

THE HONORS BEACON

Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato



LEADERSHIP • RESEARCH • GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Issue XVIII, Fall 2020



Making the Most of the Pandemic

We asked students Sarah Wall and Cassidy Tocco, "During the pandemic, what have you done or tried that you otherwise would not have?"

Sarah Wall, '20 (Exercise Science/Pre-Physical Therapy; St. Paul, MN)

The pandemic has offered many opportunities that began in quarantine and extend to present-day. During quarantine, also known as March and April, we were all forced to stay home. I struggled with staying at home but passed my time with painting, cross-stitching, and of course, school. With more time in the evenings, I began cooking homemade meals on a regular basis and did my best to exercise at home. While the quarantine period initially horrified me, I found peace with it and made lemons into lemonade.

If I had been asked to visualize my final undergraduate semester, I never would have predicted online lectures or labs, much less a pandemic. I thought I would be meal-prepping, packing lunches, eating in the Honors lounge, and studying to my heart's content. Instead, I often attend Zoom lectures in my pajamas with my cat

in my lap. Online class has been difficult, especially with a hands-on major, but I am working on adapting to the situation. I am meeting with my professors regularly to review course material and I am also using Quizlet to study.

COVID-19 has also pursued me to find a new job. Prior to the pandemic, I was working as a gymnastics and fitness coach. Due to both gyms being closed, I began a new and intimidating work experience with Freedom Homecare. I will always be grateful for the unique encouragement the pandemic gave me to pursue a new job in senior health care. I have met so many caring and considerate seniors whom I never would have met without this job.

The pandemic is, unfortunately, far from over. However, with adaptability, curiosity, and optimism, we can make the best of the situation. Remember to wear your mask and go exploring, read a new book, or do something creative!

Kassidy Tocco, '21 (Special Education; Marshall, MN)

We are living in a new reality today, one with changes, hardship, and loss. While this has no doubt been a difficult year, I think that we all have learned new things about ourselves and the world. We've seen entire communities come together in support of one another and innovate as we learn how to exist in a pandemic.

We've also witnessed growth, even if it wasn't what we wanted or anticipated. I see all of this reflected in myself and personal journey through COVID-19. I recall the genuine panic I felt last spring during quarantine, when the rug was pulled out from under me. All stability was seemingly lost and replaced with uncertainty and fear. Oddly enough, during the most challenging weeks, that was the period that I had grown and learned the most about myself. I finally understood what

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The Honors Beacon newsletter was awarded 1st place in the student print category of the National Collegiate Honors Council's newsletter contest for the 2014-2015 academic year.



Director's Note

Dr. Leah White



As the Fall 2020 semester draws to a close, campus remains eerily quiet and Pam, Ginny and I have been lonely in the Honors Office. Even with classes meeting in the FlexSync

format and events being held online and/or socially distanced, we have not been able to interact with our students with the frequency we enjoy. Our new students have made the best of an atypical first semester of college and our graduating seniors are managing their disappointment at not having the usual closure to their college experience. Yet, I continue to be amazed at the resilience of our students. Despite all the changes they have navigated this year,

our students continue to adjust and move forward.

During Fall advising, I talked with many students about how processing 2020 is a master class in global citizenship as it relates to self-awareness and knowledge and understanding. Making sense of the pandemic, social unrest and the election season requires significant reflection about one's own lived experiences as they compare to the experiences of others. Honors is about doing the hard work of reflection regarding one's learning. I am proud of our students for the ways they have been able to look beyond themselves and see the bigger implications of what we are all experiencing. We anticipate Spring 2021 will continue to be difficult, but I am confident those in the honors community are prepared to meet these challenges with grace and increasing wisdom.

Editor's Note

Jonathan Fjeld '21 (Mass Communications and Communication Studies; Twin Valley, MN)



To be at this point in time where we can reflect on what Fall 2020 was, and how much we have each grinded it out this semester, is amazing, to say the very least. It will be a topic of

conversation for when future generations ask about what this time was like.

Being able to document it with the Beacon has been an honor (no pun intended!). However, when work began on this edition, it was unclear what the stories were going to be about with so many events, conferences and other happenings not taking place that define many of our stories. The focused

eventually shifted to sharing about how life in our community has gone on, even as unusual circumstances have been present.

I was happy to read about all the stories people had to share, including the career aspirations of our Tischer scholar from this spring, and what ways other students have adapted to the pandemic. Reading these stories made me feel that sense of community and connection that defines Honors, and I hope that you can feel the same while reading this.

I want to especially thank Michaela Reidell, who has been a BIG help for all of this semester's projects. It is sad that this is the second and final Beacon I will be Editor-In-Chief for, but I trust that with Michaela as the Editor-in-Chief for Spring 2021, the Beacon will be in very good hands.

The Fall 2020 Beacon Team

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Ten Questions with... Our New GA!

This article features ten questions with Sammi Cowger, our new Graduate Assistant who works closely with both the full-time Honors staff and the Honors Student Body on matters pertaining to the program.

1. Where are you from?

I grew up in Fenton, Michigan – a small town north of Detroit. I grew up loving summers on the lake and winters playing pond hockey and sledding. I am the third child in a family with four girls. Our lives revolved around sports, specifically softball. My parents were constantly utilizing

the “divide and conquer” method to get us to all of our practices and tournaments. Now, all of us have retired from our athletic careers and the softball has stopped, but the competitive nature is still alive and well! Game nights in the Cowger household are always eventful!

2. What are you studying at Minnesota State Mankato?

I am studying School Psychology at Minnesota State Mankato. The program prepares us to be licensed school-based psychologists in K-12 and nontraditional school settings. We can also apply to be a licensed psychologist and practice in other settings. Ultimately, I would like to focus on system/school-wide programming, specific to social skills and positive behaviors.

