



Honors Portfolio

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Composition 1, Honors

Composition 2, Honors

Survey of the Universe, Honors

Intermediate Spanish 1, Honors

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

Honor’s classes present one of the greatest opportunities to grow in the personally, communally and educationally. The focus, although mostly on education, is on bringing different perspectives to the learning process and building a community of people that are there to encourage each other. Every honors class that I have walked into has been a place of expectations and excitement.

For those who may deal with social anxiety as I do, group discussions and front of class presentations are difficult. Luckily, every teacher works with the different needs of students while still remaining firm in their expectations. Honor’s classes prepare students for the real world as they do not let students get out of doing assignments. This is not to say that they are unsympathetic, as they listen and may have dealt or continue to deal with the same issues as well. However, they want to set every student up for success so that when we do enter the workforce, we meet expectations from those who may be less sympathetic.

When I entered my first class, Mr. Jeffrey Jackson’s Composition 1, Honors class, I was so nervous as I had never been inside of a live classroom before. I was raised in Mexico for more than half of my life and I was homeschooled. When I enrolled at Northwest Arkansas Community College, I had only been in the United States for about three months. I was anxious but it turned out much better than I could ever have imagined. Every person in that class was there to learn and did not pass judgement. I felt welcomed by everyone including Mr. Jackson. After that first class I went straight to talk to him, and I felt that he understood my situation. He simply told me to work hard and let him know when I had hit a wall. That’s exactly what I did. I worked hard despite having little knowledge about how to navigate the NWACC website and online library, Microsoft Office and a laptop in general. Since I was raised in a very strict household the only knowledge of computers that I had was typing and a little about looking things up online. It was difficult learning and navigating everything my first time around, but Mr. Jackson was extremely patient with me and gave me fair grades. I walked away with an A in that class and every class that semester. I credit half of my success to having understanding people around who generously gave their time to tutor and help me get through the semester.

One of my favorite two classes during my time at NWACC was Ms. Megan Looney’s Composition 2, Honor’s class. She is a very direct and organized person who sets high expectations which she wants met without excuses. Since she goes over everything in detail, there aren’t any excuses that you can claim, so I did not feel that she was harsh or expected too much. Two of the greatest lessons that she gave were to explore other’s opinions and let them critique your work. Learning these made me realize that it doesn’t matter how right you think you are, everyone has something that to learn from. This revelation was important, as I grew up in a bubble of people who constantly praised my work and hardly criticized me. It was not at all easy to come to the realization that my work needed improvement, but it has set me up for

success at work, at home and in my relationships. It was by no means the end all of lessons, but it opened up a door to the floodgates of listening to others while staying confident in myself.

My second favorite class was Dr. Kathrine Auld's Survey of the Universe, Honors class. It's one that I cannot recommend enough, but it did not start out that way. I walked into the class with a nervousness as I had been raised to scrutinize every word about the science of astronomy and the origin of the universe. Dr. Auld said one thing at the beginning of the semester to the effect of science complementing her faith. This statement somehow allowed me to set aside any prejudice and freely discover what she was showing. I learned more than I can wrap my mind around and I was glued to the lectures every time. I walked into her class wanting to learn about something "taboo" to my faith and I walked out with a full awakening that lead me to continue with the infatuation of learning about the origin of the universe.

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?

Looking back, I see that the common theme in every honors class was diversity. Learning to listen and respect other's opinions opened new ideas for me that I otherwise may have never explored. This concept goes hand in hand with yet another soft skill, communication. Being able to put the ideas in my head into a presentation, project or discussion made it tangible and worthwhile. Although these are the two most prominent ways that my skill set has improved, there are many other skills that I am so grateful to have started working on. Among them are, setting and meeting high expectations, being dependable, doing healthy things outside of my comfort zone and taking criticism while staying confident.

The hard skills that have allowed me to advance and keep my grades up are proficiently navigating Microsoft Office programs (Word, PowerPoint, Access and Excel), finding credible sources in online libraries such as Google Scholar and writing and editing projects.

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

One of the most memorable events during my time at NWACC was when Ms. Looney, asked us all to attend the NWACC History Day. The event is held for the purpose of giving children and young people the opportunity to present what they learned from researching a historical figure. We were asked to listen and provide constructive criticism and notes of praise to the students. About a week before the event I started to get anxious about my role and what I would have to do. As soon as I arrived all my second thoughts about attending went away. I saw nervous kids running around trying to get everything together and I realized that this event was very important for the education of the children involved. I thoroughly enjoyed myself that day. Between listening and learning from their point of view and jotting down a few notes, the day flew by. After it was over and it was time to go home, they gave us all a T-shirt to thank us which I still have to this day. Anxiety will never go away, but it can subside when you know that you are doing something good for someone else. When the pressure to perform is removed, it's easier to focus on the task and on the good it will do for others.

Section 4: Considering all you have written for the above, what advice do you have to new members?

I say go for it! Talk to that person that is outside of your circle, enroll in that unusual class and challenge yourself. Don't hesitate to follow the impulse of exploring healthy interests. And remember, nothing worth achieving ever came easily, so get to it!