

# THE HONORS BEACON

Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato



LEADERSHIP • RESEARCH • GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Issue IX, Winter 2015



## From Freshmen to Mentors: A Well-Rounded Honors Experience

by Kate Anderson, '18 (Human Resources & Spanish; La Crescent, Minn.) and Alexis Cummings, '18 (Psychology; Pine City, Minn.)

On Saturday, September 12th, the Minnesota State University, Mankato Honors Program hosted their second successful Honors Fall Retreat. The Honors Program welcomed 45 new freshmen, so mentors came together to share their knowledge, experience, and expertise on the honors competencies: global citizenship, leadership, and research. We attended this retreat last year as freshmen and had the opportunity to serve as mentors this year.

When we first arrived at the retreat last year as freshmen, we were overwhelmed with all the new faces and new things to learn. However, by the end of the day, we were able to understand the different components of the program and made many new friends. The environment was very relaxing and welcoming which allowed for the exchange of ideas. Experienced honors students answered our questions and reassured us that there is

a way to fit honors into any major while at the university. The day left us feeling much more optimistic and less worried about our next four years at Minnesota State University, Mankato. For the honors retreat this year, we strived to make it a positive experience for others.

In February of 2015, we started working under the mentorship of Ashley Kanak, the program's Graduate Assistant to plan this fall's retreat. We took into consideration our perspective of the retreat we attended last year and made some adjustments. For example, we decided to make this year's retreat a half day event rather than a full day event. We enjoyed many aspects last year as first-year students such as the small interest groups and the annual fall cookout at the end. We decided to maintain the same structure as last year so that this year's students would have a similar positive experience. It was

very rewarding to be a part of the leadership side of the retreat and we enjoyed participating in planning the event.

During the retreat, it was our goal that first-year students would gain a better understanding of the Program and its expectations. To achieve this, discussions were encouraged while many questions were answered. We led three different breakout sessions to help the students gain a better understanding of the competencies. During these sessions, students had to work together as teams to complete leadership tasks, communicate nonverbally to understand cultural barriers, and strategize tactics often used in research. Facilitating these groups helped us to gain perspective on the experience the Honors Program provides and to appreciate the community available within it.

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The *Honors Beacon* newsletter has been 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

by Dr. Anne Dahlman



I hope you are enjoying our award-winning honors student newsletter! Just a couple of weeks ago, our very own Honors Beacon received, under the leadership of Ra-

chael Igo, the 1st place newsletter award by the National Collegiate Honors Council. We are so very proud of the work of Rachael and her team.

I have had such a great first semester as the new Honors Director. I have felt so welcomed by everyone and thank you all for that. I knew that the program was excellent; yet, I've been so impressed with our students doing amazing things on a daily basis. Our students have applied themselves in our three competency areas making a difference both on and off campus.

In the area of leadership, our students have been leading student organizations, putting on events for other students, and serving in leadership roles in the community. A highlight of our students' work in leadership was the honors Fall Retreat, which was planned and implemented by our Honors mentors who applied to be retreat leaders and facilitated that key event for our program. The event was a great success and you can read more about it in this newsletter.

For the global citizenship competency, we have several students studying abroad and many others planning for their future trips. In this newsletter, Megan Sandberg is sharing her experiences with study abroad, the many ways that her experience abroad was truly transformative. Also, students are pushing themselves out of their comfort zone on campus and in the community to gain experiences in multicultural contexts through service, Honors and non-Honors courses, and through internships or Fellowships.

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## Editor's Note

by Rachael Igo, '16 (Creative Writing; Mendota Heights, Minn.)



Welcome to the ninth issue of the *Honors Beacon*. It has been such a pleasure to serve as your Editor-in-Chief for the past two and half years. Next semester, sopho-

more Sara Baranczyk will take over the position. I send my congratulations to her. This semester's issue features a cover story about our second annual freshmen retreat. We are very pleased with the work

our upper classmen put into this event. I hope all readers will enjoy reading about the events and happenings of our Honors Program over the past semester as well as our students' reflections and accomplishments.

As always, I would like to thank my team of writers for working so hard on this semester's issue, especially to the first-year students who brought new enthusiasm. I also want to thank the Honors Program staff for supporting me and believing in me during my time as Editor-in-Chief.

Happy Reading! 📖

## The Fall 2015 Beacon Team

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# Alumni Spotlight

by Rachael Igo, '16 (Creative Writing; Mendota Heights, Minn.)



Kurtis Malecha is an Honors Program alumnus who graduated from Minnesota State University, Mankato with a degree in A.C.S. Chemistry in 2013. He is


originally from Lonsdale, Minnesota and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. degree in Atmospheric Chemistry at the University of California, Irvine.

