

THE HONORS BEACON

Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato



LEADERSHIP • RESEARCH • GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Issue XVII, Spring 2020



Photos: Miranda Bass

LEFT: Miranda Bass in Sevilla, Spain while studying abroad. RIGHT: Returning home from Spain and in line adhering to then-new social distancing guidelines.

Miranda Bass: A Chaotic Journey Abroad

By Miranda Bass, '22 (Spanish Education; Milwaukee, WI)

This semester, I was supposed to study abroad in Spain for 16 weeks and keep a blog to document my time abroad, but I had to come back early due to COVID-19. I flew out at the beginning of January and was supposed to be there until the end of April. Even though my time in Spain was cut short, I was still able to spend two months in the city of Salamanca and my final two weeks in the capital, Madrid.

I've known for a while that I was going to study abroad while in college. Travelling has always been something that interested me, so I wanted to jump on the chance to go somewhere else for a while for my studies. I chose to study abroad in a Spanish speaking country because it gave me ample opportunity to hone my Spanish abilities while experiencing a new culture.

During the beginning of my trip, my biggest struggle was that I missed home. Four months seemed to be a very long time to be an ocean away from everyone I love

with only the occasional FaceTime call to connect us. It gave me a newfound appreciation for people who choose to or are forced to be away from their families for long periods of time.

Even though it was cut short, my time in Spain really helped me develop my global citizenship competency. Through this experience, I greatly increased my ability to speak Spanish well. In class, I was able to talk about topics that require more thought and share my opinions. We talked about several things, from environmental concerns to comparing the political situations between Spain and the United States. Even though I am back in Minnesota, I am continuing my Spanish Peninsular Culture class online where we left off discussing the youth of Spain. Through my classes, it has been interesting to see how different cultures, between the variety of students in my classes and the professors, affect our opinions on certain subjects.

I had to adjust little things that I do to accommodate the culture in which I was submerged in. The biggest change I made, while seemingly insignificant, was what I ate for each meal and at what times I ate. For example, breakfast in Spain is traditionally something small and more on the sweeter side, as opposed to the big savory breakfasts we have in the US, and dinner wasn't until between 8pm-10pm. It took me a while to adjust to this!

However, despite any worries, I felt myself evolving as a person through my experiences in Spain. Normally, I'm a timid person but being in a new location with new people allowed me to branch out more. I spoke up in class more than I had in the United States and was more likely to interact with new people at the hostels I stayed at or on excursions since I did a majority of my travelling on my own. I noticed that I was actively seeking out new experiences and

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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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The Spring 2020 issue of The Beacon marks the conclusion of what has been a difficult semester. The COVID-19 pandemic required us to shift to online learning, close the Honors

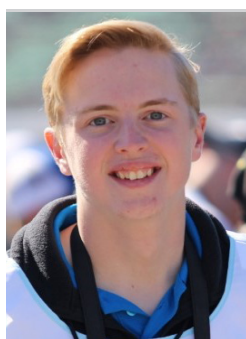
Office and move all operations to remote working conditions. Many of us in honors struggle with ambiguity and the lack of control. The past seven weeks have been full of both. Study abroad experiences were cut short or cancelled altogether, research presentations shifted to virtual events, and we had to cancel our annual spring banquet during which we would have celebrated our seniors and student accomplishments. We left for Spring Break not knowing this was the last time many of

us would see each other in person before the end of the school year. The best part of my job is interacting with students every day. Not being able to be with them and support them in person has been difficult for Ginny, Pam and I.

Yet, I am continually amazed at their resilience. Despite the anxiety of the unknown, our students continue to push forward. Students are adjusting to the constant changes and disruptions with grace. They are demonstrating leadership in how they approach their current responsibilities, strong critical thinking as they process the constantly changing landscape of information we have about the pandemic and mature global citizenship in their ability to see beyond the ways this crisis affects them as individuals. I have never been more proud of our students. They will persevere through these unprecedented times and make their mark on this world. 📖

Editor's Note

Jonathan Fjeld, '20 (Mass Media & Communication Studies, Twin Valley, MN)



This semester's Beacon began with the goal of highlighting the diversity of Honors and how our students are converging upon the program from all differing points in their college

career. As has happened for all of us recently, however, plans changed greatly. The focus turned to thinking about how we're living in historic times where the actions we make today will reflect upon who we are as people long after we're no longer living on this planet. This led to a

new theme: Thinking of how we make our mark on history. In this edition, each story will share the different ways that students are able to leave a positive mark on history and the different ways that they are living through this time. As you're reading these stories, I want you to think of how you're living life in ways that reflect a positive mark on history. Most importantly, I hope you're taking care and enjoy this edition!

Thank you to our writers, who are really the ones making this possible, especially our outgoing GA, Tomide, who has been a key part of Honors in his time and will be greatly missed! A special thanks also goes to my co-editor and mentor, Emily, who gave me wonderful help in making this Beacon the complete package you see. 📖

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Tomide Oloruntobi: Traveling Beyond a Known Border

By Tomide Oloruntobi, '20 (M.A. Communication Studies; Ondo State, Nigeria)

I moved to the United States as an international student in 2018 with a lot of mixed feelings because it was the longest and, perhaps, the most important trip of my life. Being the first person to make this kind of journey in my family, it was more of a burden than a blessing to weather the 'storms' of migration alone. Arriving here

as a first-generation migrant student, I knew I had a lot of challenges ahead and I needed to figure out ways to conquer them responsibly. In what follows, I am happy to share my experiences of adaptation in America and how, interestingly, I had to adapt to my Nigerian culture; the place I call home. Hence, the experience of migration made me rethink the concept of home since I see myself belonging to multiple worlds, yet not fitting properly into one.