3. Where did you get your previous degree?

I received my bachelor’s degree in Sports Administration at Ball State University in Muncie, IN. I was a member of the softball team and played for four years. After that, I received my master’s degree from the University of Missouri in Positive Psychology. While pursuing my graduate coursework, I was a graduate assistant in the athletic department, providing career and life skills counseling to the student athletes. It was here that I fell in love with counseling and student services. This led to me accepting a job at the University of Nebraska in Student Athlete Support Services, where I did personal and leadership development programming.

4. How did you decide on coming to Mankato?

I’ve spent the last several years of my life moving around, pursuing different educational and professional opportunities. I have loved seeing new parts of the country, but I miss being close to my family. I have two sisters who live in the Twin Cities and all of my extended family lives in Minnesota, so I really wanted to find a school that was close to them but still met all of my academic criteria. When I visited Mankato for the first time, I noticed all of the trails and parks and the small-community feel with the activities and resources of a city!

When I found Minnesota State, I immediately knew it was the place I wanted to be. Their School Psychology doctoral program has incredible faculty and is greatly connected throughout MN. I also was drawn to the small, cohort-style classes. Community is important to me and I knew that at MNSU, I’d have the opportunity to build strong connections with my classmates and professors.

5. What drove you to apply to be the Honors GA?

My favorite part of my job at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln was working with the undergraduate students. When I saw the Honors Program position, I was excited for the opportunity to con-

tinue working in a similar role. I also knew that being surrounded by academically-focused and driven individuals would be beneficial for my own well-being. Once I had the opportunity to meet Leah and Ginny, I knew it was going to be a good fit!

6. What does being the Honors Program GA entail?

My main responsibilities with the Honors Program include serving as a liaison between student leadership and the full-time Honors Staff and supporting the Honors Student Body Executive Council in event planning and logistics. I also conduct meetings with the Honors 201 class to aid in portfolio development. This has been a great way to connect one-on-one with Honors students. I love hearing about their future goals and finding ways to support their personal development!

In the future, I hope to continue engaging with Honors students through meetings and to work on ways of promoting mental health and wellbeing. I’d love to introduce some creative ways to managing stress and enhancing well-being for our students. My coursework in psychology has emphasized the need for increase awareness of mental health, and I think college is a time where coping skills and resiliency are important. I’d love to be able to mix some of these ideas in with our programming and events.

7. How has working with HSB been in your first semester?

I have loved working with HSB. It has been a great way to meet the students and learn more about the program as a whole. The students have also been incredibly helpful in the transition and have taught me so much in my first few months. It has been wonderful working with such driven and caring students!


8. Have there been any challenges that have arose so far?

Much like everyone right now, COVID has been a challenge for me. I am constantly hearing people talk about how much fun the Honors Lounge is and how it’s always full of students. I’ve had some serious envy of past years. I also have had the usual struggles with Zoom fatigue. I’m a social person and it’s been hard not having the chance to go out and make new friends. I am thankful for my position with the Honors Program because it has given me the chance to get out of the house and interact with other humans!

9. What is your favorite part of being the Honors Program GA?

I love the opportunity to work with people and serve other college students. Many graduate students help with research or work individually with their advisor. However, I am thankful that I have the opportunity to work in student service and in an office that does so many different things. I love working with individual students and I love being a part of such an incredible staff!

10. What do you hope to do in the future?

After graduation, I’d love to work at a low resource middle school in a larger city. I am passionate about mental health services and increasing accessibility to all children. I think public schools offer a unique opportunity to reach most students and provide services for free. I’d love to be a part of implementing school-wide initiatives at my school to enhance the success and well-being of all students and to ensure they have equitable access to resources. 

Making the Most... (Continued from page 1)

I needed to do to take care of myself unapologetically. I found that I was capable of so much more than I thought. Here I am finishing my degree and starting a career in the midst of a global crisis. I found more strength in myself than I knew I had. I started an intense self-care regiment. With all of my newfound time on my hands

during quarantine, I dove into the worlds of yoga, meditation, and self-compassion, which no doubt got me through my hardest moments. During my practice of yoga, I felt my body get stronger, which brought on a sense of accomplishment and pride. Meditation acts as an equalizer for my mind: letting go of what I can't control

and being kind to myself when I feel lost. Finding a silver lining in the midst of crisis can be difficult, but I try to remind myself and others that we are here, we are strong, and we are constantly growing--even during a pandemic. 📖

Honors Student Body Spotlight

Emily Schiltz, '21 (Exercise Science and Psychology; Detroit Lakes, Minn.)

The Honors Student Body is a Registered Student Organization (RSO) on campus that represents all students in the Honors Program to the community, the school, and the administration. Every student in the Honors Program is part of this organization and can participate in all of the events the organization hosts. These events have many purposes: to encourage students to take a break from studying to have some fun, to provide a space for students to get to know other Honors students, and to allow students to give their input on decisions within the Honors Program that will affect them. In the past, some of our events have been educational such as the How to... event, and others have been creative such as the Painting with Bob Ross event. As the President of this organization, the other board members and I try to come up with fun and interesting events in order to engage students. This year, while things have looked a little different with the social-distancing guidelines, we are still finding fun and creative ways to interact with each other. One of my favorite events each year has been the Ice Cream Social that's held at the beginning of the semester. With the weather still warm and the new students rolling in, it's always a well-attended event and a great opportunity for students to get to meet each other.