Malecha joined the Honors Program in 2009 with a group of pilot students when the program started a substantial reconstruction. His fellow students and the honors faculty at the time worked together to develop the program into what it is today. They developed the Honors First-Year Learning Community, and the three competencies of leadership, research, and global citizenship.

His favorite memories of the Program come from engaging with the faculty at the university. "Honors faculty are ones who are never satisfied with basic requirements. They would ask us to go above and beyond – even as honors students. Just when I thought I had something clever to say, they'd ask me to go even further with an idea," he says. He believes the papers and presentations generated in these courses helped to prepare him for graduate school.

The honors portfolio defense, Malecha claims, is the most important aspect of his undergraduate career that helped to prepare him for graduate school. The Honors Program requires its seniors to present their development in the program's competencies through a formal defense session. In his current Ph.D. career, Malecha was required to prepare a two and a half hour long oral exam where he discussed his research and made an original research proposal. Having the experience of defending his portfolio, he was prepared for this task and passed.


Malecha says it is not uncommon to come across others who have had similar extensive leadership and research training that the MSU Honors Program offers. What really makes him stand out is his cultural competency developed by the program. He says, "I work with people from all over the world, and even though science transcends cultural barriers, I find myself pulling out my intercultural toolkit when informally discussing science with others from different backgrounds."

Kurtis Malecha is very thankful for his time in the Honors Program and hopes more students will take advantage of the opportunities it has to offer. He says, "The program is definitely worth it! If you're a student considering the program or a faculty member considering teaching an honors class, I would definitely join the Honors Program! It will prepare students for a world of opportunities that you may have never realized existed! It certainly gave me opportunities that would have been difficult to realize without the program." 

Director's Note (continued from page 2)

In addition, our students are actively participating in undergraduate research working in research teams in their majors, applying for research grants through the Undergraduate Research Center and presenting their work in conferences. The Honors Program is a true community of scholars, and students are not only learning about research but also making real contributions to their fields of study. You can read about the experiences of Opoku Akyeampong and the many ways that he has benefitted from immersing himself in scholarship.

The best part about our Honors Program continues to be the community that we have as a program. The Honors Lounge is a busy and happy place where students come to study, connect with others and to receive advising. Also, both of our Learning Communities (Freshman and Sophomore) are providing our students an affinity group of supportive fellow students, where many lifelong friendships are formed. You can read about the experiences of Katelynn Malecha, the Freshman Learning Community Coordinator in this newsletter.

I know this is just the beginning for me as the Director, and I cannot wait to see what great things unfold in the future. One thing is for sure: our Honors students push me to try harder, to go further and to think bigger every day. How refreshing! 



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 [msu.edu/giving](http://msu.edu/giving)




Being a mentor had benefits that were different from attending as first-year honors students. Not only did it help us grow as leaders and mentors, but it also allowed us to better understand the Honors Program and realize why it is such a great

thing to be a part of. The experience allowed us to build connections with students who will become a vital part of the honors community. We are grateful we had the opportunity to continue the mentorship program that helped us when we were first-year students. It is always fun to

share with people the many benefits that come with being involved in a program like ours here at Minnesota State.

The Fall Retreat was followed by a cook-out where many upperclassmen joined the freshmen for hot dogs, burgers, and chips. During this time, conversation flowed among new friends and acquaintances. As honors students, we look forward to this event each year as a way to kick off a new semester and catch up with friends.

The chance to attend the first honors retreat and later plan and facilitate the second is one example of what it means to be an honors student at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Honors students regularly have opportunities to experience things outside of their comfort zone and later lead the very same event. Experiences like this retreat help honors students to grow as leaders, researchers, and global citizens. 

## Living in a Learning Community

by Kristine Dunnum, '19 (Human Resource Management; La Crescent, Minn.)

I thoroughly enjoy living and being a part of the Honors First-Year Honors Learning Community at Minnesota State University, Mankato. It is such a welcoming environment because the other students and I had immediate connections as soon as we moved in. I have thoroughly enjoyed surrounding myself with others who share similar interests with me.

The Program offers honors sections of general education courses for its students. Many of the learning community students and I attend some of these classes together and are able to help one another outside of the classroom. A common meeting and studying place for all of us is our lounge. Living in a learning community has provided many opportunities for us to be involved both on the floor and around campus. It is the first chance for first year students, like ourselves, to have a beneficial and active role in their college experience.

