

THE HONORS BEACON

Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato



LEADERSHIP • RESEARCH • GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Issue XIII, Spring 2018



Anna Hagen (center) and the Tischer Family

A Legacy of Philanthropy and Mentorship

by Alicia Utecht, '19 (Communication Studies & Creative Writing; Rogers, Minn.)

The Evelyn and James Tischer Honors Program Scholarship is one of the newest scholarships available to honors students at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Each year it is awarded to a single first-year Honors student who has faced adversity, shown outstanding leadership traits, and exhibited a drive to succeed while demonstrating financial need.

For Chad Tischer, whose family donates this generous scholarship, it serves as a wonderful memorial for his grandmother Evelyn and his father James, both for whom the scholarship is named. Evelyn first earned her two-year teaching certificate at Minnesota State. Then in the 1960's she returned to Minnesota State to complete both her four-year bachelor's and master's degrees, a feat which was unique for a woman of the time. Tischer's father, James, also attended Minnesota State after serving in the Vietnam War and earned his degree in Criminal Justice in the 1970s. After

both James and Evelyn passed away, the Tischer family began searching for a way to honor and unite them. Since education at Minnesota State was critical to both their lives, the family decided to create a scholarship in their names. Mr. Tischer describes it as, "being able to bring our family together for the purpose of doing good. When people pass, it certainly brings grief, but this is a way to turn that grief into happiness and celebrate the positive memories we have of my father and grandmother."

Although the Evelyn and James Tischer Honors Program Scholarship is only in its second year of activity, the Tischer family has been giving back to their community through time and philanthropy for the past fifteen years. Mr. Tischer pinpointed the start of his philanthropic journey when he moved to Chicago fifteen years ago. While looking to get involved in the city, he discovered an online ad for a tutoring volunteer opportunity at Midtown Educa-

tional Foundation. From working with his very first student, Diego, Mr. Tischer states that he "absolutely fell in love with the program." Through working with Diego, Mr. Tischer and his wife not only formed a supportive relationship with Diego himself, but also a friendship with the entire family that they still maintain today. "Diego is now a senior at the University of Illinois, [Urbana]" Mr. Tischer explains, "but he did an internship in D.C. the first semester, so when I was traveling, I visited him in D.C." This highlights the depth and strength of the relationship that has its roots in mentorship.

For Mr. Tischer, working with Diego and his family was an eye-opening experience as it was the first time that he had the opportunity to work with someone outside of his own socio-economic background.

The children in Diego's family of five are

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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.



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A Word from the Honors Staff

by Ginny Walters, Acting Director of the Honors Program

If this semester has taught the Honors Program anything, it's that growth is often caused by change. The standard human's reaction to growth is positive, but our reaction to change can be a different story. Some of us thrive on it and embrace it. Others despise it and avoid it like the plague. Sometimes change is unavoidable and we must embrace it and vow to learn from it. This semester brought about a lot of change for the Honors Program. Sadie Anderson, our devoted and irreplaceable administrative assistant of seven years, pursued another opportunity at the university in January. Anne Dahlman, our Honors Director since 2015, assumed another role at the university in March. Both of these individuals left the Honors Program in order to pursue their own paths of pro-

fessional growth. They are embracing change and growing from it—valuable models for students to witness.

During times of change, systems tend to falter and structures start to show the cracks in their foundation. I'm proud to say that didn't happen with the Honors Program. Here's what did happen: our students continued to thrive during spring semester. They excelled in their classes, secured leadership positions on campus, presented undergraduate research projects, studied abroad, and engaged in the community. We graduated an outstanding group of seniors and admitted incredible students for next year. We hosted the largest number of individuals for our end-of-year convocation to celebrate all of our program's and students' successes. We are excited to welcome our new staff members and students this summer. We look forward to embracing the coming changes and continuing to learn and grow from them. 📖



Editor's Note

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

Thank you for reading the thirteenth issue of Honors Beacon! In continuation from the fall 2017, the theme of this issue is growth. Growth is a deeply personal theme to me, as this semester marks my first as Editor in Chief after acting as co-Editor in the fall. Transitioning to this new role has pushed and challenged me as both a writer and leader. Through these challenges, it has been invaluable to have the guidance of senior editor Sara Baranczyk. With unfailing patience Sara has shared her knowledge and experience, helping me to become

more confident in myself and consequently, my role as Editor.

Throughout this issue you will find numerous examples of growth in my fellow honors students which has already helped them to thrive academically, professionally, and most importantly, personally. As is represented in these articles, this personal growth enables students to reach out, make a positive impact on those around them, and inspire growth in others.

Finally, a big thanks to our staff of Beacon writers. It is a pleasure to work with such a dedicated, creative group, and Sara and I are forever grateful for their willingness to share their time and many talents. 📖

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Alumnus Spotlight: Okhumekho Kassim

by Sara Baranczyk, '19 (Communication Arts and Literature Education & Physics Education; Saint Paul, Minn.)

Okhumekho Kassim (Biomedical Sciences, '17) has always been passionate about helping people. Even as a child, Kassim showed a curiosity about people and a motivation to travel, which, in part, inspired Kassim to study medicine. "I love learning—especially about people. I wanted to be able to interact with and help different people around

the world," he says. This passion led Kassim to travel from his hometown of Auchi in the Edo State of Nigeria to attend Minnesota State University, Mankato.