The Honors Student Body Executive Board is made up of elected students from each class. Along with planning monthly group events, part of our position entails sitting in on Honors Council meetings and providing student opinions. The Honors Council consists of professors from each college, multiple departments, and professionals from various student resources on campus who work together to discuss important proposed changes to the Honors curriculum and more. The Council also approves course waivers, reviews Presidential Scholarship applications, and discusses student events. Personally, I enjoy Honors Council meetings because they really value our input as students.



2020-21 Honors Student Body Council Executive Board.
Front row (L to R): Emily Schiltz, Brian Swancutt (virtually), Mallory Steinmetz. Back row (L to R): Hannah Turnipseed, Delaney Conrad, Becca Guss, Riley Lehmer.

I joined the Honors Student Body Executive Board because I wanted students to feel as connected to the program as I do. I believe that the Honors Program can be really beneficial for students when they choose to get involved and interact with other students. I met students in my major through the Honors Program who became my study buddies. I also met people who were so different than me, but I became friends with them because of something else we had in common. Not only has the Honors Student Body allowed me to meet some of my best friends, but it has helped me better understand my leadership style and strengths. Knowing these two things not only helped me as a student leader, but I know it will help me in my future profession as well.

For students who are interested in being involved in the Honors Student Body, our general meetings occur once a month. Attending events is a great way to become involved and learn more about what we do. If you're interested in becoming a part of the Executive Board, there will be elections in the spring for next academic year. 📖



Make a difference in the lives of those preparing to make a difference.

Because they have the opportunity to push themselves to do more here at Minnesota State Mankato, students in the Honors Program will be ready to push for success in the real world as well.

Supporting the Honors Program has an impact on students who will become widely recognized, prominent, distinguished leaders, researchers and global citizens who are able to bring about change in the world, no matter what their chosen discipline may be.

Giving to the Honors Program is easy; simply visit mnsu.edu/giving and designate your gift to the Honors Program.



Yoga Class Spotlight

Samantha Kozelek, '22 (Elementary Ed.; Waukesha, WI)

This is an interview style piece spotlighting professor Carly Hopper, who taught the Honors yoga class in Fall 2020.

Kozelek: What honors course are you teaching this semester?

Hopper: The name of the course is Honors 401: An Exploration of Yoga A Journey of Discovery. This course will introduce students to the eight limbs of yoga: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. Students will explore the philosophy of yoga as it relates to social, religious, historical, holistic, and political issues around the globe. Students will develop self-awareness of how yoga can be a personal journey to discover their own physical body, energy body, mental body, intellectual body, and divine body. Students will cultivate a deeper understanding of the yoga philosophy and practice through an academic lens and physical practice.

Kozelek: Why did you choose to instruct it this semester?

Hopper: I was asked to teach this course over a year ago, so it was planned to be offered fall 2020. I think, even with all that is going on in our world, and the challenges of adjusting this class to be a FlexSync format, I am happy to be teaching this course and sharing the info with students to explore during this time.

Kozelek: What are some of the goals you hope students achieve by the end of the class?

Hopper: I hope students move beyond initial expectations of what they thought yoga was. Many people think yoga is only about poses (asanas) but, that is only one part of eight limbs of yoga. We are diving into yoga ethics and philosophy and exploring how all of that can help us deal with life right now. Yoga is about what is happening on the mat and what we take off the mat into the world in our daily lives with what we learn during our practice on the mat and through study.

Kozelek: What is most exciting about teaching this course?

Hopper: I love engaging with students and learning from them. I get excited to share yoga anatomy information, Pranayama (breathing) practices, Dhyana (meditation) techniques, the history and philosophy of yoga, and the physical poses (asanas) practice. I am excited that I can provide an experience for students to practice yoga safely from their own space, via Zoom, and provide beneficial tools for stress and anxiety relief.

Kozelek: How has class been adapting to HyFlex FlexSync?

Hopper: Pennington Hall 102 is not set up for FlexSync—so, our in-person class was changed to meet via Zoom for the yoga practice. I meet with students on Wednesday nights at 6pm via Zoom from the space I created in my home for yoga practice. Students have been engaged and the input I have received is that it is working well. Other content has been moved online to D2L, through weekly discussions, compositions, content in weekly modules, and a final project. Yoga has taught me to embrace situations that may not be ideal and find a solution that fits best for all involved. So far, this format of meeting via Zoom and having online class discussion was not in the original plan—but, I feel it is working well.

Kozelek: Why are you passionate about the content within your course?

Hopper: In short, I have done yoga my whole life without even knowing I was doing it. I would wash dishes as a kid, standing by the sink, standing in tree pose. I used the guidance of the yamas and niyamas (yoga's ethical practices) off

the mat without even knowing what they were; for example, ahimsa is non-violence and that can be with kind words to our self and other, in addition to the obvious ways to be non-violent. When I took my first yoga class over 20 years ago, everything clicked with me, that this was a practice, an exercise, a spiritual practice, a way of life that I was already doing so much with and didn't even know. So, I dove into the self-study of yoga practice. I took classes and read a lot. I keep learning from studying and working with others to learn from them. It doesn't feel like work, don't get me wrong, but parts of yoga's physical practice and even self-reflection are difficult. It is worth the effort—and to me that is the definition of my passion.

Kozelek: What sort of connections are you hoping for students to make from this course?

Hopper: I hope students see the connection of the materials in this course that yoga is for everybody. It is about what happens on and off the mat. Yoga is about exploring who you are and learning about yourself in the process. I also want students to know that I am a resource for them as an employee at the university. I may not always know an answer, but I will do my best to connect them with the correct resource now and after they graduate.

Kozelek: Is there any other information that you would like to share?