As an active resident of the Honors Learning Community, I have already made personal connections that I believe will last beyond this first year and many that will last beyond graduation. These relationships improve and strengthen every day. Not only do we have relationships with one another, we have also gotten to know our wonderful Community Advisor (CA), Meme Cronin, and our dedicated Learning Community Coordinator (LCC), Katelynn Malecha. Katelynn coordinates and plans events for our floor and is available to help us with any problems or answer questions that we may have about the Honors Program or our classes. At the beginning of the semester, Katelynn made a point to reach out to make a personal connection with each of

us. Katelynn takes us to honors events and other activities on campus. We had the opportunity to challenge ourselves at the campus ropes course, and we collected canned goods from the Mankato community to donate to the ECHO food shelf.




The other students who are part of the Honors Learning Community and I unanimously agree that the most influential aspect of living on this type of floor is the amount of events that we attend, or are a part of together. Whether it is playing in a volleyball tournament, entering competitions, or having dinner together, this inspiring group of individuals is truly a close-knit family away from home. In the future, I would highly encourage every first-year student to live on a learning community because I have only have positive experiences from living on one myself. We are a learning community floor on the outside, but inside we are a family. 





Photo Courtesy of University Printing Services

## Food for Thought

by Sara Baranczyk, '18 (Communication Arts and Literature Education & Physics Education; St. Paul, Minn.)

Not many people realize the exact nature of the food industry in the United States. The American lifestyle is meant to accommodate the consumer, be convenient, and be quick and cheap. Unfortunately, this lifestyle has led to unhealthy habits in the food-making process. Most people, while selecting food in the grocery store, do not stop to consider where their food comes from. The American consumer does not know how his pre-packaged foods are made, and he cannot name over half of the ingredients—mostly chemical preservatives—in his foods. In this country, and in many places worldwide, food is treated as a product, an item of sale and profit, not what it is: food, which is meant to be nutritious, a fundamental pillar of human life. The large food manufacturers across the country have largely ignored this while producing their foods. Big companies want to produce massive amounts of food in the shortest amount of time which has led to shortcuts that are not only unhealthy for the consumer, but also for the environment.

Minnesota State University, Mankato's Common Read text for the 2015-2016 academic year, *The Good Food Revolution*, is the story of Will Allen, the son of a sharecropper, who reimagined the world of food for low-income communities. Allen grew up learning how to work the land as a farmer, but he never desired to work in agriculture. As a young man, he played basketball professionally before he began working in the food industry, managing half a dozen Kentucky Fried Chicken stores for ten years. He later became dissatisfied with this work and found a new career at Proctor & Gamble. But no mat-

ter his place of work, Allen found himself longing for some connection to farming. He found that connection in a run-down greenhouse in a small community in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He wanted to offer healthy food to the low-income community that relied heavily on convenience stores and fast food restaurants as their primary sources of food. Allen also wanted to provide opportunities to the community's youth to keep them out of trouble and teach them the same discipline he had learned from his sharecropper father when he was young.

The idea of providing healthy and accessible food is by no means a novel idea. For many years, local farmers have taken great strides to overcome the name brand corporations that have controlled a large part of this country's food industry. In one campus event related to the Common Read, students were invited to watch *Fresh*, a documentary that reveals some unsavory truths about the food industry in America. It compared independent farmers' methods of raising livestock and produce to those used by large corporations. During the movie, students participated in a discussion about what they were seeing, what surprised them, and what they wanted to do about it. Many students felt unsure of how to solve the problems of the food industry or even attempt to solve them. Even the idea of boycotting certain company's food products seemed a bit unreasonable, given that these companies produce a lot of food, so their products are virtually unavoidable. The expense of buying higher-quality fresh foods on a college-student's budget is not, by any stretch of the imagination, an easily at-

tained goal. However, students were not discouraged by the seemingly outrageous obstacles in their paths. Many offered creative solutions that, if put into practice, could make quality fresh foods on the MSU campus and/or in the Mankato community a tangible reality.

On September 17th, Constitution Day, the lecture *To Live and Dine in Dixie: The Evolution of Urban Food Culture in the Jim Crow South* was given on campus by Dr. Angela Jill Cooley of the History Department. She spoke about the complex relationship between food and the Civil Rights Movement. Food, in some ways, was at the very heart of the Movement as many of the peaceful protest demonstrations happened at the lunch counter. This idea was also present in Will Allen's book. "My experiences reflect the uncomfortable truth," Allen writes, "that black farmers have faced discrimination for generations, even to the present day," (Allen, 98). Food has been transformed into a luxury, not just for the consumer, but for the producer as well. Dr. Cooley touched on this in her lecture, and noted that African American citizens' access to the most basic of human rights, including food, has been impeded and policed throughout this country's history. This problem has not yet been eliminated. In many ways there are connections between this year's Common Read and last year's, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* by Anne Moody. The struggles that Allen faced are in the aftermath of what Moody faced in her early adulthood years. Both works speak to the same truth about equality, justice, and opportunity.

