

Benjamin F.
Schaap V.
Honors Portfolio



Courses Taken

Honors World Literature to 1650

Honors Introduction to Theatre

Honors General Geology

Honors Survey of the Universe

Honors Public Speaking

Section 1: Reflect upon your semesters spent in the program, and discuss how the Program helped you “demonstrate engagement,” “cultivate curiosity,” and “explore perspectives” (community, curiosity, and diversity). How have you “grown”?

The Honors Program helped me demonstrate engagement by adding some consistency to my NWACC career. There isn't much of a campus life at NWACC, so having something outside of classes to contribute my time to and be part of helped keep me engaged. Friends in classes come and go, but the friends I made in the Program have lasted through my time at NWACC.

The Program also helped broaden my horizons. National and regional conferences like the Great Plains Honors Council Conference are not discussed or brought up in classes. Because of my participation in the Program, I was informed of opportunities to travel to conferences like GPHCC and network with students across the nation. It was invigorating to see what other students at these conferences were doing and inspired me to do more.

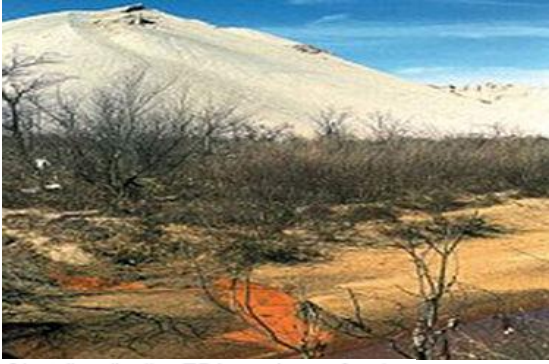
My fellow honors classmates helped me explore new perspectives. The Program is made up of a very passionate, creative, and vocal group of students. I have been going to NWACC since 2015. Naturally, I have met some students whom I disagreed.

The honors students with whom I have disagreed did not back down from their beliefs like other students. My personality is to encourage calmness and peace in a classroom, so I never confronted these students. However, because of their passion and conviction for what they believed, I often could not just steer the conversation away like I normally did.

This kind of forced hostage situation proved to be very beneficial to me since it required me to really think about what the person was saying and think about WHY I did or didn't believe what they believed. Today, I still don't agree with what some of the students said, but my understanding of why they believe certain things and of their situations has broadened my perspective in ways I don't think I would have had outside of the Program.

The honors classes I took helped cultivate curiosity far more than other traditional classes. The focus in honors classes is typically “Let's spark interest in this subject; let's dig deep and find fun and new things to discuss” whereas a traditional class focus is “This will be on the exam, don't forget it.”

For example: I went on a geology field trip to Picher, OK. This is the location of a major superfund site where mining had contaminated the regional aquifer and caused massive sinkholes regionally. The point was to see what it looked like when humans mistreated the environment around them and what measures had to be taken to fix the problem.



Chat (lead) pile. EPA.gov/superfund

I saw massive mountains of lead dust littered around the ghost town. As we drove by them, I saw a child playing in one.

The creeks and rivers ran red because of the exposed metals in the water corroding. Houses were mostly abandoned; no animals were seen.

It really impacted me. It felt like a post-apocalyptic movie. I left with a newfound appreciation for the

beautiful earth I live on, and a passion to protect it. This was a life-changing moment for me, and one I'll never forget.

I wouldn't have this perspective if I had just read this in a textbook. I wouldn't even have it if I'd seen a movie depicting it. My honors professor knew there's nothing like seeing it in person, and thus took the time out of a very busy course to take us up to Picher to see it.

Basically, because of the Program I realized being a good student is more than just getting the grade. My focus was now to be a scholar, learning all I could because I wanted to. It inspired me not just to watch life chaotically swirling around and instead to reach out and change it. It helped me learn how to embrace new ideas - whether I agreed with them or not - and as a result make me a more well-rounded person.

Section 2: What was the best part of your experience?

Man, the best part of my time in the Program. This is a tough one. I really enjoyed my trip to the 2017 GPHCC to Beaumont, TX. The group I went with was incredible and the conference itself was great. I had low expectations for it since Beaumont is an oil refinery town, but the trip turned out to be amazing. Sabrina would stop at these random places, and I'd think, "What on earth are we doing in Heavener Oklahoma?!" Then bam, there's potential Viking ruins in a cave in this random place in Oklahoma.

The conference itself had so many awesome people I got to meet, who I still speak with today. It was great to spend the week with Sabrina, my classmates, and my new friends. My worries of homework were put on hold, and I basically had an educational vacation for a week.

The presentations were also awesome. There were things ranging from Deadpool analysis presentations to students who were conducting sponsored studies on sleep patterns and how a person's perception of sleep affected their actual sleep.

I also got to be on a panel discussion with two of my classmates. We were the only panel at the entire conference, and I was very honored to have been given that opportunity. Especially since I didn't like public speaking at all.

We had someone from NASA come speak to us about a potential plan to set a base up on the Moon before we colonize Mars. We went to museums, art galleries, banquets, an after party, the beach, and so on.

It was incredibly fun and memorable. Again, NWACC doesn't have a very strong campus life, so this was a great way for me to make some lasting friendships. If I could go back in time and do it over again I would in a heartbeat. It was AMAZING.



GPHCC 2017: From left to right:

Bernadette, Garret, Sabrina, Rebecca, Myself, and Megan.

Section 3: 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 Program has really prepared me for a 4-year university in that I now expect more out of myself. I was homeschooled before NWACC, so I didn't really know what I would accomplish in college. I expected I would do rather well, but not exceptionally well.

My time in the Program has given me self-confidence, to the point that I don't consider "rather well" to cut it. I want to do very well, maybe even exceptionally well, and I believe I'm capable. I have the work ethic, the heart, and the people around me to make it happen.

Since I was homeschooled and not public schooled, I didn't really know how I would do. When friends in family asked how I thought I would do in college, I responded with, "I donno, we'll see."

When I was accepted to go to GPHCC, I thought, "That's odd, I'm not that good." Sabrina and other professors in the Program constantly told me that I sold myself too short, and that I needed to have more confidence in myself.

I think some people don't join the honors Program because they think they aren't "Honors material". I certainly didn't think so at first. But even if you aren't "Honors material" at first, the Program can set you on the path to become that. It didn't force me to raise the bar per se.

However, I desired to do so and the faculty and students are exactly what I needed. I'm so thankful I joined the HP because it has elevated my expectations for myself.

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."

My advice to new members would be that you get out of the Program what you put into the Program. Everything I wrote about happened because I was willing to spend time talking to other members or talking to Sabrina. It's hard to get a lot out of the Program if you never participate.

I would really encourage you to get involved. Show up to community events for the Program. Submit papers to the conferences, even if you think you don't have a chance (I didn't think I had one). Join the Honors Student Association and work together with some fellow honors students. Talk with Sabrina a bit if you have the time. There are great people at NWACC, and especially so in the Honors Program. So be the person to initiate the conversation, get yourself out there, and have fun!