He learned about the Honors Program from one of his friends, Ali Oku (Biomedical Sciences, '17), who said the Honors Program would be a good fit for Kassim. "The Honors Program is about taking your education further," Kassim said, "and about developing yourself and your skills to be the best you can be." The Honors Program appealed to Kassim as a new challenge that could help him achieve his goals.

The most challenging part of the program was learning to balance the requirements of the Honors Program and those of his major. "Honors doesn't ask for a lot of time commitment in the classroom," he says, "but there's a lot that you do outside of the classroom, which can be overwhelming at times." The important thing to remember, he said, "is that Honors is supposed to help you grow." For Kassim, the requirements for honors worked hand-in-hand with his major. Honors enabled him to take on a variety of roles that helped him further his education. The experiences that Kassim had in the program helped him develop skills that he could apply to both his studies and his future career.

Currently, Kassim works at Medtronic on Medical Device Reports (MDR). Medtronic is committed to "making a new era of healthcare," one in which technology and healthcare work together to "improve and extend the lives of patients," according to their website. Kassim has "had the opportunity to work with patients and medical staff, and [he has] gained real world experience," he said. Kassim works with patients who have

neuromodulations, implants that can help alleviate symptoms of several nervous issues. "Most often, I talk to patients when they are having a problem with their neuromodulations, which can be very stressful for them and for me," he says and continues, "I try to talk to the patients and get to know them. Things always seem less stressful when you have someone you trust working with you." Kassim problem solves and uses investigative skills on a daily basis, which are skills he started developing in college that he is able to apply to the real world.

Taking a year between his undergraduate and graduate careers has been an incredible learning experience for Kassim. He has gained valuable experience in his field, even before entering medical school. "You can learn so much in a gap year about yourself, your field, and the world around you," he said. Taking a year off of school has exposed Kassim to new experiences which have allowed him to explore what he wants to do after medical school. "I've known for a while that I wanted to be a pediatrician, but through my work with Medtronic, I've been able to learn about other specialties and options," Kassim said. He also said that, while taking a year off from school isn't for everyone, it can lead to the further development of one's skills and the application of knowledge to the real world. "This experience has taken me one step closer to who I want to be," he says.

Kassim plans to attend medical school within the next few years. Looking back, he says the Honors Program helped him achieve his goals and "opened the door to so many opportunities." For students considering the Honors Program, Kassim advises to try it. "It's one of the few opportunities that you have [in college] to focus on yourself and to work on your strengths and weaknesses," he says. The Honors Program helps expose its students to new experiences and different perspectives. In the Honors Program, "you get out of your comfort zone, and only then do you really start to learn." For those currently in the Honors Program, Kassim says not to limit oneself by "going through the motions and doing the bare minimum to fulfill the competencies." In order to get the most out of the Honors Program, one has to put a lot into their experiences. For Kassim, the Honors Program helped him achieve many of his goals and prepared him for a successful future in the field of medicine. 



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

“first generation in this country. Both of Diego’s parents are from Mexico. His father is probably the most loyal guy I’ve ever met, and his mom was a teacher back in Mexico.” From this experience Mr. Tischer realized, “You can really make a meaningful difference in people’s lives by simply caring,” and was inspired to continue expanding his philanthropic and mentorship roles.


This genuine care is already having a wonderful impact on the first recipient of the Evelyn and James Tischer Honors Program Scholarship, Anna Hagen. Anna’s long-term goal is to earn her doctorate degree in order to practice psychiatry. Before earning the Tischer scholarship though, financial difficulties were beginning to push that dream further and further away. “I was already struggling to afford school,” she stated, “so I began to not even entertain the idea of attending [medical] school. After receiving this scholarship though, I feel more motivated than ever to do my absolute best in order to get accepted into [medical] school!” Receiving the Tischer scholarship

has provided Anna with the resources to turn her dream of becoming a psychiatrist into a reality.

However, the financial support provided by the scholarship is not the only way that the Tischer family is supporting Anna in achieving her goals. They have also become a source of emotional and mental support. “Coming from a single mother, trying to support two kids and herself, has made me into a very humble person, but it has also taken a toll on my confidence,” she admitted. After working extremely hard during high school and a grueling first year at Minnesota State, Anna began to feel burned out and wondered, “What is all of this for?” Receiving the scholarship was a clear answer to her doubts. In addition, it brought Anna into contact with the Tischer family who stepped in to fill the role of mentors for her. Anna states, the Tischers support her “through the journey and struggles of attaining [her] goals [by being] both passionate and compassionate enough to support [her] education.” The guidance of the Tischer family has helped Anna to see new

experiences and challenges as opportunities for personal growth instead of seeing each struggle as a requirement that must be checked off in order to succeed.

The positive impact, which the Tischers have had on Anna, inspires her to someday become a mentor and philanthropist herself. Anna states, “I feel so blessed to have both [mentors and philanthropists] within the same family”. In particular, Anna is extremely passionate about women’s issues, and she would love to provide mentorship and philanthropy, “to someday make an impact on someone’s life who has been affected by these issues.” In the future, Anna hopes to mimic the effect the Tischers have had on her by donating her time, effort, and resources to someone else in the future.

To Anna the impact of the Evelyn and James Tischer Honors Program Scholarship and the relationship with the Tischer family is practically indescribable, sharing; “This scholarship has reassured me that I can do it. I can’t put into words what it means to me!” 

Making a Difference

by Jonathan Fjeld ’21 (Mass Media & Communication Studies; Mendota Heights, Minn.)