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## Leadership Spotlight: Katelynn Malecha

by Madie Hoffman, '19 (Mass Media; Omaha, Neb.)

are experienced students who serve as resources and mentors to their students. Katelynn focuses a lot of her attention on the students within her learning community and helps them in any way possible.


As an LCC, Katelynn has the opportunity to plan events, establish study zones, and mentor the students within the learning community. She has an open-door policy for any students who may have questions, and she organizes study groups to help her students with their academics. Her role enables her to help her students become successful.

Katelynn is able to meet new students who are just starting their journeys in the Honors Program. This provides her with unique opportunities and challenges. Having lived in

the Honors First-Year Learning Community last year, Katelynn is able to connect with her students and share her experiences with them. Her role as their mentor also allows her students to learn about leadership. "I wanted to be the Honors LCC because it helps myself and others grow as leaders," she says. Katelynn notes that seeing her students succeed—especially knowing that they worked hard—is the most rewarding aspect of her job.

"I have learned to have patience with my LC students," she says. They will often come to her asking for help, and she needs to be an accountable resource for them. Some problems are easier to solve than others. Reflecting on her experiences, Katelynn says that she

feels she has become a better leader and is therefore better able to help her students learn about effective leadership.

Katelynn strongly encourages her students to get involved in activities on and off campus. According to Katelynn, it is one of the best ways to grow as a leader. "There are so many organizations for everyone to have a vital role," she says. Leading by example, Katelynn is very involved on campus. In addition to her position as the First-Year Honors LCC, Katelynn is also the Vice President of the German Club as well as the Secretary of the Honors Student Council Executive Board. The Honors Program is fortunate to have such a well-rounded student serve as an LCC to its first-year students. 

Katelynn Malecha is known for her helpful personality. She is a second-year student from Lonsdale, Minnesota, majoring in Exercise Science with a concentration in Pre-Occupational Therapy. Currently, she holds several leadership positions at Minnesota State University, Mankato, including the position of the Honors First-Year Learning Community Coordinator. Learning Community Coordinators (LCCs)



## Research Spotlight: Opoku Akyeampong

by Anjola Onadipe, '19 (Biomedical Sciences; Mankato, Minn.)

Washington in Spring 2015.


Opoku has lived in six different countries. He is originally from Kumasi in Ghana and moved to United States when he was fourteen. He attended St. Lawrence Seminary High School in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin before enrolling at Minnesota State University. Intercultural interactions have always been a topic of his interest.

At the 2014 NCUR, Opoku and his research partners presented their research on factors that affect how much students grow in their cultural competency as a result of human relations courses. They sought to see how variables such as the age of students, the instructors in their classes, temperament

of students, and the learning style of a class affect changes in cultural competency among undergraduate students. At the 2015 NCUR conference he presented this project again, as well as a research project he did on Crohn's disease. In this project, Opoku and his team sought to determine the role of the IRGM protein and how it fit with the CRIP protein in mice. His role in the execution and presentation of both of these projects exemplifies his versatility as a student and researcher.

The learning process that comes with research has helped him grow as a student. He has learned that in research, not everything will work out as planned, and developing good prob-

lem solving skills and critical thinking goes a long way in a successful research project. "I learned that what really comes out of research is more questions. It's a cycle of questioning and looking for more answers," he said.

The opportunities to present his research have been significant experiences for Opoku, and he encourages other students to dive into research and to get out of their comfort zones. Originally he was hesitant to do research on intercultural competency because it did not directly relate to his major. Upon reflection he said, "You would be surprised how much you learn. I think going out of my comfort zone made the experience more worthwhile." 

Opoku Akyeampong (Biomedical Sciences; '16) attended the National Council of Undergraduate Research (NCUR) Conferences in 2014 and 2015 with other undergraduate students to present research. He had the opportunity to share the work he took part in on nationwide stages in Lexington, Kentucky in Spring 2014 and in Spokane,



## Global Citizenship Spotlight: Megan Sandberg

by Madie Hoffman, '19 (Mass Media; Omaha, Neb.)


about global citizenship.

Megan studied through the Spanish Language Study in Ecuador Program at Estudio Sampere. At the beginning of her trip, she found the language barrier difficult to overcome. Her host family did not know a word of English, so she had to quickly learn how to communicate in order for her trip to be successful. There was no gentle way of immersing herself. "Students really need to want to learn the language," Megan said. "It takes more out of the student than it does the teacher to acquire a language. It can be hard, but it is one hundred percent worth it." By the end of her trip she got accustomed to how people spoke and could understand the native speakers better.

