective honors students.

“While our days were filled with class time, museums and field trips, we also had plenty of time to explore London,” recalls Selby. “Instead of a straight lecture from the professors, we taught each other and shared a free-flowing discussion.”

Honors Program Director Barry Falk says the success of the first trip led to the Honors Seminar Abroad: Art and Politics in Medici, Florence. Future plans include a course in Barcelona.

“The benefits of being in the Honors Program are astounding,” says Selby. “I’m excited about writing my thesis and looking forward to exploring a subject that interests me. I look forward to learning how to handle such a big paper in terms of time management, writing skills and working with others to complete a major project. I really look forward to graduating with distinction.” ■

\*Listen to current students share their JMU Honors Program experiences at [www.jmu.edu/honorsprog/video.shtml](http://www.jmu.edu/honorsprog/video.shtml).

“It’s nice being around people who put a lot of effort and time into their schoolwork,” says Taylor Selby ('13), who lived in the Honors Program residential learning community in Shenandoah Hall with 200 freshman Honors students. The Honors Program has expanded its Learning Community to accommodate more students.

{ LEARNING WHERE YOU LIVE }



# The sound, the music

Renowned composer and Hollywood sound engineer resonate with a new generation

By JAMIE MARSH

Soon Hee Newbold ('96) has traveled to exotic lands for world premieres of her musical compositions and festivals in her honor. Her husband, Erin Rettig ('96), has worked alongside Hollywood giants as a sound engineer for films like *Gulliver's Travels*, *A-Team* and *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*. They are both tops in their careers and amassing enviable achievements — a refrain that began at JMU.

The duo met in the JMU School of Music. Newbold was concertmaster of JMU orchestras, and Rettig played principal cello. As first-year students, they both declared double majors in music performance and pre-med, though Newbold eventually switched from pre-med to music industry. She liked that JMU was strong in all her interests: science, business and music. "I loved the feel of JMU because of the attitudes of the faculty, the size of the school, and the music industry program," she recalls. Rettig had become familiar with JMU's music program from attending orchestra camps during high school. "JMU gave me a great opportunity to study and grow, personally and intellectually, and to decide what I wanted to do with the rest of my life," he says.

They saw each other frequently during orchestra, string quartet, and ensemble performances and shared many friends. As upperclassmen, they started to date. Newbold enjoyed hosting dinner parties for music faculty members in a huge off-campus house that she shared with roommates, while Rettig played in a string quartet for the Mill Street Grill in Staunton, Va. To help pay the bills, Rettig started a barbershop group that offered paid serenades on Valentine's Day. "I put an ad in *The Breeze*," he says. "People could call and schedule a time and place for us to do the serenades. We'd show up — many times as a surprise to the 'love interest' — and sing. It was very romantic and very different."

After graduation, the couple wed and moved to Orlando, Fla. They performed with professional orchestras and at Walt Disney World. They both played backup to big names like Neil

Sedaka and Jodi Benson and appeared in a music video with Shakira. Newbold was gaining more of a passion for film, while Rettig became interested in audio production and engineering. While in Orlando, they recorded several albums. The first featured their string quartet, *Celtic Threads*. Next came *Faces of Huntington's* and *Pinches of Salt, Prisms of Light*, both with companion books by the same title. These projects included pop songs sung by the author of the books and original music written by Newbold and a few close friends. She also took up acting, landing a role in *The Waterboy* (1998).