Hopper: I feel lucky to have the opportunity to teach this course in a department that values my passion and willingness to allow me to share what I love with students. I work full-time at Minnesota State University, Mankato in Campus Recreation as the Fitness and Wellness Coordinator, and I own Sun and Moon Yoga LLC. I have taught yoga in the Mankato community and around the world, so if anyone has any questions please don't hesitate to reach out. 📧



Alumni Spotlight: Lauren Bach and Carolyn Nelson

Michaela Reidell, '21 (International Business/Business Management, Spanish; Mankato, MN)

Featured in the article are interviews with two Honors Program alumni: Lauren Bach and Carolyn Nelson. Bach currently works at the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, and Nelson works at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Nelson graduated from Mankato in 2005 with a degree in political studies, while Bach graduated in December 2014 with a degree in psychology and a sociology minor.

What was your desired career path?

LB: It was very different from the current path that I am on now. I believed I was going to go the clinical psychology route. I took abnormal psychology and similar courses like industrial organizational psychology, exploring the various paths. I was working in admissions, orientation, and student affairs where I fell in love with higher education and wanted to work with students long-term. I didn't know that advising was a career option while in college.

CN: My career path was law school and I worked as a paralegal with the intention of doing some career exploration and ultimately applying to law school. I found that I had internal conflict related to that type of work, so that changed my type of career direction. I was approached to work in an admissions role around the same time I decided that law school was not going to be the right fit for me. In the admissions officer role, I found a passion for helping other students access education and help 17 and 18 year-olds make a big decision for themselves. It is really an exciting time to be part of somebody's life. So I found that helping piece that I was missing in the world of law and I was also able to pair that with a passion for Minnesota State University, Mankato. Then, I was able to grow and progress into a couple different roles, and now I am the Scholarship Director for the office of Admission.

How long have you been in your current position?

LB: Over three years, I arrived in May of 2017. My roles changed a bit over those three years. When I first arrived, I was an adviser for business and economics



Lauren Bach

students. In the last seven months, the associate director of advising left in January, so I took on the interim role. Most recently, starting September 1, I became lead adviser of Business Studies, leading a group of seven other advisers for business and economic students while being the main point of contact with the College of Business faculty and staff.

CN: I have been in my current position for about three years, so I think I am hitting that point in time where I am starting to get comfortable in the position. Therefore, I am looking for opportunities for growth. It takes at least a year in any new position to really get used to the cycle of things, and then the second year to feel confident. In the third year, to actively seek growth and confidence in making changes to existing programs and structures.

How did the Pandemic impact aspects of your job?

LB: Before the pandemic, every part of my job was in-person because it is a lot of student contact. All of the meetings were in-person, so we didn't have a tele-commute option for work. Since the pandemic, we all are working from home, so I have been working from home since March. We are using mostly Zoom and Microsoft Teams for all staff and student meetings. The one thing I am doing in-person is teaching. I teach a one credit class for first year students and that is in person, once a week. Otherwise, a lot of people have experienced changes with how you interact with student and colleagues during this time. We had to change things so quickly in the Spring that I had a lot of phone meetings with students.

CN: The most immediate impact for me as an employee and in my career was the removal of your work situation. From



Carolyn Nelson

engaging with colleagues to being able to walk down the hall to ask for advice to working remotely, which I'd never done before because I never had the desire to work remotely. I'm very much somebody who likes interacting with others and seeing other people. So the movement to remote work was jarring. In that remote location I found myself working right next to my husband while taking care of a four year-old and kindergartener. Navigating all of that complexity was something that I never expected to experience.

For more information regarding Carolyn's job during Covid-19 please visit pages 7-8 to read more about how she and the University have adapted regarding student financial needs and enrollment.

What are the benefits of mastering the Honors Program competencies of Leadership, Research, and Global Citizenship once starting a career?

LB: I use them every day and I am not sure that as undergraduate student I understood how that was going to translate into my career. They are essentially transferable skills, that can be applied to both your career and your personal life. For leadership, I ended up supervising a staff as a 27 year-old. That is a huge learning curve early on in my career and I am leading other staff now in many different ways. With Research, I have done a lot with enrollment management, with looking at student retention, in terms of are they enrolling in classes every semester and helping with the strategic planning process. Global citizenship is more important than ever before. I have international students from China that I have worked really closely with during the pandemic. Their experience was very different. People were blaming them for the virus, and they were trying to

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get home to their families, so those skills were important to empathize with their experience and support them in any way I could. I think that the Honors students are graduating with a lot of skills that are timely in the pandemic.

CN: All of the competencies intertwine, so in my role as the Director of Scholarships, I need to be able to work with a diverse group of people, who have different life experiences than I do. More and more every year the importance of having that global perspective and willingness to engage with people who have different life experiences, while finding the value of those experiences, is really important. One of the things that the Honors Program did for me, is it really instilled an interest to know more and to explore deeply while providing an outlet to satisfy curiosity. The research competency instills the ability to channel all my knowledge in a productive way. That competency has developed project management skills for me. Ultimately, you have to implement action, which makes an Honors Program graduate extremely beneficial to an employer because you are able to take your knowledge, interest, and expertise and do something with it and feel confident implementing your idea in a way that will benefit your employer.

How have the Competencies helped your career path?

LB: They have been instrumental. When I went to graduate school, I was using research for courses. With Leadership I took on extra roles within my cohort, like review of admission applications and programming for our cohort. My program had a huge focus on social justice, I was right outside of D.C., so we talked a lot about underrepresented students in higher

education and how to make policies and resources for them.

What is advice you have to first year Honors students?