She loved that she got to be in a smaller city for four weeks because she was able to discover the little secrets the small city held. She especially enjoyed the markets which sold jewelry, food, and flowers. "The different markets made the town so beautiful," Megan said. "The culture was so different than that of the United States."

One of the main differences she observed between the cultures of Cuenca and the United States was the discrepancies between classes and how these discrepancies are shown. "The differences in culture, classes, and families show the main differences between the countries. My host family had a maid who had to work for little pay, and my host family seemed to do

anything they wanted to," she said. In the United States, on the other hand, class differences may not be so obviously seen. The differences between the two country's cultures interested Megan, and she wants to learn more about them through future travels.

Megan wants to continue to travel and study Spanish. She wants to travel to Chile, Uruguay, Peru, and other countries in the near future. Her advice to people who are on the fence about studying abroad is, "Just do it, especially if you are studying a language. It is so much easier to travel when you are a college age student, so don't waste it." Studying abroad made a difference for her, and this trip changed her perspective on Spanish culture for the better. 

Growing up in a family that traveled often, senior Megan Sandberg did not think that traveling to a different country would be a radically new experience for her. With the intention of improving her Spanish language skills, she packed her bags and headed to Cuenca, Ecuador in early May 2015. While in Ecuador, Megan learned much about the Spanish language and

## Honorable Mentions

- The *Honors Beacon Newsletter* was awarded 1st place in the student produced print section of the NCHC newsletter contest.
- Minnesota State Mankato's Honors Program was one of four programs within the MnSCU system to receive the Excellence in Curriculum Programming Award.
- Sarah Aldrich presented her Spanish creative writing at the Streamlines Conference at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa.
- The First-Year Honors Learning Community trick-or-treated 741 pounds of food for ECHO Food Shelves.
- The Leadership and Civic Engagement Honors Learning Community held a bake sale and raised \$101 for The Center For Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry. The funds will provide food plots for four local families for a year.
- Congratulations to the following seniors who have passed their portfolio defenses: Mohamed Al Duhbani, Corey Ennis, Shelby Flegel, Rachael Igo, Makenzie Petzel, Austin Rau, Anna Rice, and Tatiana Soboleva.
- The following honors students were awarded grants from the Undergraduate Research Center to fund their research: Nicole Soley, Ali Oku, Brooke Jones, Stephanie Peterson, Uyi Jefferson Imasuen, Ryan Colakovic, Tatiana Soboleva, Amanda Roche, and Allison Maleska.
- Congratulations to the following honors students who were accepted into their majors: Brooke Jones, Nursing; and Ebony Wilson-Sinkfield, Social Work
- Congratulations to all of the students who have completed Honors First Year Experience this fall, and Introduction to Honors last spring who were pinned at the Semester Celebration.
- The following honors students earned the YWCA's Emerging Leader Award: Hailey Gorman, Rachael Igo, and Ebony Wilson.



# Student Council Ice Cream Social

by Sarah Aldrich, '18 (Spanish Education; Jordan, Minn.)



President Alexa Turgeon (left) and Vice President Natalie Moses (right) photography by Madie Hoffman

On Thursday, September 17th, twenty-eight students met in the CSU Heritage Room for the first student council meeting of the school year. One of the jobs of the Honors Student Council is to keep honors students involved in the program. Students were treated to an ice cream social with what seemed like endless toppings! The meeting was a touch point for reconnecting with fellow honors students and a great way to hear about new ideas related to the Program.

Juniors Alexa Turgeon (Community Health Education, '17), President, and Natalie Moses (Pre-Medicine, '17), Vice

President, were excited to lead the meeting. Turgeon and Moses wanted to convey that everyone should feel like a vital member of the honors community by sharing their opinion and listening to everyone. The meeting started with students introducing themselves and sharing their names, years and majors. It was a good way for incoming freshmen and upperclassmen to meet each other. For some students, this was also an opportunity to meet Honors staff.

The main focus of the meeting was about what the student council board is and how freshmen can become a part of it.

There are student representatives from each grade, which contributes to the feeling that everyone in the Honors Program has a voice. The current student council members include senior Austin Rau, junior Mikyla Denney, sophomore Katelynn Malecha, and freshman Anjola Onadipe.

This year is different from others because it is a strategic planning year. This means that students in the Honors Program can suggest changes to the program for consideration by the faculty and staff on the Honors Council. Turgeon commented, "I am looking forward to working with the rest of the executive board this year and seeing what changes we can make for our peers."

