

Nancy Lemus

Graduating Class of 2025

Associate of Science in Business Administration



Honors Courses:

English Composition II

Intro to Philosophy

History of the American People since 1877

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

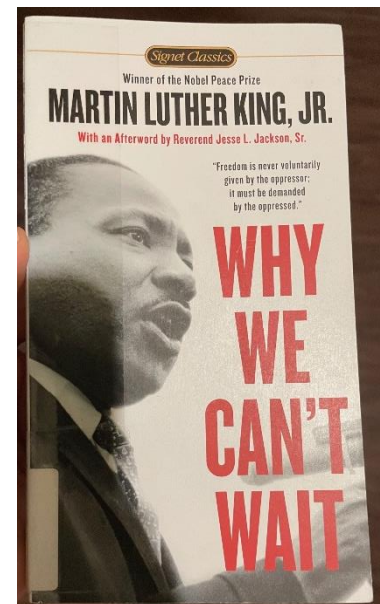
Joining the Honors Program has given me opportunities to be more involved in the community. My first semester here at NWACC was Fall 2023. I remember not really knowing much about what was going on inside the campus and events happening. My first semester was not very engaging compared to when I decided to join Honors. The honors courses and teachers provided me with opportunities to engage myself in activities within the Campus and within my community that have helped me build curiosity and diversity.

Most recently, my History of American People Since 1877 professor, Dr. Vinzant, gave students a choice of writing a term paper or participating in a Service-Learning Project. I had already written multiple papers in my honors English and Philosophy classes, so I decided to do something a little more engaging. The project I chose was the American History Service-Learning Project in which I cleaned old or dirty graves to preserve them and our history. Before I started this project, I was conflicted with stereotypical ideas of grave sites being “scary” and “haunted.” However, once I started, I realized these graves are truly just people’s loved ones who have left us, and the cemeteries are a preservation of our past. I realized there was nothing to fear. The cemetery I cleaned, alongside my two younger brothers (yes, twins), was called Bluff Cemetery and is one of the largest in Springdale. Through some research, I found out that it is older than the Civil War and has some of the early residents of Springdale. It’s basically a time machine! Because the cemetery is old, there were many graves in bad conditions, so much so that some were illegible. My brothers and I worked hard to scrub all the biologicals off the graves to make them look as good as new. I have provided the before and after pictures to show what conditions some of these graves were in. After cleaning them, we were able to see the names and the years of when these people were alive. There were a few graves that we cleaned that were of young kids which was sad.



Overall, this experience helped me break through personal opinions and helped me see how history can be perceived in different ways. I never considered graveyards to be a way of uncovering the past, but it truly helped me learn more about the city I live in and who was alive before my family and I got here. I felt more connected to my community and am happy that the gravestones can now be read by anyone who visits the graveyard.

Going to events and lectures at the White Auditorium as part of extra credit for my honors classes helped me understand the diversity of the world around me. Most recently, I went to a Martin Luther King Jr. lecture at the start of the Spring 2025 semester, for my history class, in which a professor from NWACC discussed King's impact during the Civil Rights Movement and related it to present events. I remember the day of the presentation was also the day Donald Trump revoked the sixty-year-old executive order designed to combat workplace discrimination. The presenter mentioned King's book, "Why We Can't Wait" and mentioned how we could all learn from King's way of fighting injustice. At the end of the lecture, many students and faculty voiced their concerns and asked for advice on how to move forward if anything goes wrong in the next coming days. This experience allowed me to hear different perspectives of life and how different people must deal with different struggles in our society. My life and my experiences are completely different compared to the person sitting across from me in class. Later in the semester, Dr. Vinzant informed the class we were assigned to read the exact same book that presenter mentioned. I was excited to dive deeper into the topic of civil rights and try to understand the struggle that many of the Black Americans had to go through to get us to where we are today. The book was inspirational. The bravery and fearlessness of Black protestors during the nonviolent movement made me emotional. I am glad I decided to attend the MLK lecture that day because I was able to relate what I learned from the lectures with what I learned from the book.



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

The Honors Program introduced me to Honors College at the University of Arkansas, which I had no idea existed prior to joining NWACC's program. With this opportunity, I was able to look into their program and the different opportunities they have to offer. I found out that they have a specific program for my major in Business. The classes are small and centered on application-based learning, which I feel like I gained experience with while taking honors classes at NWACC! I have been accustomed to having small classes and I believe the Honors College would be a great fit for me.

While attending honor classes, I strengthened my hard and soft skills. To begin with, I tested my creativity in English Composition II through my essays. The essay that tested my creativity the most was titled *The Conversation Essay* in which I had to write about money orders, a common item found in confiscated bags at the airport and find a bigger message that can lead into a deeper discussion. When I first got my item of money orders, I felt so much pressure. I thought to myself: how in the world am I going to relate money orders to something bigger? After hours of brainstorming, I somehow found a way of relating money orders to supportive families. I talked about how money orders are safe and secure and how a strong family bond can create safe and secure

A Family is Beneficial: An Analysis on Money Orders Compared to Family Bonds

While working at a retail store, I have done money orders for several customers as well as cashed money orders out. Through this experience, I have learned how reliable money orders can be. Many customers use them to send money over to relatives and others use it to pay for rent or other bills. Moreover, most money orders never expire, so it's there for the customers whenever they need it. For as long as they have existed, money orders have been recognized for being safe and secure which got me thinking: What else makes people feel safe and secure? As I thought long and hard, I concluded that a loving and supportive family is the answer.



