

# HONORS PROGRAM NEWS

Spring Arts \* Alumni \* Faculty Updates \* Great Plains \* Awards Gala

## Spring Arts & Culture Festival

Honors Program Director Sabrina Chesne hosted "Honors: Reimagining Education," a panel of Honors Program members, old and new, highlighting the benefits of the program in their academic and personal lives.

- ✦ Dr. Matt Evans discussed the Model United Nations opportunity he offers in his political science classes with Connor Odom, Mikayla Ellender, and Tarun Eisen.
- ✦ Honors Program members Ashley Luzzi '21, Ben Kuykendall '21, Shonna Enzo, Eric Halsell, and Katherine Rees talked alongside new students Kassidy Bauer, Ellie Godfrey, Emily Patten, Naomi Hagan, and Natalia Lewis about the benefits of the program.
- ✦ Honors Program literature courses were featured with Prof. Jim Laughton and students Shalene Miller, Robert Williams, and Adam Baker.

(cont. on page 2)



## Alumni Interviews

ALUMNA DANIELA MARTINEZ ('20, pictured on pg. 3) is an NWACC Honors Program Graduate and current student at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway. We had the opportunity to ask her some questions about her transfer process to UCA, as well as her experience as a DACA recipient and a member of the LatinX Theatre Project.

### *When did you graduate from NWACC?*

I graduated from NWACC this past Spring of 2020. For myself, as well as countless other graduates, graduation was different that year. While I was a Northwest Arkansas Community College student, I envisioned myself at the finish line with black cap and gown. I looked forward to graduating with Honors and spending that celebration beside many other Honors Program graduates. I knew transitioning from NWACC would be a significant change; however, I would never have imagined how much my life would change, and everyone else's lives during [the pandemic]. Nevertheless, graduating from NWACC has been one of the proudest accomplishments in my life. I am the first of four daughters to graduate with an associate degree and continue my education at a four-year university. I graduated from NWACC when life could not get more surreal. Through these times, I reminisce about experiences and memories NWACC gave me and use them to push me through out my new journey.

### *What is your current degree plan?*

My current degree plan is to obtain a Bachelor of Arts degree. I plan to major in English and minor in teaching.

*(Spring Arts cont.)*

- ♦ Alumni sent in video greetings from different locations around the country:
  - ♦ Rob Lee '12 from Wisconsin, where he is an attorney at Midwest Environmental Advocates
  - ♦ Richard DeCampa '16 and Veronica Garcia-Carvajal '17 from Florida, where each recently completed a master's degree, in Sociology from University of South Florida and in Accounting from St. Leo University, respectively
  - ♦ Kaitlin Johnson '19 from in front of the Colosseum, as she attends the American University in Rome
- ♦ Bernadette Holt '18, Kimberly Kay '19, Reece Hodgson '19, Olivia Schaap '20, and Sophie Horan '20, who are all studying at the University of Arkansas, shared their experiences in the program.

*What are your plans for the future (work and/or school)?*

Often my plans tend to be what helps me through the present. I have always wanted to participate in work-study positions at school. However, it has been difficult being accepted since I do not qualify for FAFSA. I do not qualify for federal aid being a DACA recipient, also known as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. Thankfully, the Honors Program has paved the way for me to continue my education. Currently, I am on my way to becoming a resident of the United States. I dream of the day I can share my journey with my future students. My plan for my future is to obtain my B.A. and move towards a master's degree. I would like to be an English teacher and teach the subject itself and creative writing courses. While being a teacher, I would like to be even more involved in the school community and students' lives by being a cross country coach. I hope to inspire students not only one lecture at a time but one mile at a time as well!

*What do you wish people knew about honors courses or the Honors Program?*

I wish people knew it would provide them with a completely different experience instead of not taking courses or participating in the program. Honors courses always helped me improve my mindfulness, whether profoundly engaging with the materials or reshaping how I thought about my life. The lectures in my honors courses became my favorite parts of the day. They always enriched my life with exciting artists, philosophers, writers, musicians, language, cultures, etc. It is not hard to become a creative being in this program and taking these courses since they offer you so much and inspire you to "think outside the box".

