

Rhonda Hazen

Northwest Arkansas Community College Honors Program Graduation Portfolio



Liberal Arts & Science – Associate of Science – LAS

Graduating summer 2022

Honors Courses:

English Composition II

Survey World Lit to 1650

General Psychology

Music Appreciation

Section 1: In what ways did the program help you “demonstrate engagement,” cultivate curiosity,” and “explore perspectives” (community, curiosity, and diversity)?

My high school years were difficult for me, and I barely scraped by academically to graduate. In fact, at the time I was not even sure I would finish my high school education. Therefore, the thought of attending college seemed out my reach. However, several years later I became interested in pursuing a career in radiology. This interest was the motivation I needed to enroll in college and begin taking classes. At first it was a struggle, especially with my biology class, but I was determined to succeed. Thankfully, I found a study partner, who was currently in the honors program. I was excited to learn that a program like this existed and the following semester I was excited to join.

To date I have completed four honors classes during my time at NWACC (Northwest Arkansas Community College), English Composition II, Survey World Lit to 1650, General Psychology, and Music Appreciation. The experiences I had in the honors program were not what I expected. I thought the honors classes would be much more difficult than regular classes. However, those classes provided a shift in the class dynamic that was different from other classes. Honors classes required more involvement, which is what I enjoyed the most. The teachers poured their hearts into the students' learning, and really focused on what was being taught. I have always considered myself to be a nontraditional student with a unique perspective and modality for learning. The honors classes allowed me to engage in conversations during class, making the learning fun. I did not always agree with everyone in class, but I enjoyed having classes that allowed everyone to respectfully express their individual points of view, as we discussed topics from the class. The honors classes helped me embrace my own learning style for which I am forever grateful.

At this point my motivation for attending college shifted from something I had to do, to something I wanted to do. The honors program allowed for broader student engagement which enhanced my learning experience. All the teachers at NWACC (Northwest Arkansas Community College) are fantastic, but the honors program provided a way for the teachers to present their information in a more unique setting. I found myself attentive and enjoyed participating in class. Whereas in the past, I was always the person to sit in the back of the classroom trying to remain invisible to avoid being called on. The smaller class sizes and settings were key to making me feel more confident, and thus bringing me out of my shell.

Community involvement was also a part of the honors program, which proved to be especially important for my perspective. Through the community involvement part of the program, I was given the opportunity to participate in a middle school History Day program. My role was to evaluate and judge the students' projects that were presented that day. It was clear that each student had worked extremely hard and was proud of their projects. It was an amazing experience to be part of this exciting day with them.

Section 2: How did the program prepare you for a university (or for a workplace, if you are not transferring at this point)? What hard or soft skills will you take with you?

The honors program helped me prepare for future university classes as well as pursuing any high-level workplace demands. This program allowed me to fine tune and adapt my study skills applying the strategies that worked well for me. The teachers offered great suggestions helping me prepare for assignments and provided feedback upon request. The honors program also offered a quiet, comfortable place to work allowing me to maintain my focus and complete the work efficiently. Remaining focused at home was often more difficult as I would easily become distracted with daily tasks. In the past I have often had a challenging time staying focused on my studies. After I learned and implemented the new strategies and study skills my grades continued to improve. Now I am confident in my ability to continue my education at a university, as well as manage greater responsibilities in the workforce. The many commitments required by the honors

program will enhance my ability to transfer to a large university. One of the greatest benefits from this program is how it strengthened my confidence as a learner. Prior to joining the honors program, I questioned my ability to succeed in college. My effort and performance in the honors classes has not gone unnoticed. A few years ago, I was accepted into the radiology program at UAMS (University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences). Unfortunately, I was not able to attend after the birth of my second daughter. My daughter was born with an extensive arm and shoulder injury that required and still requires multiple physical therapy sessions. Caring for my daughter did not allow for the time required to continue with college at that time. This was a major setback for me and while I was feeling lost, I decided it was best to take a few semesters off and find my new path. While I do not regret my decision to postpone attending UAMS, I am proud to say that my time and commitment to the honors program proved worthwhile and helpful when applying. I was able to show that I had what it takes to join a university, and I am confident that I would have done well. Even though I had to delay completing my classes for graduation I felt certain that when I re-enrolled, I could complete the remaining classes successfully. Without the honors program I do not think I would have had the desire or motivation to come back and finish my degree. Things happen for a reason even if we do not understand them at the time. Putting the time in was not always easy, but with the support of the staff, students, and my loving family it was well worth the effort.

Section 3: What is one experience you had while a member that you would like to share?

Having smaller class sizes had several advantages. One day our teacher, Mrs. Chesne, decided instead of a traditional quiz she was going to mix things up a little. She put together a jeopardy game. I did not realize how competitive our whole class was until this game. We were divided into groups of three to four people and once that game started it was hilarious to watch how everyone enthusiastically threw out answers to the questions. It was refreshing to have a learning environment where everyone wanted to participate. Not one person in the whole class sat on the sidelines. It was a group effort where everyone had something to add. The further we got into the game the more animated the students were, this may have even surprised our teacher. It was a close game, but my team won the game. Our Prize? A giant Pickle! We did not know what the prize was before the game, but I must say it was a creative prize for a fun filled class.

Section 4: Considering all you have written for the above, what advice do you have for a new member? This answer should be “short and sweet.”

My advice would be to get involved, and do not sit on the sidelines. Having this program was truly a blessing. The people involved become like family. My time in the honors program is filled with wonderful memories, from goofing around in the honors lounge, chatting with some friends in between classes, and having a safe space and sometimes quite space to enjoy in the lounge. I wish I were able to attend some more of the out of class activities while in the program. They all sounded amazing, but with my schedule and having two children I was unable to attend. If you are at a point in your daily life to participate, I encourage you to do so. I know that is something you will not regret, and you will make memories here that will last a lifetime.