LB: Challenge yourself...when I first started in the program, I had great mentors to push me to seek experiences to develop the competencies and skills. Looking back, that was wonderful because I'm not sure that I had other people on campus pushing me in that way: expanding my comfort zone, going on study abroad, doing research, leading an organization. I went on a service-learning trip to Belize. I never expected to do that in undergrad. All of those things really make your undergrad experience stick out and give you other skills that are valuable as you leave Minnesota State. I would say use your network too, because you are with other highly motivated students, so you are surrounded by people that will push you to do better.

CN: My advice for honors students in a pandemic is to give yourself and others grace. I think that many students come in from high school, succeeding from everything, I believe that it is okay to experience challenge and failure. When you have challenge and failure that is your opportunity for real growth.

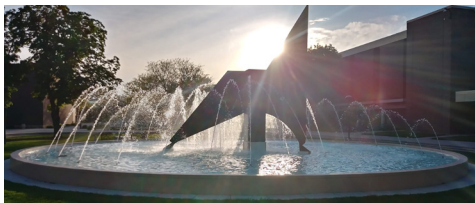
How should graduating seniors showcase their development within the honors program to recruiters?

LB: The portfolio process prepared me for that because you already have to reflect on specific examples that demonstrates your competencies. The same practice is used in interviews, highlighting a skill and talking about an example. Maybe at an interview they are mentioning how you put together reports or synthesized information, that's

research. The portfolio can also go on a resume. It is basically a more-elaborated resume, and you can easily transfer those projects to LinkedIn or other platforms.

CN: I talk about the Honors Program a lot to students who are interested in the University and I think that the competencies of the current Honors Program make our Honors Program graduates stand out. You have to be able to say I have these competencies. There is a reason why the Honors Program has these competencies because when they re-imagined the program 8-10 years ago, they went to employers and said, 'How can we as a University create the best new employee for you?' They responded with a need for people who can operate independently, step into a leadership role, and work in our increasingly global environment. Our graduates have three skills: leadership, project management, and the ability to work independently and come up with an independent product (Portfolio). Therefore, students have really great talking points about interacting with those who are different from you and how the diversity of a team is really important. You could express the type of diversity you bring to the team, like your ability and willingness to work with others who are different from you and to value that experience. I would hope every Honors student would go into their first interview and say confidently to an employer that they are ready to step in day one and learn this job in the first year, work with others and contribute their own expertise, work independently and ask informed questions. I think these are very powerful tools in an Honors Program graduates' tool belt for that first entry level job. They are tools to get the job but also advance early in your career. 📌

Carolyn Nelson: Scholarship & Enrollment Response COVID-19 Perspective



As it relates to the work I do in scholarships, COVID had a direct impact on students' financial situations. When students need more money, they are searching for scholarships but the world of scholarships is a funding source that is planned in-advance, so the world of scholarships was

not able to respond to students. In my role, I was able to incorporate the emergency grant program. When the pandemic happened, this accelerated the need for all students. I was lucky to maintain my job, but so many of our students and their families work in retail sectors, health care, and service industries that immediately shut down. Most of our students work to pay for rent, bills, and food, not for spending money. Those monthly bills didn't go away but their jobs did. Consequently, there was an uptick in grant applications. In the span

of three weeks, we were able to expand the program to include graduate and international students. Students were disproportionately impacted so the pivot was to allow more students to apply for the Emergency Grant Program as a way the University showed its care for the students

Another role of my job is that I coordinate recruitment scholarships, so these are incentives for high school students to come to the University and be shown that we value what they did in high school. Due to the

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pandemic, there was massive disruption in standardized testing, so most testing was cancelled or reduced capacity. So as the University is thinking about future admissions and scholarships, we find ourselves being test-optional. I'm actually very excited for the opportunity to have a forced experiment. The data shows that scores are not a strong indicator of successful students. High school courses and GPA,

and whether they challenged themselves in high school, are strong indicators that they will be successful. Since scholarship requirements may be class rank or GPA, the University expects a larger applicant pool, and I am hopeful that we have a more-diverse applicant pool as well.

The department has planned to shift from on-campus interviews to Zoom or online interviews. We always had that option for

people coming from out-of-state so now the University is assessing how to ensure students get needed information, but also that there's a connection that students can find a home through the University.

In general, there was a change in processes and an increased need for financial help, for not only current students but also for incoming students whose families have been, and continue to be, affected. 


Tischer Scholar: Kianna Fladland

James Ziegeweid, '24 (Business Management and Spanish; Arcadia, WI)



Scholarships can provide a variety of benefits and opportunities to their recipients and the same can be said about The Evelyn Tischer and James Tischer Honors Program Scholarship. For the past four years, the Tischer scholarship has been awarded in May to a Minnesota State University Mankato Honors Program student who has just finished their first year. The scholarship is awarded to a student who has faced adversity and demonstrated leadership traits

as well as a drive to succeed. This year's recipient, Kianna Fladland, is a sophomore majoring in Interdisciplinary Studies, with the hopes of one day having a career designing characters and settings in video games. Coming into college, Kianna was undecided as to what exactly she wanted to major in. After meeting with a few advisors, she was pointed in the direction of Interdisciplinary Studies, which she decided was the perfect fit for her. Looking for ways to further her passion, she joined the anime club last year, where she is working to improve her drawing skills that will be essential for her future career. Currently, she is unsure whether she would like to work for a company such as Nintendo or if she would rather do freelance video game design work in the future. However, she is sure that the Tischer Scholarship has and will continue to have a significant impact on her life. "Receiving this scholarship will allow me to focus more on obtaining my college degree without having to worry as much about how I will pay for my edu-

cation," Kianna said. "It means that I will not have to work as much which will give me more time to focus on studying for my classes. Without having to work as much, I also will have more time to spend on drawing, a skill that will help me succeed in my future career." The actions of the Tischer family have had such a significant impact on Kianna, that she has decided if she is able to in the future, she would like to give back to the community and "pay it forward". She believes the best way to do so is either by setting up a scholarship fund or potentially creating an opportunity for students to have an internship with her. She would work with the interns to help them develop and strengthen different skills that are necessary to succeed in the video game design industry. Although the future is uncertain, one thing that is certain is how significant of an impact receiving scholarships such as the Tischer Scholarship can have on students, opening doors to a world of opportunities. 

