

L&C Honors College Students Chat with Best Selling Author Paul Schneider

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GODFREY – Not even a global pandemic can stop the Lewis and Clark Community College Honors College from finding new ways to engage academically and socially – while practicing social distancing, that is.

The students, nine in total – along with three faculty and one parent – sat down for a group chat with New York Times Bestselling Author Paul Schneider over Zoom, Thursday evening, April 2.

“This is the third time the Honors College has had the privilege to meet with Paul,” Honors College Coordinator Jen Cline said. “He always does a great job with our

students – empowering them to write their own stories and being a humble guide. This time, it was more intimate, though. This time of COVID brought us together in a unique way, and we could bond over our devices.”

Instructor Brad Winn teaches History of Riverscapes, a humanities course shaped around experiential learning. Schneider is the author of “Old Man River,” one of two required texts for the class.

“In order for our students to better understand the local history, culture and society we live in today, we need to search for how all these came to be,” said Winn, who is also the site manager at the Lewis and Clark State Historic Site in Hartford. “The class focuses on river stories stretching from the formation of the river, the wildlife, the people, et cetera, from the beginning up until around 1865.”

Winn said Schneider’s book and personal experiences were a perfect fit for the class.

“Schneider has a written history of the exact topics we are covering as well introducing his own personal story into the mix of chapters,” Winn said. “And he literally floated down the Mississippi with his son many years ago. I could not think of a better book to use that would encompass all that we would be learning and seeing during this class.”

After assigning the book, Winn reached out to Schneider personally to ask if he would be willing to meet with the students every year. He agreed.

“As an author, it’s a special treat to have a handful of smart young people who have read one’s book and traveled to some of the places in it in a single gathering for a conversation, Schneider said. “Students like the ones I got to hang out with this year give me great hope for the planet in this crazy time. Despite the extraordinary circumstances, they were fun, curious, intelligent and full of really thought-provoking questions from a wide range of perspectives: just the sort that future leaders will hopefully be asking. It was a shot of good energy.”

Schneider lives in Massachusetts and meets with the group remotely every year. Participants said using Zoom this year helped the meeting feel more intimate.

“He is simply amazing with the students, interacting with them on a very personal level to answer their questions about his book and his experiences,” Winn said. “I am just thrilled that he is so giving of his time to meet with them like this in a very informal setting.”

Honors College Student Bryce Bushnell said he misses face-to-face classes and enjoyed being able to spend some time with his classmates in a virtual setting. Meeting Schneider was an added bonus.

“Meeting Paul was a fantastic experience! Personally, I have always wanted to meet an author but have never had the opportunity to,” Bushnell said. “My biggest takeaway from the conversation was how much we take for granted with authors and artists. Reading a book is to stand on the shoulders of giants. Paul said it took him four years to complete his book, which one can buy and read in four days. Our conversation really put into perspective how much work truly goes into writing, especially in terms of reading, writing and time.”

To learn more about the L&C Honors College, visit www.lc.edu/honorscollege.