Educational Highlights: I am a member of the Honors College, as well as a double major in Anthropology and Biology. I completed three internships: acting as a lab tech alongside Dr. Dana Cope in his Paleolithic lab; working at Williams & Walsh law firm; and serving as a research assistant on Dr. Christine Finnan’s yoga study. I also completed an independent study with Dr. Moore Quinn, where I examined the relationship between women and folklore. I am a member of Lambda Alpha and I recently presented research at the SCASC conference in Columbia, S.C.

Research Focus or Project: My research paper focused on the construction, transmission, and maintenance of social myths, specifically on the beauty ideal in Western culture. A theoretical analysis of the Western conception of beauty is offered through the lens of the artists who rendered such images immutable. The discussion begins with the construction of the beauty ideal as it was drawn from ancient Greek philosophers, analyzed in literary musings, and then visualized by Renaissance artists. The paper established that cultural myths are an effective form of social control because they provide the appearance of fact, reality, and timelessness. Renaissance art was an effective medium for the development and dissemination of a beauty myth that served to justify and maintain a system of patriarchal control. Ultimately, the role of Renaissance art in our modern aesthetic understanding suggests that perhaps beauty lies only in the eyes of the enculturated beholder.

Future Plans: My success as an undergraduate, along with my desire to remain in academia, has made me want to pursue higher education. Although I will be taking a year off to further evaluate my academic interests and to travel, I intend to begin the applications process next spring.

This award presented by Cynthia Lowenthal, Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Department of Anthropology at the College of Charleston on the 6th day of May 2011.