Hard work and community service were honored at the Make a Difference (MAD) Celebration on February 21. The Learning Communities of Minnesota State University, Mankato gathered in the ballroom of the Centennial Student Union to learn about and reflect upon the various MAD projects completed by each Learning Community during the 2017-2018 academic year. The aim of each project was to give back to the greater Mankato community.

Throughout the evening, each Learning Community presented their projects which included a Walk for Alzheimer’s, participating in Rake the Town, volunteering at a young aviators’ event, and our Honors Learning Communities’ project, Trick or Treat So Others Can Eat.

Trick or Treat So Others Can Eat took place on Halloween. The goal of the project was to collect non-perishable food items from Mankato community members for the ECHO Food Shelf. Students from both the first- and second-year Honors Learning Communities split up into groups and were assigned to designated neighborhoods. We dressed up in our costumes, went to our areas, collected cans from those who were able to give, and received candy from those who offered! After we finished collecting in our designated areas, we reunited with the other groups at the ECHO Food Shelf to deliver all the food items we had collected. The total was tremendous and ended up being 704 pounds!

Participating in this project helped me to realize that I can make a difference and help others in nontraditional ways. Through working with ECHO on this project, I was also able to get an understanding of the issue of community hunger in the Mankato and see how our project would help those struggling with this issue. It was a fun night of making memories with others in the Learning Community, and the feeling of helping others be able to have non-perishable food to sustain themselves was great.

Working on the MAD project also taught me a lot about getting started with community service. A good first step is to find a need in the community that is near and dear to your heart and reach out to people working to meet that need. Connections are very important, and getting in touch with the right people can help to get you started. There are many great people behind service projects that would love to have your help.

Being able to share this experience of community service with the other Learning Communities was awesome. Seeing my friends from other Learning Communities present their projects that were really important to them was also special. We were able to see the impact that each other had on the community and get ideas for ways we can make a difference in the future. My favorite part of the Make a Difference Celebration was being able to see that I am a part of a great community of people who are willing to serve others and do good work. 



Research Panel

by Katie Leibel, '21 (Mass Media; Little Canada, Minn.)

Undergraduate research can be scary for many first year honors students. There are so many questions that go along with this competency that some students do not even know where to start. They wonder how they can get involved in research, how time-consuming it is, and how others have started their research. These questions and many more were answered at the Undergraduate Research Panel held in the honors lounge in on January 24th. Members of the student panel included Katelyn Malecha, (Exercise Science and Pre OT '18) Brooke Jones, (Biology '18) Mara Soupier, (History & Anthropology '18) Bethany Haus, (Biomedical Sciences '20) Sara Baranczyk, (Communication Arts, Literature Education & Physics Education '19) and Katie Leibel (Mass Media '20). These students shared a large assortment of research projects including working with mice to find a gene linked to a specific mutation, mathematical research, and studies on the participation of gender in internet culture, among other things.

The honors research competency is meant to help students learn how to effectively and ethically accomplish a research goal. The competency does not specify what the research has to be, or how one approaches the subject, but the main goal is to present or publish one's research or a creative achievement through a peer-reviewed medium. This can include presenting at conferences, creating a book or chapter of a book, or writing a journal article. This panel helped demonstrate


that these goals can be achieved through many different forms of research in many different fields of study. Panelists hoped to demonstrate to those who attended the event that the research competency can be completed in many different ways, and is mainly meant to help students explore their passions while contributing to society in the form of knowledge.

The overall resounding message that came from panelists was to talk with professors as well as the honors staff to make connections, and eventually the research will find its way to you. "Bother everyone," Leibel joked. Jones agreed, adding that professors love to talk about their research and will try to find a place for you in their or their colleague's work. Many of the students in the panel encouraged those who attended the panel to also look online for research opportunities as faculty may post about it, or they may have it listed under their credentials.

A few of the panelists suggested exploring ideas outside of one's major. College is one of the few times where you will get to explore your many passions and ideas. Baranczyk especially pushed students to look outside their major for research opportunities as she had done by following her heart to learn more about African American History and how it is portrayed throughout museums and memorials in the U.S. Haus agreed with this suggestion by demonstrating that her research with mice, testing new implants, falls into the category of biomedical research, and she doesn't plan on going into the research

aspect of her major. Malecha added that her research in mathematics has nothing to do with her major, and although it was hard, she was proud she completed it.

Many students worry when they hear about the research competency because it seems like there are not many creative approaches to it. Many of the panelists had completed scientific and mathematical research, but many had taken creative approaches and encouraged those who attended to come up with their own new and creative ideas to research. Leibel voiced that she had never known that there was a study of internet memes known as memetics, and at this point in time it was what the majority of her days were spent learning about. She took a look at what made up the research competency, and found that her interests could be further explored.

The most important message given to students by their peers was not to be afraid of the research competency, and that it is never too early to start. Leibel, a first year student at Minnesota State University, Mankato talked with staff her first semester here to find research, and started early to gain the knowledge and experience she needs to help her stand out and land a job in her career field. Malecha added that she often worked on multiple undergraduate research projects at once, as they are easy to get involved in. Although this competency is often regarded as the most hands on, the panelists all agreed that it has helped them discover new passions, and better their research skills. 



Leadership Spotlight: Ana Leyva

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

Ana Madai Leyva (Music Education, '19) was first introduced to the Honors Student Body (HSB) [formerly known as the Honors Student Council] as a freshman, when she attended the annual HSB Ice Cream Social. After two years of participation in HSB activities, she served as President of the organization for the 2017-2018 academic year.