Seeking Out Campus Resources During COVID-19

Sarah Wall, '20 (Exercise Science/Pre-Physical Therapy; St. Paul, MN)



Photo: Jonathan Fjeld

Minnesota State University, Mankato has always offered a plethora of resources and COVID-19 has not changed this. While the appearance of our semester and resources have changed, we, as stu-

dents, must remember we are not alone in this struggle. We must remember to ask questions if we need any help and to advocate for ourselves. This article will outline a variety of resources available to students and explain how their help has evolved due to COVID-19.

The levels of stress and anxiety are elevated during a pandemic and the Counseling Center is prepared to help. The Counseling Center offers consultation and screenings, individual and group counseling, and workshops. As a result of the pandemic, all resources have been moved online and appointments can be booked

over the phone or through the website. Whether you have had counseling before or if you have never spoken to a counselor, the Counseling Center is there to help you.

Mental and physical health must both be taken care of. Student Health Services offers access to the pharmacy, clinic, health insurance, and education. The clinic has doctors and nurses that help with vaccinations, common illnesses such as strep, and mental health. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, your temperature and symptoms are monitored prior to entry into the clinic and pharmacy. If desired, appointments can also be attended through tele-

Continued on Page 10

New Academic Year, New URC and Fellowships Directors

Jonathan Fjeld '21 (Mass Communications/
Communication Studies; Twin Valley, MN)

At any time during each school year, the Undergraduate Research Center (URC) and University Fellowships are each open to helping students accomplish research projects or apply for awards. This year, both programs each have a new director whose respective terms began this fall.

Patrick Tebbe, Ph.D., a professor in the Department of Mechanical and Civil Engineering, is the new URC Director, while Kristen Cvancara, Ph.D., a professor in Communication Studies, is the new University Fellowships Coordinator.

Tebbe took over for Kuldeep Agarwal, Ph.D., who served as the URC Director from 2017 to 2020 but has returned to solely being an Associate Professor in Automotive and Manufacturing Technology. Cvancara took over for Ginny Walters, M.Ed., who served as the Fellowships Coordinator from 2013 until July 2020, when she transitioned into being the full-time Honors Program Associate Director. Each of them has served as the Department Chair of their respective departments and each have previous experience working with their respective predecessors.

"I already knew about the URC because I've done student grants through the URC and helped students with the NCUR [National Council on Undergraduate Research] conference," Tebbe said. "Kuldeep works in a department that is close to mine so I've worked with him before. The call went out to all of campus but I was on sabbatical last semester. I had just finished seven years as Chair of Mechanical and Civil Engineering so I stepped down from that during sabbatical and was looking for new things."

"I always like to say I like to leave a window open in the sense that I am looking for new, unique, curious ways to use my skills," Cvancara said. "I have worked with previous director Ginny Walters and had a couple opportunities to work with her. So when the job came up, I was not only aware of the job but I had some



Undergraduate Research Center Director
Patrick Tebbe, Ph.D.

familiarity of what Ginny did with that. In addition to that, I have actually had my own experience with seeking fellowships, scholarships and grants."

In 2012, Cvancara applied to do a research teaching fellowship through Fulbright, which allowed her to be in Finland for her sabbatical. Through this experience, Cvancara was able to work through the application process and form a timeline for the eventual research she would be conducting.

"With a Fulbright as a faculty member, what I had to do was I had to identify a country I wanted to do research in," Cvancara said. "I chose to work in association with a colleague I was already publishing with and she was in Finland. I approached her about the potentials of us working together on our research interests and what it might look like to receive a Fulbright grant to work and teach in Finland, at her university."

The COVID-19 pandemic has prevented many in-person events from taking place for organizations and both the URC and University Fellowships are not immune. However, both Tebbe and Cvancara have worked closely to adapt to the challenges their programs have been facing.

"This year, we're looking at adapting for the different environment. NCUR will be virtual this year and we don't know what the format for the other presentation things will be next semester," Tebbe stated. "And also we're doing more training. We're doing an online certificate program for faculty to help them with conducting research with students and looking at other resources for students and faculty to develop their research skills."




University Fellowships Director
Kristen Cvancara, Ph.D.

"It's like trying to work students through a keyhole. We haven't held many traditional events, such as tabling in the CSU," Cvancara said, "so instead we are being far more specific and focused with interactions where we work through specific avenues on-campus, to have specific engagements with people, like an event we did with the African Student Association on-campus. We talked about what opportunities are available, what's available during COVID, the application process, and what might be something fun to take advantage of."

Cvancara explained that the goals of being the University Fellowships Coordinator is not necessarily about the strength in numbers, but about the strength in impact that different opportunities can have on students.

"Even if they don't get an award, their work isn't all lost. They get to take all of their growth, and they bring it into wherever they are going," Cvancara said. "It's really about building up a repertoire and personal knowledge, which you really gain when you write essays especially about yourself."

"When we can help a student identify their story, that's investment they can get payback on a number of times in their career."