*What is the transfer process like?*

The transfer process felt a bit rushed. Living [in the pandemic] made the way to the University of Central Arkansas a bit blurry. One of the most critical changes in my life was moving out of my parents' house and becoming more independent in several different ways. I was mostly on my own during the transfer process. I often spent my time researching up to date site from the university. I looked up the enrollment process and the steps you have to take before officially becoming a UCA Bear. It was also crucial to look at their essential calendar dates and the new policies



**Alumnus Daniela Martinez '20**

due to Covid-19. However, I could not have known what classes best suited me without the help of the transfer services at NWACC; I learned about UCA programs, such as the 2+2 program. The transfer process was a lot of self-research but possible.

### *How would you compare and contrast the Honors Program at NWACC and UCA?*

It is a goal to join the Honors Program here at UCA. I have not been able to self-research on how to join and the requirements their program has.

### *What is one last thing you want us to know about?*

I have just completed a year being part of the LatinX Theatre Project. I became a part of the ensemble last fall during my last year at NWACC. I was in their last production of *The Crossroads* and now play Luna's role in our new tech-based production of *Heroes and Monsters*. I have been truly blessed to grow as an artist and an individual being around talented artists and individuals. They have given me a means of expression and the freedom to use my voice. In them, I have found the comfort and strength to continue to speak out and "act" out on the issues POC continue to face every day.

Through them, I have found the support of always trying to improve my artist skills. I always find a significant amount of

happiness being part of something bigger than myself...being part of LXTP. Watch *Heroes and Monsters* at [LatinX](#). \*

**ALUMNUS GAVIN SMITH ('10, pictured on pg. 4)** is an NWACC Honors Program Graduate and current business owner and civil engineer. We caught up with him to discuss how the Honors Program affected him, and what he's up to now.

### *What is your current degree plan?*

My current degree plan is to never get another degree. I graduated from the University of Arkansas with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a minor in sustainability in 2013. Because I switched between two different courses of study, from asian studies to civil engineering, my undergraduate degree took seven years. That is more than enough school for anyone.

### *What are your plans for the future (work and/or school)?*

Since earning my degree, I worked in several capacities as a civil engineering intern before getting the requisite experience for my Professional Engineering License. I earn my [Professional Engineer] stamp in 2019 and have since set on my own as an engineer and small business owner. In addition to engineering work, I work as a problem solver for anyone with an interesting project, especially if it pertains to woodworking. Right now, I am working on several projects simultaneously; I am designing a stormwater park for the City of Conway, designing and building a natural pond/swimming pool, designing and building a historic log cabin, designing and

working for approval on a commercial shop building and a subdivision, building display platforms for a mathematical exhibition, and helping a steady flow of walk-in clients with residential structural, foundation, and stormwater issues.

### *What do you wish people knew about honors courses or of the Honors Program?*

I sincerely wish they understood the sublime difference between difficult and challenging. A challenge can be difficult but is rewarding. No one likes drudge work and I assume many might skip the Honors Program to avoid extra work. That is a smart way to operate but misses the very real reward of crafting something you love as opposed to completing a task that is less meaningful to you. I in no way want to denigrate non-honors courses. They can be just as rewarding and challenging. NWACC, like many community colleges, has built an amazing faculty of smart teachers who love teaching more than the academic publish or perish struggle. But an honors course is a special outlet for the teachers to bring out their best idea. Another great secret is the inherent participation of the students and teachers in the Honors Program. There is a lot of apathy in the world and it can be overwhelming to be in a class packed with people who do not know why they are there and don't care about what they are doing. That is not true in the honors classes. It's all Hermione and no Ron. Everyone in the program chose to be there.



**Alumnus Gavin Smith '10**

### *What is your favorite memory from the Honors Program?*

I have several great memories, but one that sticks out is from Honors Western Civ. Chris Huggard is a fanatic for the French Revolution. I think he did some big part of his graduate work on it. When the class swings to the French Revolution he gets really excited and goes into a kamikaze

explanation of exactly where everyone who was anyone was standing at the storming of Bastille. His enthusiastic story telling sheds light not only on the historical facts, but also demonstrates the zeal the crowd must have had. He really gets into it and really takes you there.