Another topic discussed was how many honors events and opportunities should be given to students. Currently, with a couple of activities each week, students responded that they sometimes feel inundated with options and that it can be hard to balance those events with classes and other extracurricular activities. They suggested fewer events that are larger in scale, with approximately one event corresponding to leadership, global citizenship, and research each month, in addition to service learning and social events.

Continued on page 10

## Creative Writing Spotlight

by Lauren Reiman, '19 (Statistics; Mankato, Minn.)

*These are a collection of poems on being an honors first-year student at MSU Mankato. They are modeled after the style of Iain Thomas.*

### Commencement

This is the beginning of the beginning. This is the start of the rest of our lives. We have waited for these moments for years, nostalgic as we are for these moments we have not yet had a chance to experience. Now, we can finally start.

### Life's Slogan

These memories are proudly brought to you by life. Keep on living.

### Jigsaw Puzzle Pieces

Our differences are like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. And, like a jigsaw puzzle, these differences do not separate us. Rather, they bring us closer together until we are something bigger than ourselves. Until we are more beautiful than we could ever be on our own.

### Honors Freshman Anthem

We are Honors college students now. We have our own hours and don't get near enough sleep and we work hard. We strive for an excellence we've been longing for. We dream about making a difference. We are all strangers with our headphones in, our tastes and our differences may not be so apparent on our skin, but we all know this song—we all chose this place. This is our anthem. Our experiences have led us to this point, and we know that what we make of our time here is up to us. We will be part of the generation who makes a difference, one degree, one year, one class, one project, one person at a time. This is the beginning. What has passed is just the prologue to the rest of our lives.



# Honors in Pictures



Tyler Keller, Lexi Turgeon, Katelynn Malecha, and Rachael Igo at NCHC 2015



Bake Sale for The Center For Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry.



Campus Kitchen Volunteer Day



Lunch with Erika Allen, Common Read Guest Speaker



Students discussing research with URC Director Karla Lassonde



Ropes Course  
Second Year Learning Community



Thanksgiving potluck

# Honors Athlete

by Josie Braaten, '19 (Creative Writing; Glasgow, Mont.)



I have been running since I was in elementary school. I started because my mom and older sister would run regularly, and of course, I wanted to be just like them. Once I was old enough I began running on my own. As soon as I entered seventh grade, I joined the junior high cross country team, and I was in heaven. I enjoyed running cross country and track through high school, and I decided to continue my running career in college.


I have now been a collegiate cross country runner for four months, and my love for the sport has not changed at all. My favorite parts of cross country, and simply running in general, are the feelings of accomplishment, self-worth, and confidence that come with the completion of a particularly hard workout or race. As I sit on the track after each run, trying to catch my breath with my heart thumping, I know that I have pushed myself past my limits. I have proven to myself that I am stronger than I knew; because I pushed through my comfort zone, I will be even better the next day.

Pursuing this feeling of achievement is the same reason I decided to join the Honors Program. I love knowing that I am going above and beyond what is expected of me and that I am pushing through difficulty in order to become a more insightful student and person in general. My favorite part of the Honors Program so far is my Honors First Year Experience seminar. In this class, I enjoy learning about applicable leadership with my fellow honors students. I have the opportunity to witness leadership both on my cross country team and in the Honors Program.

I hope that from learning basic leadership skills in class and observing other strong student leaders, I will be able to grow into a respected and effective leader myself. I also truly value all of the community outreach opportunities that are possible through the Honors Program, because I believe very strongly in giving back to the community that gives so much support to us as students.


Being involved with a sport is an enormous commitment, as is being in the Honors Program. Thankfully, both programs encourage being involved in a variety of activities, so they have been very accommodating in order to allow me to pursue my varied interests. At the end of the day, it is my responsibility to make sure that I am giving the proper attention to both my pursuits. A challenge I face is fitting in my honors courses around a fixed practice schedule, but I have to be creative and remind myself that regardless of sports, my schedule would never be perfect. However, the individualized advising Honors offers is extremely helpful.

I attend class almost continuously all day, then I have practice every afternoon. After practice is the time period that I set aside for homework. I also make an effort to check what honors events are happening during the weekday evenings in advance, so that I can set aside time to attend those events and rearrange my "homework plan" accordingly. I have a planner where I write class, cross country, and honors information down. It's the only way that I can keep everything organized.

Being an honors student athlete is not impossible. Both programs will do whatever is in their power to help their students succeed, as long as students show genuine commitment to both communities. Making the decision to be both an honors student and an athlete is not an illogical choice; it simply requires extra dedication, organization, and some creativity. 