Over time, I have found that as a newcomer a lot of things will call you out in an environment. If your skin color does not call you out, your accent as a cultural outsider would. If you are lucky that none of these calls you out, your limited cultural knowledge would. In some cases, sadly, all of these could call you out and bring to your face how different you are. I was in Menomonie, Wisconsin last spring, for instance, and I was sitting alone in a crowded lounge area. A professor in his mid-50s walked up to me and started a conversation. We got talking for another 30 minutes. After this interesting chat, I began to process why he came to speak with me. I later discovered that we shared one thing in common: skin color. He noticed that I was alone and might need help. He helped. From this interaction, I learned that there are a lot of arms that are open and willing to embrace you. You just have to make it comfortable for them to do so.

I have also found that immigration lets you know more about yourself and your society –your society of origin. My nationality is a constant character in how people view and communicate with me. As a matter of fact, someone once asked me where I came from and when she got her answer, she went on to ask: "And you can operate a phone?" Yes, it's that bad that people will evaluate your intellects and mirror you against your background. Hence, it is important that you find it convenient to know more about your place of origin and be ready to learn about people's position on your nation to sustain that conversation and tell them your side of the story. As a matter of fact, doing so would place you above

stereotypes and make it a learning experience for the host-interactant.

As a first-generation student, I have learned the values of help-seeking from high school. I have also found how impactful it could be from mentees' feedbacks. Hence, I knew it was a behavior I must maintain to have a better experience as a newcomer in any context. Complementing my help-seeking behavior is finding a mentor in the new environment. During my stay at Minnesota State University, Mankato, I have had the opportunity to work with people who were available to answer my questions. When I went back to visit Nigeria in March, also, I had to find a person to fill this role no matter how short the visit was. Finding these people is important because they help you navigate the new context better and ease your adjustment.

My trip to Nigeria came with some challenges that made me understand that intercultural experiences are not unidirectional, instead they are multidirectional and multidimensional. Reentering Nigeria registered me as an outsider in the place I called home. When I paid excess for my sim card retrieval but later found someone else who charged less for the same service, I realized it was not because I didn't bargain well, it was because I had not accrued enough contextual knowledge to re-assert my belongingness. When somebody walked up to me and started a conversation that was in the frame of what I knew about an immigration office in Lagos, it was synonymous with the warm gesture of the professor at Menomonie. These experiences made me understand that being a newcomer requires that you consciously decide to adjust and make your experiences learning points. In those moments when somebody mirrors you as someone who can't operate a phone in Mankato or profiles you as someone he or she could take advantage of in Lagos, it is a reminder that you still have much to learn about the environment. So, learn!

The fun part of my travels is that I had the chance to meet great people, to find new opportunities, and to reach my goals. In return, I thrust myself to that continuous learning, not about knowing or questioning human nature, but to make sense of my place as a human living with other humans in a fun, complex, and chaotic world. Taking my journeys as learning experiences has helped me to understand and discover the opportunities around me. My advice to you is if you ever have a reason to travel, don't look back, leave! But don't forget that there will be challenges at your next stop, and you will meet challenges at your current spot if you ever want to return. 

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

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

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

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



(A Chaotic Journey Abroad, continued from page 1)


things to try, mainly with food, in order to push my own boundaries.

The challenge that had the most impact on me, of course, was the issues that rose from the spread of the Coronavirus. When I was in Salamanca, there wasn't a lot of concern because there weren't many cases in Spain, especially not in Castilla and Leon, the community in which Salamanca is housed in. However, when I moved to Madrid, the number of cases rose drastically and most of them were in the community of Madrid. Rapidly, everything started closing around me in the city as the number of cases rose. The show I was going to see was cancelled because of the limit on people gathering in an area and my family had to cancel their plans to come out and visit me. Finally, I was told that I had to go home after the announcement by the President to suspend travel to and from Europe.

Getting a flight home on such short notice was a nightmare and since I left on Saturday, the day after the new regulations were put into place, I actually had to stay overnight in Toronto, Canada because there was such a backup with the U.S.'s customs. Everyone that was flying in from a country on watch for COVID-19 was placed in one crowded room. There were people around me that had been waiting for over three hours to get tested and missed their flights. While waiting, I ended up striking up conversations with a handful of other college students. Finally, they announced that they weren't testing anyone else that day and that everyone would be re-booked for a flight the next day and booked into a hotel for the night. After a poor night's sleep in the hotel, I went back to the airport the next morning where it was a smooth process to get through customs. By early afternoon on Sunday, I was back in the U.S.

and meeting my dad at the baggage claim in O'Hare.

Now at home, I'm faced with the same challenges as everyone else due to the Coronavirus, but without the extra worry of being away from home. I'm spending an absurd amount of time with my family, making up for our time apart, and continuing my classes online. It was a little unnerving at first to go from being the most independent I had ever been to being constantly around my family. It can feel a little difficult to connect with my family sometimes because I have these new experiences without them that have given me a sense of maturity, but quarantine is taking care of that.

If anyone would like to read a more detailed account of my time in Spain or trip back, feel free to check out my blog at mirandastudyabroad2020.blogspot.com. 

Making a Difference with Reading

by Amber Chrischilles, '20 (Mass Media, Storm Lake, IA)


An integral part of every Learning Community at Minnesota State University, Mankato, is the Make-a-Difference (MAD) service projects in which they choose to participate in. This year, the Honors Launch and Emerging Leaders Honors Learning Communities volunteered with the Greater Mankato Area United Way during their Reading Festival in November. The Honors Launch Coordinator, Kade Patterson, and I, the Emerging Leaders Coordinator, greatly enjoyed working with the United Way and community members during our project this year.

The Reading Festival is an annual event that has been hosted by the United Way for the past six years, with the help of various sponsors such as the YMCA and Capstone, who donated books to give out. The goal of the event is to celebrate literacy and encourage reading among all ages. During the event there were activities for children, healthy snacks, free children's books, and literacy information for parents. This free event is a great way to promote literacy in our community, but it also is a great opportunity for families spent time together.