During her undergraduate career, Leyva has had the opportunity to serve in a variety of


other leadership roles on campus and in the Mankato community ranging from working as a Learning Community Coordinator to volunteering with the YWCA Ready to Learn Program in the greater Mankato area. Though her leadership roles in each organization have varied, Leyva's favorite aspect of each situation is that they have allowed her to be in a position in which she can make a positive difference in the lives of others. Of her personal leadership mission, Leyva shares, "A leadership position provides you the voice, platform, and resources to make your vision of change a reality."

As HSB president, Leyva is responsible for managing the HSB executive board, which includes scheduling and planning the HSB's monthly meetings, acting as a liaison

between the department faculty and the board, as well as overseeing the planning and execution of HSB events.

Leyva noticed her leadership style evolve as she became more familiar with the responsibilities and capacity of the position. Leyva states, "I've learned a lot about working as a team." Leyva shares that the collaborative nature of the board has helped her to develop as a more open-minded and objective leader. In addition, the responsibility of leading the board has taught Leyva the importance of trusting one's group members and delegating responsibility. Her term as HSB President has taught Leyva the "necessity of organization and time management" in leadership positions. "It doesn't matter how graceful you are when speaking to people or how

many great ideas you have for your organization," Leyva said, "if you do not know how to manage your time responsibly and stay organized, it will be difficult to succeed as a leader." Because of her efforts as a leader and the drive of the HSB members, the HSB received the Recognized Student Organization Exemplary Service Award.

Thanks to the incredible and enriching experiences Leyva has had in her leadership positions, she encourages others to get involved with what they are passionate about as quickly as possible, "Take a risk. You won't always succeed in all of your attempts, but the key is to learn from your mistakes and fix your approach. There is no better way to learn and grow than by trying." 



Research Spotlight: Nick Rockenback


by Mackenzie Glaser, '21 (Law Enforcement; New Brighton, Minn.)

cedures on rats. During these surgeries he gets to do most of the physical work like inserting catheters, putting in trach tubes, and isolating three abdominal arteries.

To get started on research, Rockenback recommends talking to professors you admire, even if you are not majoring in that professor's field. "As long as you take interest," he says, "talking to your professors can point you in the right direction of research." He also says that most professors are working on their own research projects and welcome the help of students. "If you're nervous about doing your own project, start with helping someone else on theirs."

During the process of his research, Rockenback experienced some challenges. He explains that it took him "a full semester and some changes to do the surgery successfully and consistently." Working on this project was fairly time-consuming, which helped him "build time management skills" in order to balance his research and his studies. He had to change his methods and perfect surgical techniques, which speaks to his dedication and patience. This aspect of his research definitely points out the hard work and discipline that is cultivated during the process of fulfilling the research competency.

Rockenback plans on pursuing medical school, and through

his work with Dr. Knoblich he has been able to get a "sample" of what he hopes to be doing in a few years. When talking about his research and how it has influenced him to pursue the medical profession, he says, "It has certainly made me feel like I'm doing something more permanent and bigger than myself. I am also a lot more interested in surgery than before ... I think that research is a great way to get experience for future jobs that can aid you in to future." Rockenback says that students shouldn't be afraid of research because "it's actually a lot of fun once you get into it." He says that starting might be the hardest part, but it's well worth it. 



Global Citizenship Spotlight: Madison Wittenburg

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

During the fall semester of 2017, Madison Wittenburg (Aviation, '19) studied abroad in Manual Antonio, Costa Rica. Wittenburg always wanted to study abroad because she realized it might be the only time her life where the opportunity to live in another country would arise. Through this experience, Wittenburg hoped to gain new cultural and linguistic insight that would otherwise be impossible to obtain.

While in Costa Rica, Wittenburg lived with a host family, an experience which greatly


increased her overall interaction with the culture. At first, it was a struggle for her to get used to using Spanish all the time because her host mom didn't speak English. Most of her previous experience with Spanish had been in the academic setting. With the kindness and patience of her host mom and instructors, Wittenburg's Spanish began to improve. She shares, "I think the fact that the people I talked to there didn't know English really helped me. I wasn't able to lean on someone who knew English. Even though it was frustrating at times, I learned to be patient and not to give up on myself."

Wittenburg's favorite part of her experience in Costa Rica was meeting new people. The relationships she formed over the semester were something she never expected. In addition, she found the people in Manual Antonio to be extremely down-to-Earth and

relaxed in general. This sort of atmosphere taught Wittenburg to appreciate life's simple joys and to take in every moment instead of always rushing through life.

During Wittenburg's time there, Costa Rica was hit by Hurricane Nate. Many people in Manual Antonio lost everything they had, and the city went days without clean running water or working electricity. Seeing all the devastation, Wittenburg knew she wanted to do something to help. By reaching out to family and friends in the United States, she was able to raise about \$1,300 to buy school supplies for a local school that had been devastated in the hurricane. The people of Manual Antonio had made such a positive impact on her time abroad, and Wittenburg felt like this was one way she could thank them. This experience reinforced in her the importance of utilizing one's re-

sources to assist those who do not have the same advantages, in order to help them find or regain their own strength.

Wittenburg plans to graduate from Minnesota State University, Mankato in May, 2019 with a degree in aviation. She has noticed that she is more confident as a person after her time abroad. In particular, she feels more confident making decisions without asking or seeking approval. This increased confidence will also benefit her as a woman in the male dominated field of aviation. Her advice for anyone on the fence about studying abroad is that you should do it! Wittenburg plans to go back to Costa Rica as frequently as possible in order to visit the people that made her time there so memorable and to bask in the relaxed atmosphere and simple joys that her time in Costa Rica showed her. 



