

McKenzi Brinkley

Honors Classes: Survey of the Universe, History of the American People to 1877, General Geology 1, Intro to the United Nations, and History of the American People Since 1877.

Graduation: Spring 2019



## **Section One:**

As an honors student the words community, curiosity, and diversity are never far away. When I first joined honors I didn't think much about the motto but as I look back on my time in the NWACC Honors Program I can clearly see how these values were a part of my journey every step of the way.

The honors program provided me with a community of students who had the same academic values as me. I knew that everytime I used the study area I would see friendly faces. I truly appreciated and enjoyed the sense of community I got from being a part of the honors program. I knew that there was a group of people that I could count on for both advice and a good chat.

I benefited from classrooms where students took an active role in the learning process. I was able to engage with students and see topics from multiple points of view. My honors classes challenged me to approach problems by thinking outside the box. The focus of these classes was on a deeper understanding of the material, not just the homework. I also felt like I had more freedom when it came to projects or finals. I could explore the topics that interested me instead of working on a cookie cutter project.

Of course my curiosity wouldn't have been piqued even with this class structure if it weren't for my professors. It was clear that my honors professors were passionate about their subject and wanted to make sure that each student understood the material. My honors classes have hands down been my favorite classes because of the atmosphere the professors created. It was always a relaxed environment where discussions and questions were encouraged.

Being a part of the honors program also exposed me to classes that I may have not explored otherwise and because of that I'm a more well rounded student. The honors program also exposed me to people from different backgrounds. Discussing different topics and hearing different opinions and viewpoints was one of my favorite parts about spending time in the lounge. I feel extremely lucky to have met and befriended the people I have. They are the ones who have made my time here at NWACC memorable. Their encouragement and friendship are the things that I'll take with me as I transfer to university.

## **Section Two:**

The honors program has helped prepare me for university in many ways. One of the most noticeable ways is my confidence. When I started at NWACC I was extremely shy and introverted. I was more than happy to just listen to a conversation instead of participate in it.

As I spent time at NWACC and in the Honors Program that began to change. I was able to come out of my shell and be more active in student life. I was surrounded by other students who were welcoming and had the same academic goals as I did. I felt comfortable and welcome in the Honors Program from day one. Because of this I was able to build my confidence.

My Honors classes also helped me develop my critical thinking skills in classes like Geology and Astronomy. I studied things from the composition of rocks on our planet to galaxies light years from our local group. I was challenged to ask questions I'd never thought of before and then answer them (or at least find the right source for that answer). These challenges sharpened my critical thinking skills and bolstered my confidence in my own abilities. This skill will be invaluable as I continue my education.

### **Section Three:**



After two years in the Honors Program there are many moments that stand out when I think back on my time at NWACC.

During my first semester I took Honors Survey of the Universe with Dr. Androes. Like many other Honors classes we had a semester long project. I expected the project to be like others I had worked on in the past. However, Dr. Androes had us create a lesson plan based on the solar system. Each person created a lesson plan and powerpoint on a celestial body in our solar system (I had the Kuiper Belt). At the end of the semester we got together, had pizza, and shared our projects. Throughout the semester we had worked together in order for our final project to, hopefully, be a permanent display at NWACC. I believe this project will remain one of my favorite experiences throughout my college career.

At the beginning of my second semester I decided to get together with other students and start the astronomy club at NWACC. The creation of the club wouldn't have been possible without the help of other honors students and honors professors. Dr. Androes and Dr. Auld agreed to be our advisors and guided us as we figured out the best way to run our club. Our advisors truly cared (and still do!) about the club's success; and of course I could count on Honors students to take on leadership roles and really help the club develop. I'm so thankful to both the students and professors who were a part of the creation of the astronomy club. Being able to be a part of the club was definitely one of my favorite experiences at NWACC.

Another favorite experience of mine was the two field trips my geology class took to a trail in Bella Vista with Professor Phillips. We were able to put what we had learned in class to use. We hiked while we examined different rock formations and when we found one on our list, we posed for a picture with it. These sunny days allowed us to enjoy the outdoors and apply what we had learned in class to the world around us.



### **Section Four:**

To incoming students I'd encourage you to remember to utilize the resources around you. Whether it's your professors' office hours, counseling, advising, etc. They're there to help and they *will* make your life easier. So if you find yourself thinking you don't have time for these things, make time because you'll be better for it in the long run.

If you're shy like I was, don't worry about whether or not you're going to make friends. The Honors Program has a relaxed atmosphere and you'll always find a friendly face in the study area. You'll quickly make friends and wonder why you were so worried in the first place. Just be yourself and you'll fit right in!

The semesters go by quickly and before you know it you'll be moving on to the next phase of your life. So take advantage of the opportunities around you whether it's game night with the other honors students or a play put on by NWACC students. Don't

be afraid to join a club (or start one). It's a great way to be involved and find other students who have similar interests.

Take the time to get to know those around you and don't forget to thank your professors, advisor, and anyone else who has made it possible for you to succeed at NWACC.