Those of us who volunteered at the reading festival were there from the beginning of the event until the end. At the beginning we helped set up the event space by setting out books, organizing booths, and putting up a welcome table. During the event students were assigned different roles. Some helped welcome and sign in visitors while others engaged in activities with children, helped with the photo booth, handed out welcome bags, and gave children books. At the end we helped load things up and assist with cleaning. My favorite part of the event was helping to decorate the area with dinosaur themed props and watching the children enjoy dressing up like dinosaurs at the photo booth. Overall, it was a fun event to not only get involved with the United Way but with many community members.



Another great aspect about participating in MAD projects is that students gain leadership experience which helps Honors students build their leadership competency. It was fun to be able to see students interact with children and parents and be able to help them for an afternoon. A few of our students are education majors so I know that they also enjoyed being able to interact with kids by playing games or coloring with them. I thought that the most rewarding part of the day was seeing how grateful the United Way was for having us volunteer our time to help make sure their event ran smoothly.

MAD projects are a great way to get students involved in the community and give back. They also give students an opportunity to bond as a group while they serve others, especially this year since the two Honors Learning Communities chose to do their service projects as a whole group. My advice for students wanting to participate in similar projects is to just get out there and do it! There are so many great organizations and events in the Mankato area that would benefit from the time that you volunteer. As a college student life can get busy, but it is always worth it to spend time volunteering in your community. 

Facing Uncertainty Together

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

Our semester took a turn none of us were expecting. With the COVID-19 pandemic wreaking havoc on our routines and plans, we all find ourselves in the same state: uncertainty. Similar to other institutions in the state and across the country, Minnesota State University, Mankato has transitioned to online learning for the remainder of the semester and campus is closed. This abrupt transition has thrown me for a loop and I am positive I am not the only one trying to find their footing during this time.

For me personally, all of the parts in my life have come to a halt. I am a member of the Speech and Debate team, and unfortunately the last half our season has been canceled, just like so many other sports and activities. Being robbed of our national tournaments has been devastating for our team; and even more so for our seniors who had no idea their last performance would in fact be their last. One of the most painful parts of all of this is that we didn't get the opportunity for closure in our activities. There was no last game, last performance, last time to be with the people you care about. It was just over. Though, there is unity even in that. My team is hurting and healing together. Despite how disappointing this situation is, there came a turning point when competing wasn't what we were missing. We were missing each other. And losing our national opportunity wasn't as important as keeping each other well.

Since campus has closed, we have been meeting weekly on Zoom to discuss the coming year and to check in. We are hitting the ground running in preparation for next season. This not only provides us with some sort of normalcy but also a much needed opportunity to see each other.

The transition to online classes has been a difficult one. While the non-stop email updates were at times overwhelming, it was incredible to me how many people were working to help me and other MNSU students. I don't have enough fingers on my hand to count the mentors, professors, advisors, and coaches who reached out. Not only did they want to check in to see how I was doing, but they had a list of resources and services that were available to us if we needed them.

Yes, this is a frustrating and scary time, but there is no doubt that there are people supporting us from all over the community, especially the Honors community. The Honors staff has helped me find several resources, especially when my employment was in question. I found myself without a job once campus closed, like so many other students who worked on-campus. Thankfully now we know that student workers should be compensated for time off due to COVID-19, which is a massive weight off my shoulders though I know this is still a weight many others bear. If there is one thing that these difficult times have taught

me, it's knowing when to ask for help and I am grateful there are so many people in my life, and hopefully yours as well, who will be there when we call.

Ironically, our very long spring break has actually served me well. While the circumstances are not ideal of course, I made a personal decision to use this unstructured time to rest, recharge, and take care of myself; something I often forget to do at the height of the semester. I might have an uncommon experience, but after the initial panic subsided, this is the most stable and balanced I have felt all year.

Of course, there is no right or wrong way to deal with these difficult times, but I think this is a pivotal moment for us as individuals and as a community. Amid the chaos and uncertainty, now is the time to take care of our minds and bodies. Now is the time to call your neighbor and check in. Now is the time to spread love and positivity. Now will be the time when the true global citizens, researchers, and leaders come to light. We have already been learning how to connect with people different from us. We have the skills to find the accurate information and not feed into mass panic. We know our leaders can set good examples for others. If there is anything the Honors Program has taught us, it is how to be a community. And it is as a community that we will get through this, together. 📺

"Zoom"-ing Into the Corral with Ferdinand



This semester is our fourth semester featuring Ferdinand- the Honors Program mascot and stress bull that accompanies students and faculty on their adventures. Since the last corral with Ferdinand, our world has changed but Ferdinand is still everywhere! He was able to make it to some of our staff meetings with Pam, Ginny and Leah.

If you have a Ferdy picture, feel free to show us! Upload it to Instagram and tag "@mnsuhonors" or email it to honors@mnsu.edu





From L to R: Kaitlyn Graning, Melanie Bengtson and Shamsudeen Adediji.

Three Honors Graduates: Three Different Paths

By Samantha Kozelek, '22 (Elementary Education; Waukesha, WI)

This article features an interview of three Honors program students who are graduating this spring semester as undergraduates. The three students are Melanie Bengtson, Kaitlyn Graning, and Shamsudeen Adediji.

Kozelek: What is your undergraduate major? How did you decide on studying this? Why did you choose this path for your education?

Adediji: I am studying Management, Marketing, and Business Analytics. I knew I wanted to manage and that I could do so. I also knew I wanted to do something working with people. I had other interests in design and sales, which is where marketing came in. With analytics, I liked to see how things work and how they are connected.