To get in touch with the Fellowships office, contact Kristen Cvancara at Kristen.cvancara@mnsu.edu. To get in touch with the URC, contact Patrick Tebbe at Patrick.tebbe@mnsu.edu. You can also stop by the office, at Morris Hall 265, to learn more about either program. 



health. One of the newest additions to the clinic is the COVID-19 hotline (507-389-5591) and is available to answer any questions or concerns regarding COVID-19.

School during a pandemic introduces a lot of new challenges and accessibility resources can help. The Accessibility Resource Center can help with taking exams online and providing access to e-textbooks and adaptive software. Furthermore, if you struggle with taking notes, you can also request for someone to provide you with notes. The information regarding your disability is confidential and the staff will help you to the best of their ability.

The library has also adapted to serve the students during this pandemic. Seating and study areas have been adjusted to accommodate for social distancing and you can request an item from the library prior to arrival. The popular study rooms have been reduced to a two-person occupan-

cy. However, the library also offers online study rooms which do not have a maximum occupancy. Lastly, help from reference librarians is available (only) online and they can help you with nearly everything. The librarians are extremely knowledgeable so do not be afraid to use them as a resource!

Originally housed in the library, tutoring (Center for Academic Success) can now be accessed online via Zoom. Tutors are available for most general education courses concentrated in math, science, and business. If you need help writing or editing an essay, you can also contact staff from the Writing Center to help you.

College is expensive. Thankfully, there are resources available to answer your financial questions and help identify programs that may benefit you. Campus Hub staff can explain the nitty-gritty details of FAFSA, tuition payments, loans, scholarships, etc., and is prepared to help you in-per-

son, over the phone, and through email. If you have any questions and you are unsure of who to go to, the campus hub is a great place to start. Bridge to Benefits is another resource designed to relieve some financial stress by connecting students with public programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program (SNAP) which provides you with grocery money on a bi-weekly basis.

If you are stressed this semester, remember two things: A) You are not alone and B) There are people who care and will help you. This article summarized some of the resources available to Minnesota State Mankato students but there are more resources that have adapted in accommodation of the pandemic. A full list of resources can be found on the university website. The table below also has contact info for the resources noted in this article.



Resource	Address	Phone Number
Counseling Center	https://mankato.mnsu.edu/university-life/health-and-safety/counseling-center/	507-389-1455
Student Health Services	http://www.mnsu.edu/shs/	507-389-6276
Accessibility Resource Center	https://mankato.mnsu.edu/university-life/campus-services/accessibility-resources/	507-389-2825
Library	https://library.mnsu.edu/	507-389-5931
Center for Academic Success	https://www.mnsu.edu/success/	507-389-1791
Campus Hub	https://mankato.mnsu.edu/university-life/campus-services/campus-hub/	507-389-1866
Bridge to Benefits	https://blog.mnsu.edu/csu/bridge-to-benefit-offers-students-with-children-a-path-to-assistance-programs/	507-345-4551

🔥 Honorable Mentions 🔥

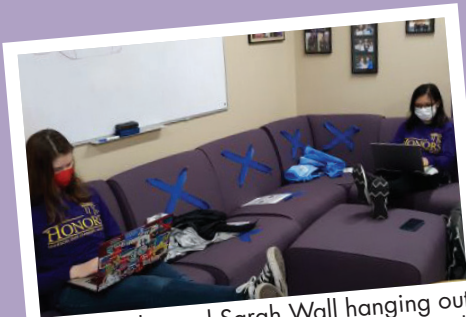
- The following students received supply grants from the URC this semester:

Brian Swancutt	Meaghan Keohane
Emma Knutson	Molly Hill
Jamie Rogers	Mykenzie Cole
Kade Patterson	Quinlan Brogdan
Kianna Fladland	Rachel VanKeulen
Lelti Asgedom	Riley Lehmer
Liberty Hombe	Roman Parpart
Mackenzie Reed	Samantha Kozelek
Maureen Nghambi	Simale Kadir

- The following students passed their portfolio defense this semester:

Amber Chrischilles	Michelle Baldrige
Cierra McClain	Molly Olson
Jada Harley	Myles Schwartz
Kaitlyn Knutson	Nwando Ikeogu
Kassidy Tocco	Sarah Wall
Lissette Garza	Shayla Schumacher
Mason Vlaanderen	

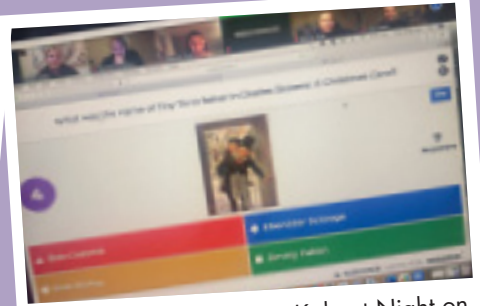
Honors in Pictures



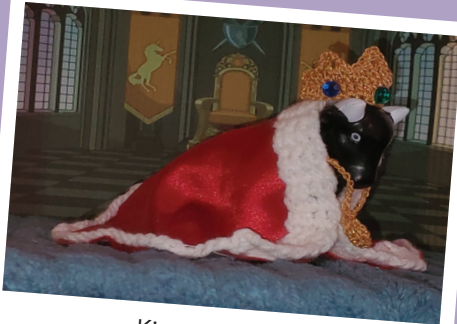
Nicki Jecha and Sarah Wall hanging out in the Honors Lounge, socially-distanced and each with a mask on (per guidelines).



Ferdinand with a doll version of the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader-Ginsburg. Ginsburg passed away in September.