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## Food for Thought (continued from page 5)


Many other events were held on campus, including screenings of documentaries, Regional Food Access Gather Breakout Sessions, and public lectures. Erika Allen, Will Allen's daughter, even visited the campus for a public lecture and a special lunch with Honors students. All of these speak to the fact that the food industry is in obvious need of repair. Food is a fundamental right, and good food should not only be available for those who can afford it. Everyone deserves the opportunities that healthy food can provide. Clearly some things need to change in the ways that Americans produce and consume food. But what? How can one person or community change the way the country views food? As any call for change, the idea is to start small. Let the problem be known and educate others on the ideas for change. Change personal habits and become aware of how certain foods are made. The process of changing the entire food industry is not an easy task, and it will not happen overnight. This change is necessary and worth the time and effort for quality, healthy food to be accessible to all people. 

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## Student Council Ice Cream Social (continued from page 8)

At the meeting, students could sign up to volunteer with the program. Opportunities throughout the semester include tabling at open houses and leading Common Read discussions for *The Good Food Revolution* by Will Allen. Another sign-up was for Honors Council sub-committees: recruitment, strategic planning, admissions, fellowships/rewards, and curriculum review.

During the last part of the meeting, students wrote down suggestions for the

Program. They recommended including more community engagement opportunities to meet professors one on one, a participating in more cultural and local events. "This year I am particularly excited to help the program continue to grow and adapt," Vice President Natalie Moses said. "I am looking forward to incorporating more service learning projects so that as a Program, we can give back to the community of Mankato and show our appreciation." The Honors Program has exciting things in store for this year, and the first student council meeting of the year was a way to start things on the right track. 



# Mentorship Course Reflection

by Nicole Soley, '17 (Art Education; River Falls, Wis.)



Due to my interest and experiences in leadership, I decided to enroll in the Honors *Developing Your Mentoring Philosophy* course taught by Ashley Kanak. I wasn't sure what I would get out of the course considering I have already had several leadership roles. However, the course has helped me to reflect on several of these experiences. Through reflections on my roles teaching art, tutoring writing, and counseling at camp, I have been able to deepen my understanding of leadership. I have learned that being an effective leader includes having emotional intelligence, fostering experience and reflection, and understanding strengths and weaknesses in leadership and mentorship contexts.


In the Mentorship course, we learned how emotional intelligence can help inform leadership abilities. Having emotional intelligence means having an understanding of how self-awareness and the ability to manage our emotions impacts group settings. As a future art educator, learning about emotional intelligence helped me to understand the importance of teaching emotional intelligence. In a leadership role such as teaching, I plan to understand how my ability to manage my emotions affects my leadership style. Additionally, I plan to help my students understand their emotions and how their ability to manage their emotions affects interactions with others.

Reflecting on experiences is a very important part of all interactions, especially in leadership roles. In the class, we studied John Dewey's literature on learning. We reflected on many of our own experiences in mentorship contexts both

through writing and discussions. Sharing my experiences and reflecting on those experiences can be challenging. However, in my role as a tutor in the writing center, I make sure to focus on these essential ideas. I will often ask students to reflect on decisions they made when writing and why they feel a certain way about a passage in their piece. By

doing this, I help them learn about writing through the experience of answering my questions rather than providing all the answers to them. This way, they can understand what they are learning in their own terms by experiences we create and reflect upon together. Because of this, it is important to foster reflection for group members or mentees.

In the course we also learned the importance of assessing our own strengths and weaknesses in leadership contexts. This past summer as a camp counselor, I discovered some of my strengths and areas for improvement in the process of helping to coach and mentor. I found that delegation was not only a must for accomplishing tasks, but one of my strengths as a leader. Other strengths of mine include organization skills and consciousness of context. Taking the Mentorship class has helped me identify these as strengths while also identifying areas for improvement.

*Developing Your Mentor Philosophy* has helped me learn the importance of emotional intelligence, reflection, and understanding strengths and weaknesses in leadership and mentorship contexts. I plan to incorporate what I have learned from the course into my current and future leadership roles. While I used to think that being a leader meant being "in charge" of a group or being in a position of power, through many leadership experiences and coursework my perception of what it means to be a leader has shifted. Through taking the Mentor Philosophy course, I have grown as a leader, mentor, and person. 

## Spring 2016 Courses

### **Psychology Today,**

*Rosemary Krawczyk*

This course will introduce students to psychological issues in society that affect their lives, behaviors, and the way they think.

### **Worlds of Dance,**

*Julie Kerr-Berry*

This course explores many dance forms from around the world. The course is founded on the premise that dance is an embodiment of culture, while universal in expression it is specific in form.