Bengtson: My major is Special Education. I chose to study this because I always knew that I wanted to be a teacher. Throughout my life, I felt a connection to people with disabilities. I genuinely enjoy getting to know them and learning what makes them unique. By becoming a Special Educator, I am able to be creative with my lessons in a way that helps bring out each of my students' unique talents, strengths, and interests.

Graning: My major is Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services with an emphasis in Therapeutic Recreation. I found this major through taking a career test. It was a random, free test on Google that I decided to take for fun. I did some research and discovered it was the career for me. I find significant passion and joy serving others. I believe every individual has the right to participate in recreation and leisure; therefore, my goal is to create opportunities for

those who may not have been able to before.

Kozelek: What have you been involved in during your time on-campus?

Adediji: I transferred from an international university and arrived on-campus junior year, so I wanted to make the best out of the time I had here. I got involved in student government and an organization from my home country, International University of Grand Bassam. I started NABA, National Association of Black Accountants. As vice president of NABA, I wanted to increase diversity in the College of Business. I was also part of the National Diversity Case Conference as a junior and senior and was a finalist my second year.

Bengtson: I have been involved with Love Your Melon, The Miracle League, the Hockey Cheer Team, and the YMCA Brother/Sister Program since my freshman year. More recently, I coached an adaptive dance team called Darby's Dancers and was the secretary for the Honors Student Body. I was also a Community Advisor my sophomore year. I have been in several clubs here and there, such as LEAD 2.0, Dream Closet, and SPARK.

Graning: Freshman year, I was on Community Council in my residence hall; I really admired the togetherness my floor had. I was also involved in the IELI Language Partners Program. Until my junior year, I was a dance major/minor, so I participated in two dance concerts. This year, I am devoting all my time to schoolwork, and embracing the time I have left at MNSU.

Kozelek: Are there any pivotal experiences that have stood out or made the most impact during your time as an undergrad-

uate?

Adediji: One experience that has really impacted me has been being a Learning Community Coordinator. Working with students, I have been able to see the impact that I was making on them. I helped students navigate campus, get settled in a new place, and see their potential. This was a reflective moment for me, because I had to go from not knowing this place as a new student to helping other students. I learned to work hard, navigate resources, and push myself so I could share with my learning community.

Bengtson: As a Miracle League coach, I had an athlete that struggled with confidence. Every day, she would go straight to the dugout and refuse to play, despite the other athletes encouraging her. I saw that she wanted to play but didn't think she could. After several weeks of spending time getting to know her, I stood behind her and encouraged her to give it her best shot. As she found herself succeeding while playing, I found her smiling and enjoying the rest of the games. At this time, I realized I was in the right career path.

Graning: One experience that was pivotal to my undergraduate career was my field experience required through my major. I volunteered in a long-term care facility in the memory care unit and absolutely loved it. I saw first-hand the impact recreation and leisure activities have on older adults with dementia, which fueled my purpose in the therapeutic recreation field even more.

Kozelek: How have the three Honors competencies helped you grow as an undergraduate student?

Adediji: I liked the way the competencies are divided. It helps students reflect and see connections. For research, it's in so many things you do and don't always realize it. Research helps see value in the work you are doing. For leadership, it has helped me reflect on how I lead and analyze how I can become a better leader.

Bengtson: Personally, the competencies have helped me to be able to take my major beyond the classroom. Being in the Honors Program, I have felt more of a drive to get out into the community and apply what I have learned from my coursework. I also loved getting to complete undergraduate research and creating something that is meaningful to me. It really helped me to find a purpose in my coursework on days that it was difficult to.

Graning: The competencies gave me a reason to stretch outside my comfort zone. If it wasn't for the Honors Program, it's likely I would not have done as much as I did or felt confident enough to do so. The competencies have steered me to be more well-rounded in my education. I discovered my personal strengths to become a better leader. My original research led me to discover inclusion was the area I want to build my career in. The global citizenship competency has led me to redefine what separates one another: our cultures, lifestyles, decades we grow up in, etc.

Kozelek: What is your most memorable moment from your time in Honors?

Adediji: I took an Honors seminar with Dr. White called Performance and Social Justice. In this class, we were with other people. We discussed with each other and exposed ourselves to racial concepts, events that shaped our history that I didn't know affected me.



Melanie Bengtson with fellow Maverick Hockey Cheer Team members



Kaitlyn Graning with fellow Recreation Parks and Leisure Services program members.



Shamsudeen Adediji with fellow National Diversity Case Study Competition team members.

Bengtson: I think my most memorable moment was recently, when my partner Samantha King and I completed our research project and presented at NCHC in New Orleans. For me, research was the competency I was most unsure about. As an education major, there aren't too many projects readily available. We were able to get creative and created an Art Therapy prompt book for elementary students with Autism

Honors student Alexis Poetter has a creative and unique Honors portfolio. This May, she will graduate with a degree in interdisciplinary studies. Interdisciplinary studies can be described as sort of a "build-your-own-major", where students can choose to combine three different majors into one degree. Alexis chose to focus on graphic design, marketing, and consumer studies, with a minor in writing.

Alexis began her college education as a biology major. Throughout her freshman year, she decided that this path was not something that interested her. Not knowing where to go from there, Alexis


Spectrum Disorders. It was rewarding to present and get some great feedback. This was something I never thought I could accomplish, but with Honors, was able to.

Graning: I really enjoyed the Exploring Personal Leadership class with Ginny. It was an opportunity to do a lot of self-reflection on who I wanted to become as a leader. We also got to do research and advocate for a particular social change of our choice. This class was super enlightening, and the lessons I learned impacted my personal and professional growth.

Kozelek: What are some pieces of advice you can give to people who will be graduating after you?

Adediji: I would say don't overload your last semester with too many credits. Your last semester should be an opportunity to reflect on your experience on campus. Make sure you give yourself time to do that.