## **What are the honors faculty up to?**

### **NorthWest Arkansas Holocaust Awareness Project**

Dr. Matt Evans (political science) and Dr. Sevin Gallo (world civilizations) are members of the NorthWest Arkansas Holocaust Awareness Project, which seeks to educate about the basic facts of the Jewish genocide during WWII, as well as apply the knowledge and implications to today's events. The group hosts many public events, including two upcoming book discussions: Peter Hayes' *Why? Explaining the Holocaust* and Primo Levi's *The Periodic Table*.

For more information, visit their [website](#) or contact:

Dr. Matt Evans  
[mevans8@nwacc.edu](mailto:mevans8@nwacc.edu)

Dr. Sevin Gallo  
[sgallo@nwacc.edu](mailto:sgallo@nwacc.edu)

### **Honors Research Poster Symposium**

Sharon Fox (gender studies and literature) and Jacqueline Jones (literature) have been working on the poster symposium for honors students to present their work. (cont. on page 5)



*Favorite class or instructor?*

Jim Laughton. I liked all my classes, but Honors Comp 1 was my favorite. His teaching style and the atmosphere he creates in class are a perfect example of what the Honors Program can be. Each class period is a symposium and each assignment is an evolving personal project. I still benefit from the beginning of class literary allusions quiz. A quip in conversation about a "grey eminence" or an "artful dodger" lands squarely. The different essay assignments were exciting.

*What did the Honors Program offer you?*

The Honors Program gave me a place to shine and grow as a writer, a thinker, a student, and as a classmate. It offered me a place to connect with the other students at school who knew what they wanted and were excited to learn and work.

Gavin Smith is a practicing civil engineer and can be found online at: [www.grsmithcivilengineering.com](http://www.grsmithcivilengineering.com) \*

(symposium cont.) The idea behind the showcase is to give participating classes a unique project that connects and prepares them for various conference opportunities, as well as provide interdisciplinary learning. Next year's round of posters will be displayed at the inaugural event in spring of 2022.

## Great Plains Honors Council Conference

Eric Halsell and Shonna Enzio were first time participants in the Great Plains Honors Council Conference this past March, which was virtually hosted by the Redwine Honors Program at MSU Texas. Here's a bit about their experiences.

### Conversation with Eric Halsell, Associate of Science, Liberal Arts and Sciences

*What are you presenting at the conference?*

I'm actually presenting a Poli Sci essay that I did in Professor [Matt] Evans' class. The title, well my final title is, "Agent Within the Structure: How Gorbachev Himself Empowered the Baltic Awakening", so really it's a look at how Michael Gorbachev, in trying to push perestroika and glasnost, actually acted as, in non-violent resistance, what you would call an agent. He behaved as an agent, even though he represented and was the structure. So as far as political science goes, and non-violent resistance goes, I think that there's a lot more there that we can chew on and learn from. And somebody agreed, so I get to present [laughs].

*When did you start on it?*

So that was two semesters ago. One semester, two semesters ago? And to be honest, I probably started on it a week before it was due [laughs]. I'm sure that I didn't get any awesome head start, but, to be frank, man I have to give it up to Professor Evans. Um, I was



having a rough time, I was writing to impress, not to write well. He was one of the first ones that, ya'know, kinda tapped me and he was like "hey man...you don't need all that" [laughs]. Syllables don't win, the message wins. So he really helped me to...trim the fat, as it were.

### *What were some of your expectations?*

Well, this was my first time around doing the Great Plains Honor Convention, as it is also my first academic presentation. So yeah, I was a little nervous. [Professor Evans] was really helpful in reaching out and asking, "man, how can I help you?" And Professor [Sabrina] Chesne was the same way, "do you need to practice? Do you need to work on your PowerPoint?" There were some expectations from the conference that I didn't expect to have. I didn't expect to have a PowerPoint presentation to go along with my verbal, and I didn't expect to find that out less than a week before it was due. As a non-traditional student, I don't just work a full time job, I own my own business. So you have life and you have life and you have all the things and so when you are taking classes online because you have to, it makes all the difference when your professors walk that one mile to meet you. I absolutely understand walking the extra mile as a student, but it is really cool when they do. And it makes all the difference, because to me, man, it's "do I go to bed at midnight", or "do I go to bed at two in the morning". It's awesome when a professor hits you up and says, "Hey, is there anything you need? Hey, can I give you a hand?" \*