### **Social (In) Justice: A Critical Case Analysis of Immigrants in U.S. Schools,**

*Anne Dahlman*

This seminar is a philosophical and pedagogical exploration of the relationships among language, culture, oppression, power, and education, and will shed light on how these factors shape societal perspectives and schooling practices.

### **Taking the Urban Plunge: Service-Learning & Community Engagement in the Ohio River Valley,**

*Ginny Walters*

Students will be introduced to various principles of service learning, which they will apply during a short-term service away immersion experience in Cincinnati, Ohio.

### **Leadership and Interpersonal Communication,**

*Kristen Cvanara*

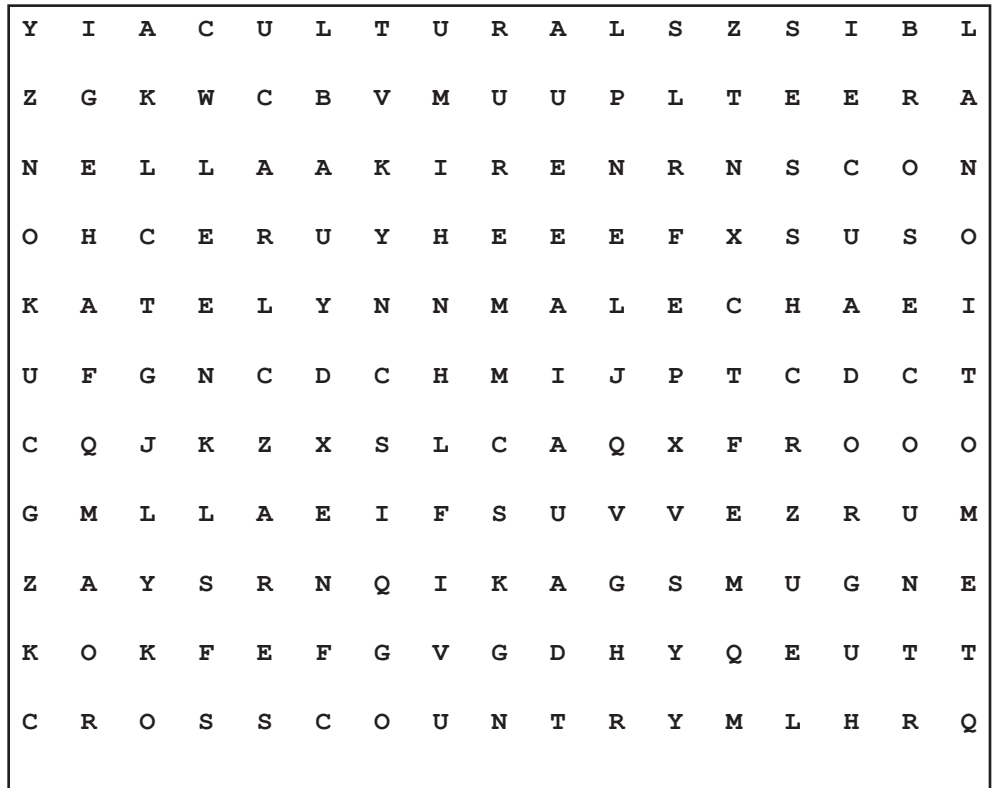
Leadership and interpersonal communication theory is examined through a "goals-based" approach designed to highlight psychological, social, and cultural theories that influence communication patterns.

# Honors Fun Corner: Word Search

by Trisha Walker, '17 (Anthropology; Kenyon, Minn.)

## Clues:

- Who was the fall retreat organized for to introduce into the Honors Program?
- Who is the current Learning Community Coordinator for the First-Year Honors Learning Community?
- What documentary was shown to interested students on campus that was related to the Common Read?
- In connection with this year's Common Read, who visited with honors students in a private lunch?
- In his research, Opoku Akyeampong studied how students develop \_\_\_\_\_ competency as a result of human relations courses.
- What country did Megan Sandberg study abroad in May, 2015?
- Besides her commitment to the Honors Program, what sport is Josie Braaten active in?
- Nicole Soley described the usefulness of learning \_\_\_\_\_ intelligence in *Honors: Developing your Mentor Philosophy*.
- This year, students in the First-Year Honors Learning Community collected 741 pounds of canned goods from the Mankato community to donate to the \_\_\_\_\_ food shelf.
- Sarah Aldrich presented her creative works at the \_\_\_\_\_ conference in Dubuque, Iowa.



Answers to last issue's puzzle:

Finance, Witchcraft, Public Speaking, Frey, Hats, Six, Finland, Food, Tougaloo, Kitchen

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