Bengtson: Take advantage of the variety of opportunities available to you. I found my niche early on, but it's always beneficial to challenge yourself outside of your comfort zone. The Honors Program is an amazing space where you can have those difficult discussions that make you think. Embrace it and participate in those discussions. Listen to what others have to say. Additionally, be intentional with your reflections!

Graning: A piece of advice I have is to live in the present. Rather than thinking so far ahead all the time, enjoy where you are now, and then your future will fall into place. Another piece of advice is to always ask questions. Once you graduate, you will not be able to easily ask your professors something you do not know. You are in school to learn everything you can that will prepare you for the working world. 

made her way to the Career Development Center. There she was able to look into several majors, but she couldn't see herself fitting into just one.

Many students aren't aware that interdisciplinary studies is an option for them to major in. It opens so many different paths, allowing for a well-rounded education and more job opportunities. However, this major is one that requires students to be self-motivated as they can design their whole degree and choose from a variety of classes.

With interdisciplinary studies, she was able

Article continued on next page



Alexis Poetter

By Samantha Kozelek, '22
(Elementary Education; Waukesha WI)

Poetter, continued from previous page

to pick a few different areas that interested her. Alexis found that she was self-motivated to take this path and enjoyed the control she had. Her classes after making this decision were a mix of finance courses, graphic design, typography, print design, and marketing classes.

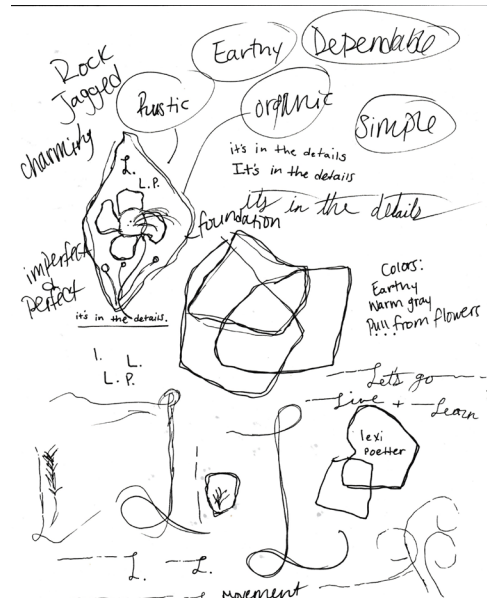
Alexis has learned a lot between her areas of focus and has found that her three disciplines mesh well together. She has been able to apply her knowledge to her internship with IT Solutions that focused on marketing communication teams. Using all the skills that she's learned, Alexis has built communication skills, made print materials and written articles during her internship.

For Alexis, there weren't too many challenges that came along, but there were times where she felt like an outsider, as she didn't fit in with any one major. Alexis infiltrated a few groups within her classes but didn't feel like she fit into all of them. She felt like other students were able to connect with the other students within their majors, something she couldn't do, which was something that she was able to mentally overcome. Alexis could apply herself in various ways with her major. She was able to jump from one concept to the


next and apply her studies to her work and extracurriculars. Looking at her portfolio, many of her achievements that have built her Honors competencies come from extracurriculars. For global citizenship, Alexis has interviewed students for news articles which has widened her perspective on different backgrounds. For leadership, she has been part of the Fashion and Photography Club, where she helps plan events and weekly activities. Alexis's internship has also contributed to her leadership skills. It has blended into her professional experience and allowed her to individually work with others in her field. She is learning confidence while leading her own projects.

For research she has utilized her creative writing minor and written original fictional short stories. Her graphic design projects have also shown how to use research in different ways, such as comparing a creative process to a science approach. Professionally, research isn't something she thinks about every day but while managing new pages and gathering sources, she recognizes this is something she does naturally.

Alexis's portfolio has a unique structure to it. While creating her portfolio, she struggled with the competencies and understanding how they fit into boxes, so she



Poetter's creative process is best detailed in sketches like this, which paints a laid-out picture of her work. designed it in a way that made the labels fit for her. For example, research for her couldn't be thought of as data being scientific in a lab, but rather how she sees research.

Alexis shared some advice for students thinking about going down a similar path: "If you feel like a major is not working for you, don't be scared to go talk to the Career Development Center. Explore your options." 

Honorable Mentions

- Becca Peterson, Emma Gale, Olivia Thomas, Oscar Lara Andrade, Kirsten Siebenga, Shelby Hartmann, Emily Hoyt, Kaitlyn Graning, Jordan Bengtson, Maddison Hajek, Eryn Zuiker, Marissa Swenson, Alana St. Cyr, Alexis Poetter, Ashley Schmitz, Nyadak Jock, and Shamsudeen Adediji passed their Portfolio Defenses this Spring.
- Annalisa Tostenson was a Junior Team Leader for the E-Fest Student Design Competition Team, which was going to attend the semi-national conference and robotics competition.*
- Abigail Larson was set to present her research on end-of-life care at the MNRS Conference in Schaumburg, Illinois, but presented online instead.*
- Maureen Nghambi was voted on to her residence hall's Community Council this semester.
- Jada Harley, Abigail Larson, Shayla Schumacher, Makenzie Reed, Rebecca Peterson, Shamsudeen Adediji, Olivia Thomas, Emily Hoyt, Emily Schiltz, Alana StCyr, Emma Gale, Meaghan Keohane, Kaitlyn Graning, Rebecca Guss, Nwando Ikeogu, Hunter Herber, Jane Sakowicz, Molly Olson, Marissa Swenson, Emily Bollendorf, Amber Chrischilles, Brian Swancutt, Ashley Schmitz, Shelby Hartman, and Eryn Zuiker presented their research virtually at the 2020 Undergraduate Research Symposium*.
- Students who served as Community Advisors for the 2019-20 academic year: Lizzie Putnam, Alana StCyr, Brian Swancutt, Dhaval Bhakta, Nina Tulashie.
- Eryn Zuiker was one of 60 students selected to present research on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC but presented online instead.*
- Emily Schiltz, Emma Gale, Shayla Schumacher, Srajan Jain, Becca Guss, Lizzie Putnam, and Mallory Steinmetz served on the Honors Student Body Executive Year during the 2019-2020 academic year.
- Becca Peterson, Eryn Zuiker, Dhaval Bhakta, Lillie McDermott, and Olivia Thomas wereset to attend March's National Conference on Undergraduate Research*:
- Emma Gale was set to present her undergraduate research at the Minnesota Speech-Language-Hearing Association Convention.*
- Emma Gale, Alexis Poetter, Annalisa Tostenson served as Executive Board members of Recognized Student Organizations during the 2019-20 academic year.
- Brian Swancutt, Hunter Herber, Nina Tulashie, and Afnan Husain were Honors Ambassadors for the 2019-20 academic year.
- Mallory Steinmetz will be one of the Nursing Learning Community Coordinators for the 2020-21 academic year.
- Serida Zosse was awarded an international students scholarship.
- Ana Leyva (Outstanding Collegian), Shamsudeen Adediji (Outstanding Collegian), Corrine Koffi (Commitment to Cultural Responsiveness), and Eryn Zuiker (Big Ideas, Real World Thinking) received Minnesota State Mankato Student Activities Leadership Awards:

