



Kimberly R. Kay

Honors Courses Taken:

General Psychology (Online)

History of American People to 1500 (Online)

Intro to Philosophy

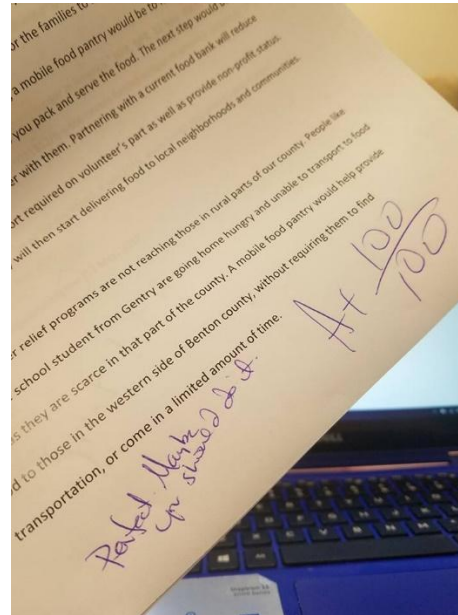
Sociology (Online)

Graduation Date: May 11th, 2019

The Honors Program at Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) allowed me to engage in the classroom in a new way. Since I took half my classes online during my time at NWACC, I was happily surprised by the amount of discussion and engagement that happened in my honors courses. My fellow students and I posted several times a week and engaged in meaningful conversation that helped me further develop my knowledge of the class material. Discussions were not limited and conflicting ideas were encouraged to be discussed. Likewise, professors joined in on the conversation and continually provided impactful feedback to every assignment. The honors program allowed me to meet students and professors from a variety of different backgrounds who have many different perspectives, my own perspectives were challenged in a respectful way and I have been able to broaden my horizons and gain more understanding. One example of my perspectives being challenged is when I was taking sociology my professor and I had very different viewpoints on almost everything, we were able to have respectful discussions and share information with each to support our ideas, while my viewpoint did not change I grew a greater knowledge of others viewpoints and my own. I also learned how to voice my opinion with others in a respectful way.

Within the honors program, I have been able to research ideas and thoughts that I have and take my learning beyond the classroom, my curiosity and questioning are encouraged and others have always been there along the way to provide insight to my questions. My participation in the honors program has allowed me to go from being a student to a lifelong learner, and encouraged me to find the answers to the “why?”. I have also learned that challenging the “why” is okay, and if there is not a solution a problem then I can become part of the team that creates the solution.

One example of when learning expanded outside the classroom is during the end of my first semester at NWACC we were told to write a paper on a problem in our area, we had to research the problem and propose a solution in our essay. When I began looking for problems that affected my local area I found that a huge problem in Arkansas and Northwest Arkansas is hunger insecurity. Many people both adults and children in my area do not know where their next meal will come from. While the solution that I proposed in that paper was not something that I could make come to life as a student, I now had my eyes opened to this problem that affects my local community. I got involved in the hunger insecurity service project on campus, I worked along a group of other students to create a presentation and pull together information about hunger insecurity to educate others. We gave our presentation and shared the



of



information with fellow students and the community. I did not want to just educate others, however, I wanted to do something and take action. I connected with a local non-profit that had this idea of connecting local restaurants on a mobile app where someone who is hunger insecure could go pick up food that would be otherwise thrown out or wasted thus reducing food waste and hunger insecurity at the same time. I got to help with initial prototyping of this idea in Northwest Arkansas, I also learned about the NWA food bank which brings mobile food pantries all across northwest Arkansas, I was able to volunteer several hours in their warehouse supporting their efforts to abolish hunger insecurity.

My participation in the honors program has helped me develop many skills that will aid me in the next chapter of my life which includes working full time as a floor supervisor at the Amazeum which is a local science museum and being a full-time online student at the University of Arkansas. I have learned how to communicate in a variety of ways with a plethora of

On the outside I appear to be your typical straight out of high school college student, you wouldn't know unless you asked all that I have experienced. Growing up in a home that foster and adopted, we had an open door and had many children and families from a range of experiences who lived life with us at different times in my life. I learned what life was like for them and got to see life through a variety of different viewpoints.

While attending school I work several jobs in different industries because of this I am able to meet and interact with people going so many different paths in life. I grew up on a hobby farm and was homeschooled, while in Highschool I was captain of a robotics team. From showing cattle, building a robot, or writing a business plan I did it all and excelled in all that I did.

I want for my legacy as a business student to be somebody that has made a difference. I want to empower those that I work with and continue to learn and grow even after graduating. I want to be known as someone who always gives their best and gives back to others.



different people this skill has already become so helpful in my life as my current job is heavily focused on communicating with team members. Creating and giving presentations about what I learned in classes, or about the honors programs came with ease throughout my time in the program and public speaking became natural. Since I took many classes online I became a better writer and learned how to effectively articulate my ideas and thoughts on paper. This will be such an important skill for me in the future as my last two years will be in a fully online program. The honors program offered so much opportunity that time management and organization became like second-hand nature as a student. I learned how to budget time for class, homework, service, and fellowship with other students. Through the program I also gained Tenacity and a strong work ethic, I learned that grades don't come without hard work but that the work was worth it. Everything was not always easy and the problem often arose but I learned how much I could overcome and what my full potential really is. All of these skills will be so important to me accomplishing my long-term goal of being a lawyer.

