

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Honors Portfolio

Spring 2019

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List of courses taken: History of American People to 1877 HONOR, Composition II, Honor, Honors Introduction to Theatre, Honors Principles of Biology I, Survey of World Literature to 1650-Honors, Survey of British Literature to Romanticism Honors

I joined the honors program in the fall of '16 and I never looked back. During the course of my involvement in the program, we were book matchmakers, amateur bakers, movers and shakers. I held the role of Secretary of the newly formed Honors Student Association; I was the first of many secretaries to come. Here we formed a fun-loving, compassionate group of like-minded academics and deep thinkers and here I found a place to belong, at least for a little while. And it was in the honors program that I would engage in the community, cultivate curiosity, and broaden my mind and perspectives on the world we live in.

There are many ways in which I, with my compatriots, engaged in the community. We participated in the spring festival by setting up a Blind Date with a Book booth. It was at this stall that we would meet and converse with various students and faculty while also helping them choose their new date for the day, a beautiful, fascinating novel. I did this event two years in a row. It is a tradition that we will continue as long there is a festival to attend.

Another engagement I would keep for two years would be the Senior Days event at the Shewmaker Center. I manned a booth and spoke to graduating high school students about the advantages of joining the honors program at Northwest Arkansas Community College as they began their college career. It is my sincere hope that I managed to draw in at least a few stragglers to our burgeoning program.

We also engaged in activities in our Northwest Arkansas community. We adopted a highway, one which we pledged to clean up a few times a year. Our home needed someone to clean it up, so we thought, why not us? It did not hurt that it looked good on our resume, per se, to have it listed that we as a program was helping clean up the neighborhood.

A fourth (and the last event I will mention here) event that a small group of us attended was a spectral stroll through downtown Rogers. We attended the annual ghost walk that the Rogers Historical Museum sponsored and promoted. Story-tellers spun yarns of local spirits and fired up our insatiable appetites to learn more about our local history.

During the many honors classes I took, one theme ran through it all: the need to learn more about the subject, to be well-versed and well-rounded and be forever cultivating our curiosity about our little blue-green planet. We were encouraged to ask questions and discuss at length the varied facets of the literature. In the world literature class I took, we spent the entire class time breaking down and trying to understand the words of Virgil through the tragic tale of Aeneas, the poetry of many great women in countries around the world, and the Mahabharata. I was so fascinated by the lengthy and fantastic Mahabharata that later I would borrow a superb retelling of the text from the self-same professor that introduced me to it to begin with.

Through this world literature class, a biology class, a theatre class, an American history class, a British literature class, and a Composition II class, a doorway was opened for me. All of these professors and the people who took the class alongside me showed me how religion, politics, and ideals of love, family, etc. could be thought of in a different way. I was just one insignificant speck in the middle of a maelstrom of minds all seeing the world in a way that I had not known. American history was darker and less patriotic when taught through the lens of a pragmatist. Biology and science when taught not from the standpoint of a fundamentalist Christian but from the point of a rationalist piqued my interest and had me yearning for more. There was a whole other realm of thought and ideas out there of which I had just scratched the surface. And I wanted to dig a hell of a lot deeper.

These experiences shaped and molded me into an intelligent and open-minded human being and I take these concepts and ideals with me into the workplace and further into my college career. I am taking a gap year in preparation for my adventure into a four-year university.

Missouri Southern State University has been calling my name and I cannot wait to see what else I will accomplish and be a part of when I answer. I was taught critical thinking, i.e. using my gray matter for something other than brute memorization and song lyrics. And I was shown how to begin to understand other peoples' beliefs and viewpoints. I am able to form deeper human connections and use these connections to be successful in work and academics.

This is the point in the essay when I struggle for how to continue. What should I say now? On the assignment sheet, it says to write "one experience I had while a member that I would like to share." Well, let's see, shall we? We have spoken at length about the festivals, the booths, and the road. Maybe the bake sale would be a good story? No, that is rather boring, true. Here, how about I tell the story of how we got kicked off campus in the middle of the night. Ready for a thriller?

It was late November, mid-week, and we were gathering in Student Center room 108, for the uninitiated few, that is the first floor convention room in the Becky Paneitz Student Center off Bogle Plaza. It was to be the night of the Secret Santa party or "holiday extravaganza" as Sabrina so sensationally put it. I had been given the name of a woman who was sick and could not make it so I gave it to the aforementioned Sabrina for safekeeping, and it was she who got me for the event. So I got a cup of highlighters, a play, and a bookmark that extolled the virtues of being an avid reader. I brought a cream cheese ball that wasn't really spherical in shape and not one that I had made, rather I had nicely forced my mother to make it for me. What can I say? The kitchen is not for me, ya'll. I had also brought along a word game called *The Game of Things*. Someone else brought Uno, and another brought a deck of playing cards. So a dedicated group of us played spoons, Uno, and 'Things' until the alarm sounded to leave the building and the lights went out. Well, what should we do now? I know! The Honors Lounge, excuse me, STUDY AREA, was just across the plaza and up the stairs. So we hauled our veggie platters, fruit assortments, soda, and lemonade, (because no party is complete without it, darlings) across the cobbled circle and up two flights of stairs. Every other light in the building dimmed and went dark and yet we still giggled and laughed and played 'Things.' I read out the answers to a chorus of chuckling college kids and the concept of time was a far-fetched fantastical thing. That is until we got a hesitant greeting at the door...the campus cops were onto us. We were in trouble now. How late was it? What day was it? "I'm sorry to break up your party. Looks like you were having a lot of fun." We apologized back and filed sheepishly out of the room and outside as the doors shut and locked behind us. The sky was clear, the air mildly chilly, and the night rang with the sounds of mirth as we shuffled off to our cars and drove away home.

Now we get to the final farewell, the end of an era, the passage of time. I am leaving the campus now and I know it to be unlikely that I will return, but maybe, just maybe I will come back for a cup of coffee and friendly conversation with the professors who gave me new eyes. If not though, if I leave and a return is not my fate, then I have one last thing to say before I go. Take care of each other, proofread her paper if she asks, and pay for his coffee if he forgot his change at home. What you put in will come back so put in only good, only kindness. Remember to ask all the questions and don't be afraid of the answers. It may be exactly what someone needs to hear.