Honorable Mentions



- Congratulations to the following students who received Student Leadership Awards: Sarah Aldirch, Rasheed Al Arami, Libby Guss, Sophia Hoiseth, Katie Leibel, and Ana Leyva.
- The following students presented at the 2018 Undergraduate Research Symposium: Katherine Albers, Steven Arriaza, Sara Baranczyk, Yuseina Brito Lino, Aspen Curtis, Bethany Haus, Linh Hoang, Brooke Jones, Geneva Kachinske, Brennah McCorkell, Omoleso Ogunnowo, Alysia Przybilla, Alexander Salazar, Courtney Sill, Hallie Uhrich, Rachel Uwimbabazi, Kellie Wong, and Eryn Zuiker.
- The following students attended the National Undergraduate Research Conference: Jordan Bengston, Yuseina Brito Lino, Bethany Haus, Aspen Curtis, Linh Hoang, Marissa Swenson, and Eryn Zuiker.
- Sara Baranczyk and Katelynn Malecha attended and presented on the Honors Peer Advisors Program at the Upper Midwest Regional Honors Conference.
- The following students served on the Executive Board of the Honors Student Body for the 2017-2018 academic year: Melanie Bengtson, Amber Chrischilles, Hunter Herber, Ana Leyva, Yuseina Brito Lino, Katelynn Malecha, and Sean Thomez.
- The following students passed their Honors Portfolio Defenses in Spring 2018: Claire Achen, Omele Edeh, Elizabeth Guess, Brooke Jones, Omoleso Ogunnowo, Nicole Piowski, Alysia Przybilla, Callie Rohlik, Mara Soupir, Sean Thomez Hallie Uhrich, and Kellie Wong.
- The following students were awarded as "Sophomore Rising Stars" in the three competencies; Maddison Hajek and Nwando Ikeogu (Global Citizenship), Hunter Herber and Linh Hoang (Leadership), and Bethany Haus and Emily Hoyt (Research).

Service Reflection

by Sarah Wall, '21 (Exercise Science; Saint Paul, Minn.)




I began volunteering with Rosa Parks Elementary School in the Fall of 2017 because of my scholarship from the Page Foundation. The founder of the scholarship, Alan Page, believes that if you are selected to receive a scholarship, that you should give back to the community. Therefore, all recipients of the Page Grant volunteer 50 hours in an educational environment with the hopes to improve children's academic experience. Establishing a good elementary education is important for the success of students as they get older. If a child falls behind in school and does not receive the appropriate additional support, understanding new material becomes more of a challenge. I am not an education major, so volunteering in the school setting was a new experience for me. I wanted to do what I could to support students and improve their educational experiences. My volunteer experience in a fifth-grade classroom at Rosa Parks Elementary School has allowed me to grow as an individual as well as a leader.

Volunteering has brought numerous challenging and rewarding experiences. Over the past four months of volunteering, I have watched the mentality of students improve. Toward the beginning of the year, I noticed some students had trouble focusing and listening to the teacher's instruction. Sometimes the teacher would have to change her lesson on the spot because of this, and I had to adapt to this new plan to help support the students. Through time, and with the help of a few lessons on listening, the students' listening behavior changed. They can now smoothly transition from one subject to another, raise their hands, and be quiet and attentive during direct instruction. Observing students grow, both academically and intellectually, is incredible, especially when you have helped with their growth.

Another challenge that I faced was explaining to students' certain concepts. For example, the concept of a sentence containing one main objective can be difficult to understand. To help the student understand this concept, I ended up splicing the sentence into different portions to display sentence fragments and complete ideas. Eventually, the student began to understand this concept, and it was rewarding to see that I was able to help a student learn a significant objective. Volunteering has not always been straightforward but persevering through its complications has proven to be worthwhile.

Throughout my time volunteering in the fifth-grade classroom, I have evolved into

a more understanding leader. Remaining calm and patient is imperative in a classroom of fifth-graders because some of them are prepared to listen while others are not. Additionally, I have noticed the importance in addressing positive actions. If a student uses his or her manners, or does something appropriately, the teacher will be quick to compliment or thank the student for their deed, which positively reinforces appropriate behavior. By watching the teacher lead her class, I have learned numerous methods that will help me direct younger children. I have learned the importance of rephrasing my words to get my points across when others do not understand what I am trying to convey. This will become particularly helpful when I am trying to explain different physical exercises as a physical therapist.

I highly recommend that everyone volunteer at one point within their career. Volunteering can teach one about responsibility and leadership. To volunteer, one must have the responsibility to be there despite the lack of financial compensation. Furthermore, one's leadership skills will develop by being surrounded by new leaders. Watching and learning from others offers the opportunity to become an effective leader. I believe it is imperative to keep an open mind while volunteering, whether volunteering at an elementary school, an animal shelter, or another organization. Volunteering may not always be easy, but the benefits that will lead to a better self are worth it. 

Honors Through the Years

by Cassidy Tocco, '21 (Special Education; Marshall, Minn.)