### **Conversation with Shonna Enzio, Associate of Arts**

#### *What are you presenting at the conference?*

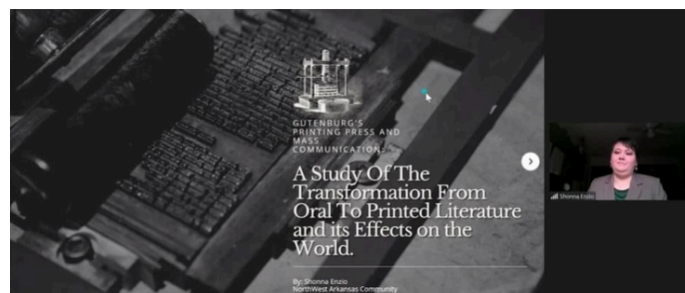
I wrote a paper last semester that ended up being about forty-five pages in length because I fell in love with the material I was researching. A lot of the research included British literature topics like King Arthur and then when through oral to printed dissemination. I wanted the opportunity to present at Great Plains, not because it was a contest, but because I wanted to share the fascinating research that I had done with broader audience. The research is important today because it gives us a platform to see how people have used mass communication in the past and judge if we are using the technology we have today to its fullest potential.

#### *Did you have any expectations going in?*

I don't know that I had many expectations. I think for me this would be more that I have a hope that people will enjoy the presentation that I have put together and that they might learning something or even evaluate their current use of technology and possible find a way to elevate their usage of it.

#### *Tell us a little more about your field of research.*

My research was on mass communication through the lens of British literature with a focus on the era of the Saxon invasion through the Renaissance. In my research, I learned that for mass communication to be effective, it must be broke down into its smallest form, which is what computers do. However, the first form of communication that offered this was the printing press Gutenberg created. This was not the first press in existence, but



the first press that broke communication own into its smallest form, one letter. We make a pilgrimage through literature starting with oral history and the bard, then moving to how these oral tales evolved over time. To see this evolution, I follow the story of King Arthur and the men that scholars think he was. We then jump ahead to Martin Luther and his 96 Thesis, then to the courts of Queen Elizabeth I. From here we review Prior Restraint laws and activists such as John Milton and how pamphlets shaped activism. Then we finally move to the reformation where we look at some of the famous writers of their time and look at how how many of the things we take for granted today owe their existence to the printing press. After this, we are then able to evaluate how we choose to use technology today. \*

## Honors End-of-the-Year Gala (April 26, 2021)

The annual Honors Awards Gala went virtual this year! The "Zoom Gala" honored outstanding students (chosen by faculty) and outstanding instructors (chosen by students), as well as Honors Program Graduates and Honors Distinguished students. Graduating Honors Program students were also awarded their graduation medallions. The recipients picked up their awards from campus prior to the event, enclosed in brown paper bags, and opened them during live on camera. The awards are as follows:

### Outstanding Honors Students:

Alejandro Pulido-Ruiz (bottom left)  
 April Bartlett  
 Danielle Gloy '21 (second right)  
 Heather Ross (bottom right)  
 Isabelle Payne  
 Kassidy Bauer (fifth left)  
 Katharine Rees (second center)  
 Kristin Williams '21 (third right)  
 Nhan Pham '21  
 Shonna Enzo (top left)  
 Taitum Meyer (fourth right)  
 Yazmine Fontaine

### Outstanding Honors Faculty:

Jim Laughton  
 Lois Chun (fourth left)  
 Matt Evans (top right)  
 Megan Looney (third left)  
 Sabrina Chesne  
 Sharon Fox (fifth right)  
 Steve Cooper

### Honors Distinguished Students:

*(completed three honors courses)*

Ben Kuykendall '21 (bottom center)

### Honors Program Graduates:

*(completed four or more honors courses)*

Areli Cabrera '21  
 (fourth center)  
 Danielle Gloy '21  
 (second right)

### Honorary Award:

Ashley Luzzi (second left) was awarded an honorary medallion for her participation and assistance, and to acknowledge her importance to the program and the program to her.