* denotes event was cancelled/modified due to COVID-19

Emma Grumke: First in a New Generation of Honors Students

by Brian Swancutt, '21 (Social Work; Rochester, MN)



This article features an interview with Emma Grumke who, in December 2012, became the first graduate of the current version of our Honors Program.

During her time at Minnesota State Mankato, Grumke majored in accounting and played for the Mavericks soccer team, while also serving on the Student Athlete Advisory Committee. She is originally from just outside of Madison, WI and currently resides in Blaine, MN.

SWANCUTT: What are you doing now either academically or professionally? How did you get to this current position?

GRUMKE: I am currently an audit manager at a public accounting firm called RSM. I started with them in the fall of 2013, and I've been there ever since!

SWANCUTT: What made you choose Minnesota State University, Mankato for your undergraduate education?

GRUMKE: I really wanted to play soccer after high school, so I researched my options. I liked that MNSU had a strong academic and athletic program that fit what I was looking for. I ran into the soccer coach on several different occasions and ended up being the perfect fit! MNSU ended up being about four hours from home, which was drive-able, but not something I would have wanted to do every weekend, so it ended up being the perfect distance too.

SWANCUTT: How did being involved with the Honors Program help to prepare you to achieve your future academic or career goals?

GRUMKE: The biggest thing that the Honors Program did for me was give me a broader perspective. Quite honestly, when I was looking at colleges and we'd be on campus, walking through all of the booths with programs that the college had to offer, I would walk straight past the study abroad booths. It just wasn't something that I thought I would want to do. Fast forward a few years and I ended up doing my undergrad research project on the impacts of studying abroad and spent the majority of my junior year summer in France. None of that would have happened without the Honors Program, and I would not have the outlook that I do today without those experiences.

The other thing that really helped me was the amount of reflection that I did throughout my classes and overall experience. I feel like I had the opportunity to really think about my own perspective on certain matters, which has allowed me to be a little bit more reflective in all aspects of my life. I also feel like I had the opportunity to speak to larger groups when presenting research, which really helped prep me for the conversations that I have on a daily basis as part of my current work.

SWANCUTT: Did your career goals/plans change during undergrad?

GRUMKE: Surprisingly, no! I was planning on majoring in accounting since high school, and I stuck pretty close to that path.

SWANCUTT: What was the Honors Program like "back then?"

GRUMKE: Great question, because I think it was probably a lot different. I think the biggest thing for me was that it was all new, so there wasn't a lot to go off of in terms of seeing what people had done before me, which ended up being a huge blessing. I'm a very thoughtful person - I'll research, plan, research, plan, research, modify the plan a little, and by the time that it is time to "do," I feel like I have a good baseline.

Being the first to go through the pro-

gram, it put me outside of my comfort zone, as I wasn't able to research and plan and look at what other people had done, because there wasn't anyone to ask. This ended up being so good for me because it allowed me to make my experience exactly what I wanted and needed it to be. I'm sure it is still true today, but there was an awesome crew of other undergrads that I got to go through the program with.


SWANCUTT: What are some of your favorite memories of the Honors Program?

GRUMKE: Studying abroad for sure. Aside from that, I think it was just the people. There was an awesome group of people that I got to work with and there was a ton of support from faculty; enough support to provide guidance, but enough freedom that I felt like my future was completely in my hands.

SWANCUTT: What is it like coming back and seeing how things have changed?

GRUMKE: It's awesome! Change is great, especially just seeing how the program has been able to develop and grow.

SWANCUTT: What advice do you have for current Honors students?

GRUMKE: Make the experience exactly what you need it to be and trust in the fact that, at the end of the day, it will be. I had a pretty strict schedule, between my normal course-load and practices/games/travel, and initially I struggled with fitting everything in. Dr. Corley was instrumental in helping me make everything work and empowering me to do that. As soon as I voiced my thoughts and opened the line of communication, I realized how many people I had on my team that wanted me to succeed. 



Grumke and her significant other, as pictured hiking.

John Shrestha: Life Behind the Lens

by Dhaval Bhakta, '21 (Marketing; Syadla, Gujarat, India)



This interview was with John Shrestha, a junior civil engineering student from the land of Everest, Nepal. Besides engineering, Shrestha has a passion for photography and won second place in the City of Mankato's annual photo contest in 2019.

Dhaval Bhakta: How did you discover the photo contest you entered? When was it? Why did you enter it? How did you feel when you were given the award?