In the early 1980s, Cynthia Bemis Abrams eagerly enrolled in the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. As a high school student, Abrams took on a rigorous curriculum and wanted to continue to be challenged in her college education. Though she didn't really know what to expect in the Honors Program, she knew it would push her academically. Initially, Abrams explains, Honors was an opportunity for smaller classes and to have professors who were excited to teach driven students. As the years went on, Abrams discovered her favorite part of Honors was actually, "a lasting friendship and better understanding of myself and my desire to learn. Relationships over the four years created a learning bond that formed a bit of a

team in what otherwise was a large and decentralized student body." Ultimately, what shaped Abrams' experience wasn't so much the programming or activities, but the people with whom she surrounded herself.

During Abrams' time, the Honors Program was small, loosely organized, and typically unknown to the rest of campus. There was no permanent space or extra programming. Today, we have an Honors lounge, administrative support and organization, and opportunities for honors students. In the time since Abrams' graduation to today, the Honors Program has changed and grown so much.

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Honors in Pictures



The Honors Learning Communities celebrate service at the MAD Celebration



Honors students at the Honors Student Body Skating Social



Honors students at the start of the semester Game Night



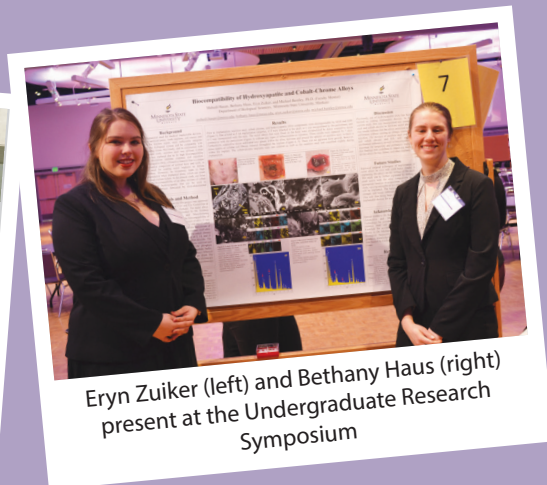
Honors students attending a campus Theatre Event



Making no-sew hats at an HSB Meeting



Honors students attend the Minnesota State University, Mankato's production of 1984



Eryn Zuiker (left) and Bethany Haus (right) present at the Undergraduate Research Symposium



Left: Peer Advisor Workshop; from left to right Linh Hoang, Madie Hoffman, Mackenzie Dockendorf, Anna Hagen, Alicia Utecht, Megan Serratore

Right: Katelynn Malecha (left) and Sara Baranczyk (right) presenting on Peer Advisors at the Upper Midwest Regional Honors Conference

Peer Advisors: Sharing Knowledge, Building Community

by Katelynn Malecha, '18 (Exercise Science & Pre-OT; Lonsdale, Minn.)

The Peer Advisor Program is brand new to the Minnesota State University, Mankato Honors Program. Six juniors and seniors in the Honors Program advise new and returning honors students. According to the creators of the program, the Honors Program Assistant Director Ginny Walters and the Honors Program Graduate Assistant Samantha Campa, the purpose of the Peer Advising Program is to “empower student leaders in an advisor-as-mentor role. Peer Advisors provide advisees with a support system for understanding and developing honors competencies [and further] developing an electronic portfolio.” The hope is that this program can help students maintain momentum within the Honors Program.

Peer advising is less formal than traditional advising meetings and provides students with a hands-on approach. Peer advisors focus on helping students find and reflect on opportunities to develop their competencies and electronic portfolios. In addition to meeting one-on-one with their advisees, peer advisors organize

workshops on competency development, reflection writing, and other areas.

The Honors Program also launched their Peer Mentor Program in recent years, which is a separate but complimentary program of the Peer Advisor Program. Walters states, “distinguishing the Peer Advising Program from our Peer Mentor Program has been challenging, but I think we’re getting there. We’ve begun to brainstorm some ideas as to how the two programs might morph into one. They are two different programs, but they share similar goals.” The Peer Mentor Program provides a leadership role for second- and third-year honors students and is designed to help first-year students transition into the Honors Program and college in general. The Peer Advisor Program, on the other hand, provides leadership roles for upperclassmen and is designed to help second-year students bridge the gap between their introduction to honors and making their way through it independently. One peer advisor, Sara Baranczyk (Communication Arts and Lit-

erature Education & Physics Education, '19), states that “these two programs work hand-in-hand with each other. Someone who was a peer mentor one year will hopefully become a peer advisor the next.” Currently the two programs remain separate, but eventually they may become one track for leadership opportunities.

Since the Peer Advisor Program is new, there are many opportunities for leadership and growth for all who are involved. Campa stated, “I believe that students have so much to offer each other! Peer advising is a great way to facilitate a connection between upperclassmen and underclassmen that empowers students to support each other and learn together.” The Peer Advisor Program gives student advisors insight into a professional leadership role in which they may not otherwise gain experience. Honors student and peer advisor Claire Achen (Dance, '18) comments, “I wanted to participate in the Honors Peer Advisor Program because I want to further understand who I

am as a leader.” Katelynn Malecha (Exercise Science & Pre-OT, '18), another peer advisor says, “The Honors Program has challenged my way of thinking and made me a stronger individual. By being a peer advisor, it has given me a chance to give back to the program and students.” On the other side of the program, advisees have the opportunity to meet and learn from their peers. Megan Serratore (Biomedical Sciences, '19) states, “The peer advising program offers underclassmen students the chance to get one-on-one advice from experienced upperclassmen who have been in their shoes.” Students tend to favor hearing about how a student achieved the competencies through another student and this provides that opportunity.

