



# Josiah Vallone

AFA Creative Writing  
Class of 2020

## Honors Courses:

- Composition II
- Introduction to Theatre
- American Literature to Civil War
- British Literature to Romanticism

“I can’t believe that,” said Alice.

“Can’t you?” the Queen said in a pitying tone. “Try again; draw a long breath, and shut your eyes.”

Alice laughed. “There’s no use trying,” she said; “one can’t believe impossible things.”

“I dare say you haven’t had much practice,” said the Queen. “When I was your age I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast...”

*Through the Looking Glass*  
*Lewis Carroll*

## Section I

Going into college, I didn't expect to graduate or last more than a few semesters. I didn't expect that I'd find amazing professors. I didn't expect to make friends or join any clubs/programs. It was in the spring of 2018 that I joined the Honors Program and became more engaged in my education and college community than I had ever anticipated.

Being a natural introvert, the community aspect of the Honors Program was not something I had experienced until my third semester at NWACC. During that time, I had decided live in my sedan full-time as an experiment to document the experience for an essay I was writing in a nonfiction course. What I originally planned as a two-week experiment had suddenly turned into a two-month endeavor. This meant that I was spending the majority of the hours in my day inside the study area dedicated to honors students. In those few months, I met some great students, had a lot of amazing conversations, and became friends with some great people. The following semester, due to life events that severely impacted my personal and school life, I felt extremely secluded, unprotected, and silenced. If it was not for the community of friends who offered me encouragement and support, I imagine I would have dropped out of NWACC. The encouragement from both my fellow honors students and honors professors is something I will always be thankful for.



The community of the honors program has not just affected me personally, it has also given me the opportunity to reach out into the community that is around NWACC. During my time with honors, I have participated in the trash pickups every semester. I was also been gifted with the opportunity to help volunteer at Magnolia's Alzheimer's home in Rogers, where us honors students have gone to spend quality time with the elderly. It was through these events that I realized how the honors program does not just build a community within the walls of the school, it also supports the community outside of it.

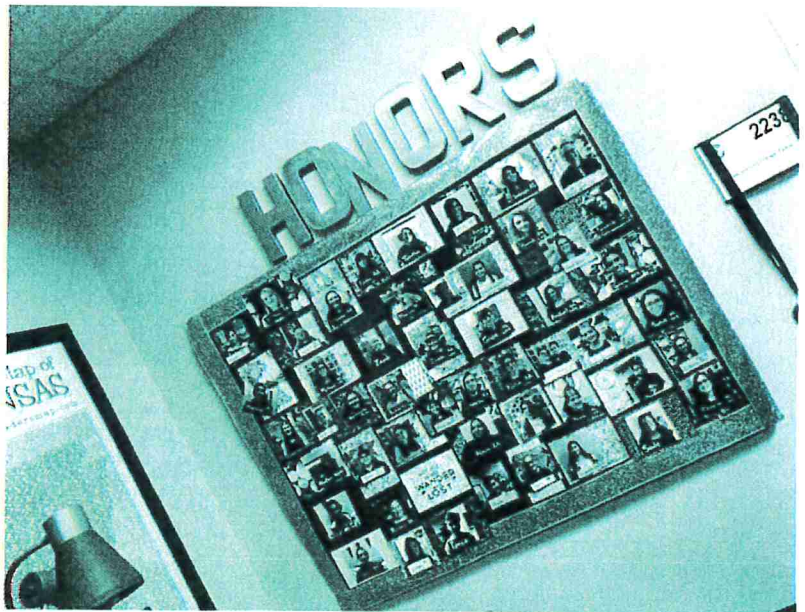




It was both inside and outside the classroom that the honors program helped me cultivate curiosity. In the first honors course I took, the English Composition II with Jim Laughton, I was amazed by how a class could be structured in a way that gives the power to the students. Us students could shift the focus of classroom discussions into topics that were relevant to us – this freedom for us to each focus on our unique passions carried over into the assignments as well. In the following honors courses I took, I also could focus on what I was personally interested in for all of my tasks. Just as an example, in my American Literature course, I decided to focus my final presentation on a topic that

challenged traditional American education. My presentation was a psychological analysis of Christopher Columbus, in which I discussed the possibility of him being a sociopath. It was through the honors program that I was able to cultivate my curiosities, which in turn made my educational experience much more engaging and beneficial to me personally.

The Honors Program brings together students from diverse walks of life, differing ages, varied locations around the world, and each of us carry a unique perceptiveness. Outside the classroom, the exchange of perspectives has resulted in some of the most engaging and intelligent discussions I have ever heard. With so much time being spent together, I have also witnessed some of the most humorous and absurd conversations as well. While a lot of us are different, all of the honors students are united under the pursuit and passion towards our education. I think that this results in a very unique and diverse community at NWACC.



## Section II

I never went into NWACC with the intention of graduating, much less moving on to a university. When I joined the honors program, I realized that I was capable of completing an associate degree and furthering my education at a university. Not only has the honors program given me the confidence to further my education, it has also given me a vision in the field I would like to go into. The fantastic honors professors who I have taken at NWACC have shaped my life in more ways they can know, and have inspired me to be a professor as well.



The skills that I will walk away with from NWACC come from both the honors program and my degree in creative writing. Being part of the honors program connected me to different honors clubs at NWACC, such as HSA and SKD – both of which I served in as an officer. This has given me the confidence to be involved in clubs once I move into a much larger educational setting. Being part of the creative writing degree, I had the opportunity to be a founder in the first ever student-led literary journal to come out of NWACC. This project gave me the

real-world experience that I needed – I learned a lot on both the technical side and the teamwork side. NWACC as a whole as taught me how to build connections and deal with individuals around me. One of the important personal skills I have been taught to use in my own life is how to speak up in the face of injustice – even when the truth is inconvenient, even when it is easier to stay silent, and even when people in charge are attempting to silence or discredit you.

### Section III

I loved every event that I got to participate in as an honors student. The plays that I got to see at TheatreSquared were all very exciting. In the Fall of 2018, I got to attend a dinner at Brightwater, which was the first formal dining experience I'd ever participated in, which was a very memorable experience.



An event in particular that I'd like to share is when I went to the honors holiday party in the fall semester of 2018. I knew all of the honors students individually, but it was the first that I had hung out with them as a group. At the end of the holiday party, we students played spoons and Things, which was very fun. At a certain point in the night, when the lights had shut off in the student center, we all transitioned into the honors study area. We all had so much fun playing games that we students lost track of time – we hadn't realized what time it was until a security guard came into the study area to tell us that the school had been closed for the past forty-five minutes.



#### Section IV: What advice would you give to new members?

As an honors student, I know that we can obsess about grades and lose sight of what's going on around us. My advice to new students is to get involved in the community that the honors program offers. Spend some time in the study area and get to know the people around you. School is stressful, and having solid connections at school will help you a lot throughout your educational journey.