John Shrestha: One day, I got a text message on my Instagram account from a friend which said, "Check this out" and had a link. I opened it and it was about a photo contest hosted by the City of Mankato. I decided to submit a photo for the competition since I had been taking pictures for a while. A couple of months later, I got an email from the city with the final decision from the City Council. One of the photos I took at the Mankato Area International Festival, labelled "Diversity of Mankato" was published on the website of City of Mankato and awarded the third place "Award of Excellence" by the City Council.

Bhakta: How did you come across the picture you decided to submit?

Shrestha: During the International Festival, my role was to capture moments in photos for the University newspaper, The Reporter. It wasn't a planned assignment. I remember David Bassey, Editor-in-Chief for The Reporter called me early in the morning on April 7th, the day of the festival. I went to the paper's office to meet him, took a camera and started my assignment.

Bhakta: Why did you decide to pursue photography?

Shrestha: In 2017 over summer break, my roommate bought a brand-new camera. We started playing with it and I started feeling a connection to it. When we started classes in the fall, I took the camera to all

sorts of events on campus. At these events, I met other students who worked as photographers for The Reporter, which is how I began working for the paper as well.

Bhakta: What were you hoping to gain from photography?

Shrestha: In the beginning, it was just something for fun but as time passed, I got attached to it and it started to become a reason to spend time alone editing and managing pictures. During my First Year Experience class with Ginny Walters, we took a personality assessment. The results showed that I am an introvert person and I think it's true as I enjoy being myself. Photography fit well with my personality.

Once I really became interested in photography, I wanted to capture all the beautiful moments in my life and tell my story to people from different languages and cultures without having a language barrier. I wanted to let the pictures speak for me and wanted to be able to do that for other people too.

Bhakta: What have you learned from photography?

Shrestha: From photography, I have learned that friendship and networking both have important roles in order to improve skill and stay close to the photography profession.

Bhakta: What were some challenges you faced when you first started photography and how did you overcome them?

Shrestha: One of the biggest challenges was the lack of equipment. I did not have anything at the beginning. No camera, no photo editing software and not even a hard disk to store my photos. But once I started surrounding myself with photographers like me, those challenges seemed like nothing compare to the challenges my colleagues been through.

Bhakta: How has photography helped you to further the three honors competencies?

Shrestha: While doing photography for the university newspaper, I was able to experience three honors competencies in a number of ways. With global citizenship, I was able to meet people from various backgrounds through different university events, like the International Festival. These

experiences have helped me understand new cultures and traditions.

With research, before going on assignment, I would do a little research about the background of the events. This helped me to understand more about the people attending the event and event itself.

With leadership, in photography, I take the initiative to move forward and not hesitate pursuing what I am interested in. One of the qualities of leaders is to be passionate and stay motivated on their goals, and photography has allowed me to encompass that.

Bhakta: How has photography helped prepare you to pursue your goals after graduation?

Shrestha: After receiving my undergraduate degree, I want to combine engineering and photography in order to make positive changes in the community. As a career I would like to work in transportation engineering, and I think using my photography skills to document the construction and progress of the projects will come in handy.

Bhakta: How has photography allowed you to connect with people or organizations that can aid you in pursuing your goals?

Shrestha: While attending events around the university for the photos as the assignments for the university newspaper, I was able to connect with people and organizations of all kinds. I learned about different photography organizations that existed that would allow me to get more involved in the photographic world.

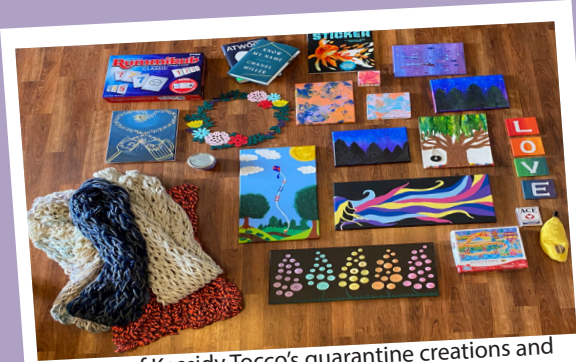
Bhakta: What did you learn about photography while working for the university paper?

Shrestha: Through working for the university newspaper, I was able to understand that as a photojournalist I need to act neutral and control my emotions while on assignment. Along with that, photographers really need to be patient with their work in order to capture the right moments.

What I have also learned so far is to keep trying. You might not have the right equipment to start the journey, but you do have the opportunity to control your experience.

(Shrestha's photography can be viewed in this edition's "Honors in Pictures.")

Honors in Pictures



Some of Kassidy Tocco's quarantine creations and activities keeping her busy, including reading and playing Bananagrams.



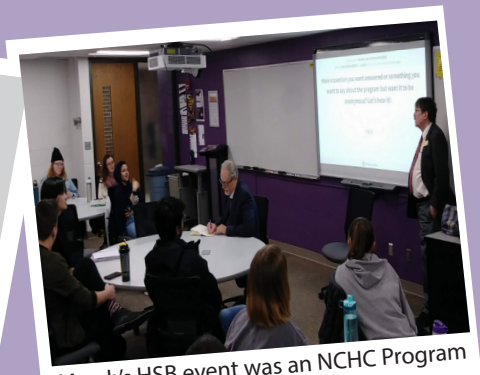
Some of the Honors Launch LC members with LCC Kade Patterson at the United Way Reading Festival, as a part of their MAD Project.



At January's Honors Student Body (HSB) Game Night, a group of students played an iconic game in the Lounge: Bananagrams (The game's bag makes for a good hat too!)



February's HSB event was a How-To Series where we learned how to crochet and even how to make Tik-Toks, among other activities.



March's HSB event was an NCHC Program Review Board panel where students gave input on the program. The Board visits our campus once every 4 years.



