



## **NIALA HINGOO**

Associate of Arts, 2022

*Associate of Arts Outstanding Student 2022*  
*Outstanding Honors Program Student 2019-20*  
*Golden Eagle Award Recipient, April 2020*  
*Distinguished Golden Eagle Recipient 2020*

*Former HSA President*  
*Former HSA Community Events Coordinator*  
*Former SKD Secretary*

### Honors Classes:

- English Composition II
- Survey of World Literature to 1850
- Survey of World Literature from 1850
- World Civilizations to 1500
- Public Speaking
- Introduction to Gender Studies
- Introduction to Philosophy

### **SECTION I: COMMUNITY, CURIOSITY, DIVERSITY**

As a non-traditional student, I began my NWACC journey with a healthy amount of fear and insecurity. I doubted that I would be able to keep up with lectures and homework, I assumed that I would always be on the periphery of campus activity, and I was convinced that a degree of any kind was going to remain elusive. Buoyed by the encouragement of my sons, two of whom were NWACC students themselves, I enrolled and immersed myself in new and welcome challenges. Under the expert guidance of my professors in my first semester, I realized that my initial doubts about my academic abilities were misguided. Under the expert guidance of the NWACC social butterflies, other

doubts were quickly laid to rest as well. And somewhere in the mix, I joined the Honors program. It was the best decision that I have made at NWACC.

The Honors program lived up to its motto of “Community, Curiosity and Diversity,” from the first day I stepped into the Honors study area. I encountered a motley crew of students hotly debating the correctness of Roseanne’s dismissal from her tv show, which segued into an equally intense debate over personal responsibility and the greater good in society. I remember thinking, “This is where I want to be.” Since then, I have been privileged to observe and participate in some of the most engaging conversations I’ve ever had in my life, and also some of the most ridiculous. The personalities of my fellow Honors students were as varied as our conversations and I endeavored to learn something from each of them. There is no better way to cultivate curiosity and diversity than by allowing people of all backgrounds, regardless of socio-economic status, race or sexual orientation, a place where they can meet as equals, allow them to think freely, and explore different perspectives.

The encouragement to have us think, question and grow is at the foundation of every honors class that I have taken, and I regret that I did not take more of them. I was challenged to think outside of my comfort zone, but I was also encouraged to draw on my life experience and Caribbean education. My professors never claimed to know it all and their thirst for learning was galvanizing. There were times in my classes when I *knew*, in that moment, that I was being well educated and I wish that feeling on every student.

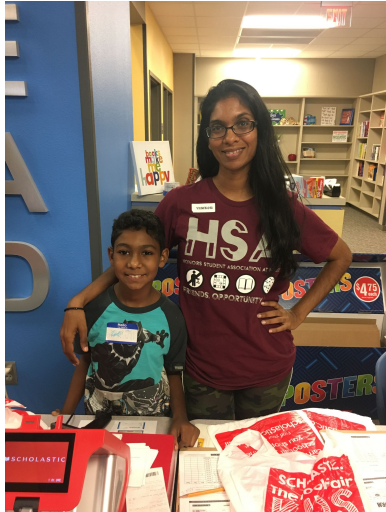
## SECTION II: HONORS IMPACT AND TAKEAWAY



The Honors program taught me that there is always something new to learn. I had been a stay at home mom for a long time and knew how to manage a household, but the program taught me new strategies for being tactful, for managing strong personalities, delegation and leadership. I worked alongside people that are half my age and twice as smart, and learned to put my pride aside and ask for help when needed. I have had the privilege of working with faculty and staff on a number of

projects which honed my time management skills, and taught me how to set feasible expectations when undertaking new projects.

Being an HSA officer is an experience that I will always cherish. I served as both Community Events Coordinator and then President, and my fellow officers could not have been more different. I also had the unique experience of being an officer alongside my son, which taught me new lessons in patience and objectivity!



As Community Events Coordinator, I had the pleasure of implementing two new programs; volunteering at the Janie Darr Elementary book fair and at the Magnolia Place Memory Care home. I gained first hand experience in observing how different personalities work together and how to maximize the strength of a team. I am employed full time and I see the value of these lessons every day. It was an added bonus for me that I was able to involve my youngest son in our activities. I'm proud to be involved in a program, like the Honors program, where our children can benefit as well; "community, curiosity and diversity" are all inclusive.

### **SECTION III MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE**

If I have to narrow it down, my experience with the Honors presentation at the 2020 Spring Arts and Culture Festival is something that I will never forget. We were approached to put together something for the Festival, the theme of which was 20/20 vision, and the HSA officers decided that Honors would produce a documentary. The problem was that none of us had ever made a documentary before, let alone presented it to a live audience. But the idea had already been accepted, and Olivia Shaap (then president) and I took the lead on the project. After brainstorming, planning and an appropriate amount of panicking, we did what Honors students always do- we got to work.

We used NWACC staff and students to represent a cross section of society and examined the value of work; who sets the value of the work we do, how and why do others perceive us based on the work we perform, and what do we wish people would see, beyond our jobs. We interviewed staff members from security, janitorial, the library and accounting. We included Dr. Jorgenson as well (going up to her office with no appointment to ask for an interview was definitely memorable for me). With every interview and new piece of research,

the more Olivia and I realized that we were working on something special, but we were struggling with how to put it all together.

The turning point came one day when a new member of the Honors program casually asked us what we were doing (we were stressing and everyone in the lounge knew it). Nhan Pham became our hero that day. We asked if he knew anything about video editing and he said yes. With the additional help of Bo in the library, the documentary was made, and in the nick of time.



Olivia and I had no idea what to expect the day of the presentation. The documentary was a half hour long and we planned to fill the rest of our one hour time slot with an oral presentation and possibly some questions and answers. We knew we had done our best, but really had no expectations. After the lights dimmed and the documentary started, neither of us could watch the screen; we knew every scene and word by heart. I looked up once and scanned the crowd to find Sabrina Chesne, who was smiling her Sabrina smile.

When the documentary ended, Olivia and I approached the podium, and were equally shocked by the reaction. People were applauding, and when we spoke, they *listened*. I will never forget how surreal that was. When we asked "Any questions?" more hands shot up than I could count. One professor was on the edge of her seat - Dr. Yannick St. Jean, who teaches sociology. I ended up taking two of her classes. But the one question I will never forget was "Do you have any plans to expand this and submit it to the Bentonville Film Festival?" That was from a professor on the BFF board. We were speechless and I think I said something brilliant, like "Um, no." Sadly, school closed shortly after due to the pandemic, so Olivia and I did not pursue the project further. But the lessons learned, the teamwork and the satisfaction of knowing that we represented Sabrina and the Honors program well, will always be etched on my memory.

#### SECTION IV: PARTING WORDS

Your journey is unique, so there's no wrong or right. There's only what works for you. Take advantage of every opportunity you can; you never know where it might lead. And at NWACC there are LOTS of opportunities. Leadership

positions, theater tickets, events at Brightwater, University of Arkansas opportunities or the Great Plains Conference. Be involved, be open to new experiences, people and ideas. Remember that growth only happens outside of your comfort zone.

To other non-traditional students: ENJOY IT. We're only just getting started!