It is with great hopes that this program will grow and continue to help students. Those who are interested can get involved in this program by contacting either Ginny Walters or Samantha Campa. <#>

Senior Portfolio Defenses



Kellie Wong
Biochemistry



Libby Guss
Social Work & Spanish



Mara Soupir
Anthropology & History



Omoleso Ogunnowo
Philosophy



Hallie Uhrich
Anthropology



Brooke Jones
Biology



Alysia Pryzbilla
Biomedical Sciences



Callie Rohlick
Exercise Science



Nicole Powlski
Biology



Omele Edeh
International Relations



Claire Achen
Dance



Sean Thomez
Exercise Science

Honors Course Reflection

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

In the spring semester of 2019 I took the Honors course, Social Change in the 21st Century: Social Movements, Social Justice and Collective Action taught by Dr. Carol Glasser. This course explored the main ways of generating social change by using various social movements and social justice campaigns of the current century as examples. The focus of the class was to use our evolving knowledge of current social movement strategies and the processes of social change to develop our own social action project that we apply to the Minnesota State University, Mankato community.

The social action project that my group and I developed involved plastic water bottle usage on campus. We began with researching the number of plastic water bottles Minnesota State uses. After obtaining that knowledge, our group began advocating for University Dining Services and Sodexo to use boxed water because of its beneficial environmental impact over plastic.


Though this class has helped develop all of my honors competencies, it has had the greatest influence on the development of my leadership and research competencies. After learning the leadership styles used in previous social movements, I was able to apply the styles I liked to our own social action project. In addition, I have been able to practice my group member leadership and communication skills while working collectively with my group to organize and implement a strategy to make our social action project effective in the Minnesota State community. There was a small struggle at the start of the project when deciding which issue to advocate for our project, but by practicing effective communication and working to understand each person's point of view, we were able to come to a unanimous solution/goal. Through the practice of the social action project, my leadership values and leadership techniques when working in a team have greatly improved.

Getting started with the social action project was the most challenging part of this class. It was daunting to go from having no previous activism experience or knowledge to organizing a plan for social change in only seven weeks. However, with Dr. Glasser's support and guidance, my group members and I were able to become more confident in the process and ourselves.



The most rewarding part of this course has been realizing that I can be an activist. Going into the semester, I was hoping to learn more about activism in general and how I could make it a part of my life. Working with my group to create and build our social action project, concerning an issue I am passionate about, helped me realize that I can be an activist and make a difference. This realization has inspired me to become an even more involved activist in the future and to encourage others to pursue their own activism journeys.


Overall, I have grown in my confidence as a young woman from this course. In the future, I hope to pursue a career in journalism, and I know that being self-assured will be vital to my success in this field. Learning about a variety of social change issues and completing of my own social action project have helped me to become more confident in my own opinions and actions. Consequently, I don't back down as often as I used to when facing opposition, which will be extremely beneficial as I enter the world of professional journalism.

As young adults, we have a lot of uncertainty in our lives. Social Change in the 21st Century: Social Movements, Social Justice and Collective Action has shown me that being involved with a social movement can provide stability and a strong community. My advice to anyone interested in activism or becoming an activist would be to research social movements you are interested in and contact someone already involved with activism. Social movements are very open places and always want new people to join in their efforts to enact change. 

Honors Through the Years (continued from page 8)

The Honors Program strives to continue to evolve in this way, so that its members can continue to improve as global citizens, researchers, and leaders. Throughout her time in honors, Abrams said, "I came to better understand myself and my own expectations to excel, perform and lead. These helped me in my first job and every subsequent life challenge." Even with the differences in the program's organization, Abrams' experiences were still exceptional. The relationships she formed with other like-minded, driven peers pushed her to succeed. This just goes to show that it's not just funding or programming that fosters success; rather, it's the people around who help you grow. Both

Abrams and honors students today have a community in which we all can grow together.

Presently, our programming, activities, and lounge space all serve as opportunities for our community to come together, whether it be through service projects, culture nights, theater nights, or honors classes. One thing past alumni and current students can agree on is that the Honors Program creates an environment and provides a community in which students can grow together as people. 

Growth in Change: A Farewell to Dr. Dahlman

by Libby Guss, '18 (Social Work & Spanish; Mankato, Minn.)




In March, the Honors Program entered a bittersweet period of transition. The previous director, Dr. Anne Dahlman, accepted a new position on campus as the Dean of Global Education. She oversees the Center for Study Abroad/Study Away, the Center for International Student Services, and the Center for English Language Programs.

Dahlman served as the Honors Program Director starting in the fall semester of 2015 and has made a significant impact in the lives of hundreds of honors students. She came into the role with her area of expertise in global citizenship. Dahlman states that her goal has always been “[to help] grow leaders for a multicultural world.” To her, the Honors Program represents the next generation of global citizens and leaders. She enjoyed being surrounded by “young, brilliant minds” and was inspired by each student. As the Honors Program Director, Dahlman had the opportunity to help the university highlight the talent of the students in the program and help craft a “great educational experience” for honors students that is similar to that of attending a private college.

After nearly three years with the Honors Program, Dahlman felt prepared for her new role as the Dean of Global Education. She hopes to use the honors mindset, which is focused on growth, with international students. By following this mindset, she is setting high expectations for inter-

national students while providing high supports. “Everyone has strengths,” Dahlman explained. That concept of self-efficacy is what helps drive Dahlman in her work. While Dahlman does not have direct contact with students anymore, she is instead focusing on managerial aspects and advocacy work on behalf of international students. Her goal is to increase the percentage of international students at Minnesota State University, Mankato from 8% of the student body to 10% and will be visiting sites in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the Netherlands, and Finland during the month of May alone.