Photo taken by John Shrestha, for the MSU Reporter, featuring the Homecoming court with some fellow CAs, including our own Lizzie Putnam.



John Shrestha's photograph highlighting the diversity of Mankato, a photo which won 2nd place in the City of Mankato's annual photography contest in 2019.

Honors in Pictures



Ferdinand in Sevilla, Spain.



Ferdinand in Avila, Spain.



Ferdinand in Segovia, Spain.



Kiwanis Lights HSB event from December!



Throwback to the Honors Cabin from Fall..



...and Lake Ferdy at the cabin.



Our Junior Honors Marshals from Fall Commencement ceremonies.



Thinking very intently about their creations during our Fall HSB painting event...



A group of Honors students made their way to Insomnia Cookies, one of the many destinations of our Fall HSB Amazing Race event.

Forming Connections One Buddy at a Time

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

This article features an interview with outgoing Language Partners Coordinator Adriana Castelo about the program and its transition to the MavBuddies name.

TOCCO: What is the Language Partners Program? How does it work?

CASTELO: The Language Partners Program was created to facilitate our Intensive English Program (IEP) students' understanding of American culture and college life as well as to assist them with extra language practice. The tutoring sessions begin from the third week and continue until the 15th week of the semester. During these sessions that take place outside of class time, each IEP student is scheduled to meet with a Language Partner for 1 hour twice a week.

The Language Partners are students from the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato as well as other domestic students who volunteer to facilitate the tutoring sessions. These sessions have proven to be very helpful for all the IEP students.

TOCCO: What was the idea behind the name change to MavBuddies? Is there anything different about the program now being under the new name "MavBuddies"?

CASTELO: This year we decided to try a new name for it to match our school's spirit and make it easier for students to remember us.

We have made a few changes to the program such as organizing events that bring our domestic and IEP students together like movies, trivia and game night and a potluck towards the end of each semester.

TOCCO: What are some goals in mind for the program?

CASTELO: The language partners assist IEP students with cultural adaptation to U.S. and American university culture, answer questions regarding campus services, and provide guidance in accessing social and academic support systems on campus. The Language Partners encourage the IEP students to exchange information about their culture through conversations on cross-cultural topics.

TOCCO: What experiences are there to be had?

CASTELO: Students will meet with their buddy twice a week and go through some optional guided activities provided by us. Students also have the option to explore



Honors Student Finley Alexander with her MavBuddy, Poorna.


Minnesota and the resources Minnesota State University, Mankato has to offer. Many of our students go to sporting events on campus, go ice skating, get lunch together or explore the Twin Cities if they decide to hold their sessions during the weekend. The Center for English Language Programs also organizes one event per month where all the MavBuddies and international students in our program get together to participate in fun activities like movie nights, world trivia and potlucks.

TOCCO: How do you believe the program is furthering global citizenship, leadership, and research?

CASTELO: Our former MavBuddies are the best example of how meaningful this experience can be for a college student. Because of the Language Partners Program, many of our domestic students have decided to study abroad, learn a new language or participate in research projects that involve cross cultural interactions. Our students in IEP look forward to their weekly meeting with their buddies, since they are not only their friends but also mentors, true leaders and ambassadors of their Minnesota culture.

TOCCO: What are the benefits of being involved?

CASTELO: Students who join the MavBuddies program get to experience new languages and cultures, be cultural ambassadors to international students, make long-lasting friendships from around the world, improve their communication and networking skills, and build leadership skills to help them boost their resume.

This summer, the MavBuddies program will be doing an eight-week program between June 1 and July 24 where language partners will meet with each other online via Zoom. To learn more about the program, contact incoming Program Coordinator Matthias Sadusky at Matthias.sadusky@mnsu.edu or Academic Director Olga Nelson at olga.nelson@mnsu.edu. 

Fall 2020 Courses

An Exploration of Yoga: A Journey of Discovery (HONR 401),
Carly Hopper

This course will introduce students to the various limbs of yoga. Students will explore the philosophy of yoga as it relates to different types of issues around the globe, both past and present. Students will also develop self-awareness of how yoga can serve as a personal journey for themselves.

Populism, Globalism and Citizenship in the 21st Century (HONR 401),
Dr. Josh Birkenpas

This course will look into how populism, globalism and citizenship are interconnected in the 21st century. Students will look at the role that the citizen has in a global world and the concept of democratic self-governance in a global society.

Sensitivity to Disability (REHB110W),
Maurita Christensen

This course will focus on acquiring an enhanced sensitivity to the experience of disability by increasing awareness of the individual and the environmental factors that impact a person possessing a disability.

Developing Your Mentor Philosophy (HONR 401),
Dr. Leah White

This course will allow students to investigate leadership styles and methods as a means of guiding the development of each student's personal mentor philosophy to become more comfortable in a mentor role.

Full course descriptions can be found at: <http://www.mnsu.edu/honors/20202021courseshtml.html>

Honors Fun Corner: Word Search

by Jonathan Fjeld, '21

Clues:

1. In what city did Miranda stay at a hotel in while U.S. Customs was backed up on her way home from Spain?
2. Fill in the blank: The learning communities' MAD project in November was volunteering at a _____ festival.
3. Our graduate assistant Tomide is from what country?
4. What was Emma Grumke's major in while at Minnesota State Mankato?
5. What is the acronym of the firm Grumke currently works for?
6. Name the major that Alexis originally did when she came to Mankato.
7. John Shrestha has done photography for what MSU newspaper?
8. How are Cassidy and her fellow Speech & Debate teammates communicating to keep in-touch with each other and prepare for next season?
9. Which summertime baseball/softball league does Melanie coach for?
10. Beginning with the 2019-20 school, the English Language Partners Program is now being known by what name?



Big ideas. Real-world thinking.

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