Fig. 1. "Money Orders." (2025).
<https://www.saps.com/shop/money-orders.htm>
Accessed 11 March 2024.

First, when making a money order, that order is securely held in trust until it is cashed out. The customer can check the status at any time with a reference number on the receipt. Like this process, having a supportive family means there will be a strong sense of trust. Rick L. Peterson, who works with Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, states that "Family loyalty commitments are like invisible but strong fibers that hold family relationships together" (167). Growing up, my parents always instilled trust in me and my siblings. As a result, I feel more comfortable speaking my

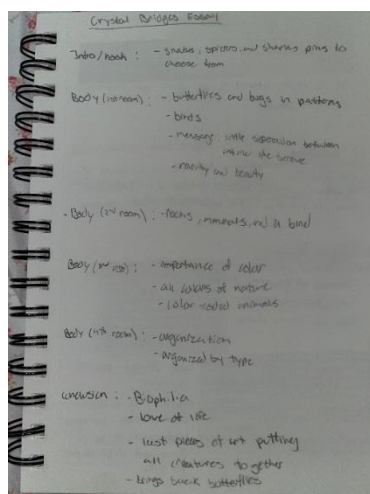
environments. This is just one example of the type of creativity I've had to come up with while taking honor classes. Moreover, I can confidently say that taking honors classes has helped me open my mind and allowed me to brainstorm more creatively.

Another soft skill I strengthened was time management. Being a full-time student while also taking honor courses, I had to be able to manage my time wisely. For most honor classes, there is an extra assignment, either a term paper or a project, that normal classes would not have. This semester, I really tested my time management skills. I had to read a book, write a book report, do twenty hours of a Service-Learning project, all while still completing my normal weekly homework. By managing my time wisely, I was able to complete everything on time, and as a result, I was less stressed out. Compared to my first semester, I procrastinated a lot and had to spend my weekends completing homework instead of enjoying my free time. Overall, I believe mastering this skill of time management will be beneficial for me as I continue my education towards a university. It will also be beneficial in the workplace, as many companies would rather have someone who is on top of things than someone who is always slacking.

Furthermore, a hard skill I learned from taking honors classes is effective research. Over the course of my time in the program, I've had to write several essays and papers in which I had to be able to provide reliable sources. I've learned how to tell which sources are reliable and which ones are not by knowing how to use verified databases, looking at the author's credentials, and the year the information was published. This skill has helped me in the real world because any time I'm curious about a new topic, I know how to find information that is beneficial rather than harmful. Effective research will also be helpful in my educational career. I can only imagine how many more papers I will have to write next semester. Having exceptional research skills is also admired in the office workforce, which will help me once I'm out of college!

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

My most memorable and favorite experience while being an Honors member was the field trip to



Crystal Bridges in my English Comp II class during the Spring 2024 semester. We visited the *Exquisite Creatures* exhibition by Christopher Marely in which he displayed numerous amounts of bugs and animals to tell the message of loving life and yearning to be connected to nature. The reason this field trip was so memorable was because we had to experience the whole exhibition from beginning to end and deconstruct it into the different parts of an essay. Before we entered the exhibit, we were able to pick out a pin of either a snake, spider, or shark. I labeled this experience as the hook, getting the viewer excited before diving into the rest of the "essay." Inside, there was a total of five rooms, each curated with specific animals belonging to each group. One room had butterflies and bugs in beautiful patterns and other rooms had rows of birds or organized patterns of sea creatures. I labeled the first four as the body

paragraph. The rooms each had a different message that ranged from rarity and beauty to the importance of color and organization.

One of my favorite pieces was the frames of birds, butterflies, and fishes. I loved the way three very different species of animals were able to be in harmony together. Each color of the animals coordinated so well with each other. My second favorite piece of the exhibition was a wall full of different types of flowers. There were flowers of every color, shape, and size. Each flower was uniquely different yet seeing them all together brought the whole piece to life and visually made it so much more special. These pieces made me ponder on society and how we are all different, yet when we combine our differences, we can accomplish great things. In the final room, all the animals were brought back together, and I remember being awestruck at how the artist was able to combine creatures from different habitats and make them look like they belonged together. It was the most beautiful exhibition I have ever been to and I enjoyed my time there. The way the animals were placed together and my emotions towards seeing all kinds of species made the message clear. We are all, at some level, yearning to connect with nature. I am glad that I was able to visit the *Exquisite Creatures* exhibition because it truly made me have a new admiration for nature and the people that surround me. Deconstructing the exhibition made me realize every piece of art with a message behind it is carefully constructed in order to get the message out to the audience effectively.



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

To anyone who is considering joining the Honors Program, I highly encourage them to join. It is a wonderful program with great opportunities that are available throughout the entire school year. They will gain so many beneficial skills that they can carry on into the real world while also finding a welcoming community full of the most encouraging people. To new members who have just joined, I encourage you to participate in as many events as you can. The only thing I regret as a member is not allowing myself to participate in more Honors activities. Take some time out of your day, ask for those days off at work, because the connections and experiences you make while being a part of the program are unforgettable.