Though the Honors Program will miss Dahlman dearly, such change will help the program continue to grow and evolve. “Mentors stay on,” Dahlman said in regards to her leaving the program, “connections don’t disappear.” Dahlman stated that the Honors Program serves as a community for students, faculty, and staff. She believes the next Honors Program Director will be “just as passionate” about the mission of the program. On a parting note, Dahlman reminded students to “dream big and stretch [their] goals.” Dahlman remains available to students as a mentor and says she is “only an email away” at anne.dahlman@mnsu.edu. 

Fall 2018 Courses

Portraits of Culture, Dr. Schlage
There are numerous ways to study and portray culture. Two of the most significant tasks of anthropologists are studying cultures and communicating the results of those studies to others.

World History 1500- Present, Dr. Odinga
Our focus will be on Leadership in Modern World History. Throughout the semester we will explore how world leaders have shaped our contemporary world through their decision, action or inaction.

An Exploration of Yoga: A Journey of Discovery, Carly Hopper
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.

Reading the News, Dr. Hanel
Students will learn the importance of finding news and information from a variety of sources by engaging with print, online, and broadcast sources.

Developing Your Mentorship Philosophy, Samantha Campa
This course will provide opportunities for in-depth investigation into leadership styles and methods, aiming to guide discovery and development of each student’s personal mentor philosophy. Students will apply their mentor philosophies throughout the semester by collaborating with and guiding new Honors students through various mentoring opportunities.

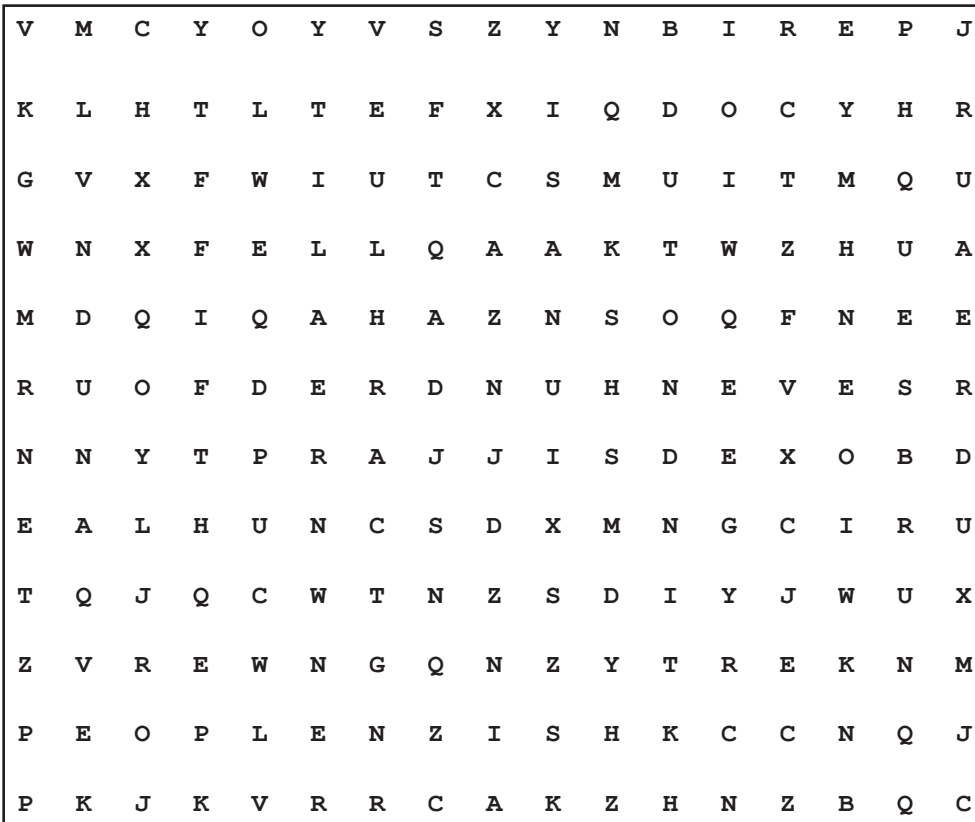
Full course descriptions can be found at: mnsu.edu/honors/current-students/courses14html.html

Honors Fun Corner: Word Search

by Josie Braaten, '19

Clues:

1. What did Mr. Tischer's father, James Tischer, earn his degree in at MSU Mankato?
2. How many pounds of non-perishable food did the Honors Learning Communities collect during "Trick or Treat So Others Can Eat"?
3. In regards to getting started with research, first year student Katie Libel jokes, "_____ everyone".
4. According to Ana Leyva, "A leadership position provides you the voice, platform, and resources to make your vision of change a _____."
5. Which hurricane struck Manuel Antonio Costa Rica while Madison Wittenburg was studying abroad there?
6. The classroom that Sarah Wall volunteered in at Rosa Parks Elementary School was a _____ grade classroom?
7. According to Cynthia Bemis Adams, the _____ truly shaped her honors experience at MSU Mankato.
8. What is senior and peer-advisor, Claire Achen's, major?
9. Madie Hoffman's Social Action Project advocated for the use of _____ water on MSU Mankato's campus.
10. As the new Dean of Global Education, Dr. Dahlman's goal is to increase MSU Mankato's international student population from 8% to _____ %.



Answers to last issue's puzzle:

Esther, College, Robert Frost, Leadership, Professionalism, Why, North Star Bridge, Third, Family, Tokyo

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