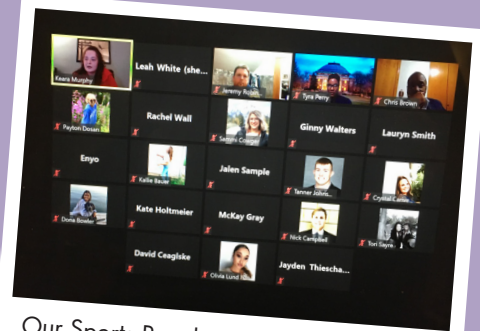
One of the HSB events: Kahoot Night on Zoom! The event took place November 17.



King Ferdinand!



Students making treat bags w/t self-care tips for friends at the October 6 HSB event.



Our Sports Panel on Zoom from November 10.



One of the learning community activities this semester was a socially-distanced sculpture walk in downtown Mankato.



Ferdinand was able to spend some quality time playing in the first snow, around October 20.

Spring 2021 Courses

Food Politics in the U.S. and the World
Dr. Josh Berkanpas (HONR 401; 3 cr.)
 This course will investigate the interconnections between populism, globalism, and citizenship in the 21st century. Topics will center around citizen activism and social movement techniques that are aimed at improving sustainability in food systems as well as increasing access and affordability for healthy food.

Sex and Gender Worldwide
Yalda Nafiseh Hamidi (GWS 220; 4 cr.)
 This course will examine women's lives and activism, past and present, throughout the world. The course will explore and evaluate individual and collective efforts to achieve social justice in the context of interlocking systems of oppression.



Honors Fun Corner: Word Search

by Jonathan Fjeld, '21

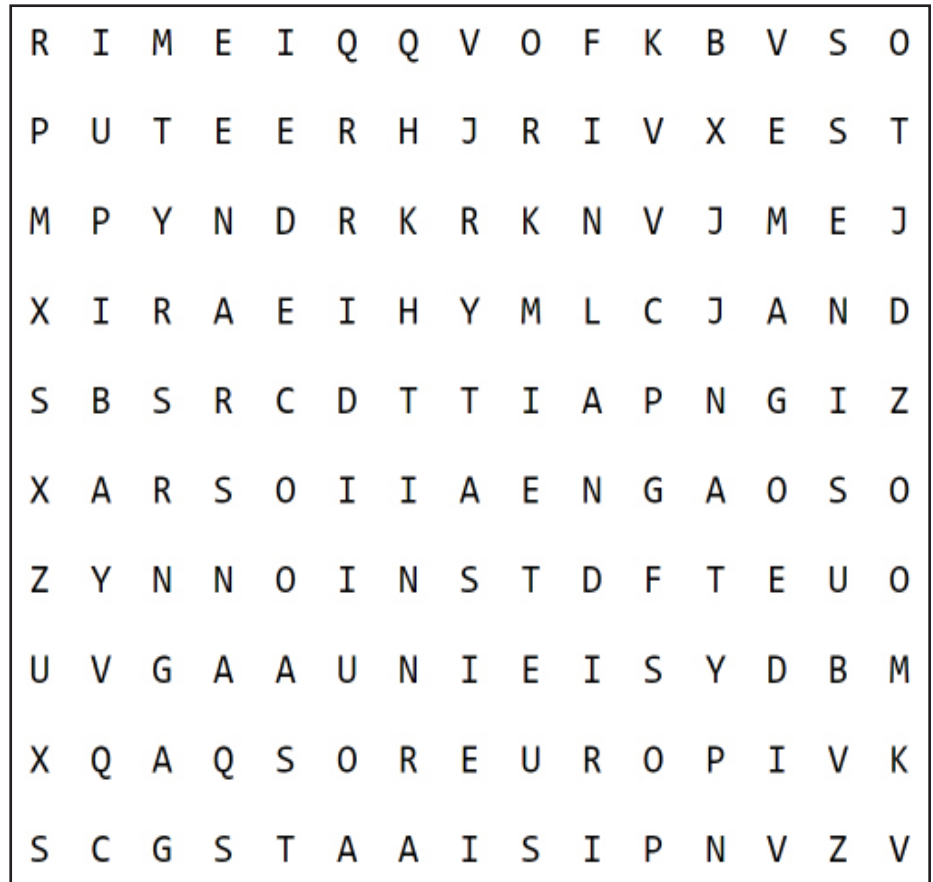
Clues:

1. Where did Professor Cvancara do her Fulbright teaching fellowship?
2. What is Emily's position on the Honors Student Body Council?
3. What is the word for yoga poses that Professor Hopper mentions when talking about the class she teaches?
4. Where can you access the Center for Academic Success?
5. What type of design does Kianna want to do for a living?
6. Around how many years have both Lauren Bach and Carolyn Nelson worked in their respective roles?
7. In what U.S. state did Sammi, our new GA, earn her master's degree in?
8. _____ allowed Cassidy to clear her mind and find a silver lining during the pandemic.
9. After the pandemic hit, what type of health care service did Sarah get a job in?
10. Lauren Bach serves as the lead adviser for _____ Studies.



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Answers to last issue's puzzle:

Toronto 1, Reading 2, Nigeria 3, Accounting 4, RSM 5, Biology 6, Reporter 7, Zoom 8, Miracle 9, MavBuddies 10

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Big ideas. Realworld thinking.

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- > Website: www.mnsu.edu/honors
- > Facebook: www.facebook.com/MNSUHonorsprogram
- > Twitter: @MNSUHonors
- > Blog: mnsuhonors.wordpress.com
- > Email: honors@mnsu.edu
- > Office Location: 265 Morris Hall
- > Phone: 507-389-5191



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