While in the Honors program, I got to know a fellow student really well, this student became one of my best friends. It is hard to choose a favorite experience with this member because we have so many but if I have to choose just one I think it would be during one of our research meetings. We were both also members of Phi Theta Kappa



Honor Society

the honor society for two-year college students. We worked together on researching the study topic of transformation, we would meet every week and learned about how the workforce has changed and continues to change, we had so many discussions about what this change looks like and what we could do to better prepare children for tomorrow's workforce. After many weeks of research and talking with experts in the field of k-12 education, we developed a curriculum and shared it with

local teachers to help children become learners rather than information repeaters. This experience with her was just another example to me of how as a student I can become more than just a student and help create and make the change in my community. I also was able to make a lifelong friendship that I will always cherish.

- 1) In this article we will be highlighting the aspect of inquiry-based learning (IBL) and how it implements the skills and knowledge students need to obtain to prevail in the workforce environment. Because the workforce is rapidly changing, the methods and ways students are taught need to enact the same strategies and skills that are needed once employed. By speaking and inquiring thoughts and opinions with local teachers and educational specialists, along with our research concerning the impacts of IBL, and the different aspects of how it affects students and teachers, we were able to specialize a curriculum that is not only beneficial to both teachers and students but also help apply the same criteria that is revealed in the workforce. With this, the inquiry-based curriculum was passed on to local middle school teachers, and professors teaching classes of future teachers. It is our belief that, by enforcing this style of learning as a regular game plan for schools, there will be an impact in the workforce, especially among young adolescents, that can utilize their learning skills with their working skills by using their resources and abilities to find what they need rather than constantly be dictated with knowledge, which is inefficiently the modernized way of learning today.
- 2) Theme 3 – Worlds of Work
- 3) We began by reading through the Honors in Action guide, and discussing each topic while thinking about things we have experienced or seen in the world around us. We also thought about current events and things that shaped us into who we are as people today. At first we began talking about wages, and people who work when they are "off the clock" or whom work more than forty hours a week as full time states. Upon exploration many hours of research, and talking to a political science professor we came up with a plan to create a new bill similar to Obama's stimulus bill from 2014 that was struck down. We wanted to modify the bill and propose it; however, we decided that the reality of being able to write and get a sponsor for the bill in the current political environment was not realistic so we went back the drawing board. One member shared information about the decline in work ethic that she had seen in her peers; this led to a discussion about the news that we see about technology expanding and job changing. Another member shared an interview that they had heard on the news regarding the need for employees to be dynamic and learn new traits—even if it meant changing careers several times during their lifetime.
- 4) With this in mind, we commenced our research on a few main questions that we wanted to analyze: How are schools preparing children for the workforce? How is the workforce changing? What methods are schools currently using to instill knowledge? What role does inquiry have in an educational environment? Through our research, we found that an employee's ability to learn new skills is more significant than retaining facts ("Why the rise of AI makes 'mental resilience' so important", 2018). Instead of learning to regurgitate information, students need to grow a love for independent learning, inquiry, and discovery ("Engaging Young Learners Through Inquiry-Based Learning", 2015). Some disagree with this research because test

scores are generally higher in schools that push retaining information; however, student success in life post-education is expected to be higher as a product of inquiry-based learning environments ("Which Education System Can Prepare Our Children for the Jobs of the Future?", 2014). We decided to speak with teachers and educational specialists regarding their thoughts on this topic. A local education specialist, Sarah Weeden, told us her thoughts and shared how some schools are implementing inquiry through field trips to the Amazon (a local science museum for children). Although the museum encourages inquiry, which is essentially "child led learning," a lot of teachers "have a hard time letting go of the control and letting the kids lead the discovery" (S. Weeden, personal communication, September 26, 2018). A charter school in Brooklyn has adopted a new concept called the "Greenfield model." This model is "student-directed," and the school has "expeditions" three times a year that allow the students to dive into their interests (Taylor, 2018). The model supports their sense of identity and community: "The aim is to cultivate students who are more self-directed and resilient, as well as to give parents confidence in their ability to support their children through the challenges of college" (Taylor, 2018). Another study that we read discussed a case in which students took the lead in a sophomore class of education majors. The students were expected to learn before class and then discuss and further their knowledge when in class ("Journal of Education and Training Studies, 2016). Students were found to be more knowledgeable of included topics than their traditional student peers in the long run, and they were more excited when teaching the information to others ("Journal of Education and Training Studies, 2016). All of our research led us to one crucial question: In what ways can educators make their curriculum and methods of teaching more relevant in preparing children for tomorrow's dynamic work environment? "Preparing our children for the jobs of tomorrow requires the implementation of a flexible curriculum that equips students with skills that are simultaneously generic and transferable. Furthermore, these skills need to teach kids how to become learners" ("Why the rise of AI makes 'mental resilience' so important", 2018). It is not completely clear what the world of work will look like in twenty—or alone fifty—years' time; therefore, we should prepare students with common, interpersonal skills, in addition to providing them with traditional, educational knowledge. This idea could be represented by not only teaching a child about photosynthesis, but also letting them work with their peers to analyze a leaf; their emotional intelligence can be developed alongside their academic intelligence—as a complement, instead of a substitute. We can also aid the child in developing a love for learning with this method. More than simply learning information, they can learn how to teach themselves. Teachers have started to utilize inquiry-based methods in the classroom, but these ideas are hardly polished and rarely incorporated into the everyday school environment. Letting students take the lead in the classroom creates learners who know how to teach themselves, and encouraging their discovery creates a love of learning. These crucial qualities are what is missing from many employees in the workforce today.

If I could say just one thing to a future or even current honors member it would be to take advantage of everything at NWACC that you can. The honors program is a prime example of an opportunity that you should not let pass you by. Being apart of the honors program gives you the opportunity to be in smaller classes that dive deeper and do more. From participating in community service projects to discussions in the honors lounge this program offers so much, you just have to jump in with two feet and take advantage of all that is offered to you.