

OLIVIA SCHAAP



Graduated Spring 2020 with an Associate of Arts

Associate of Arts Distinguished Graduate of 2020

Outstanding Honors Program Member of 2019

Honors Classes:

- World Lit 1
- World Lit 2
- British Lit 1
- British Lit 2
- American Lit 1
- World Civ 2
- Intermediate Spanish 2
- Astronomy
- Geology

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I think that the Honors Program has completely changed my life"*

Section I

Community, Curiosity, Diversity

I joined the Honors Program with an admirable amount of overconfidence. My older brother had joined the program before me, already graduated, and he'd paved the way for me to carry on his legacy. I can still remember walking into the Honors Study Area on the first day of the semester, nervous but acting like I owned the place. I'd been homeschooled my entire life and wasn't used to formal education, but I was confident and unafraid of college.

However, the Honors Program quickly threw me for a loop. I'd been raised in a very conservative, sheltered environment, and these classes opened up a whole new world to me. In my Honors World Literature classes, I read stories from different countries with cultures that

vastly differed from mine. In my honors science classes I learned about the technology that was used to discover the origins of the universe. In my Honors World Civ class, I learned about foundational historical events from which America was built - that I'd never been taught. I learned about politics, science, history, literature, feminism, LGBTQ+, and countless other topics from perspectives I'd never thought to consider. I was forced to confront problematic beliefs I'd been raised with my entire life. Each of my honors classes systematically tore down everything I thought I believed, and then rebuilt me in spans of 16 week semesters.



This was hard for me to grapple with at first.

I was fascinated by all these new ideas being thrown at me, but it threatened to tear up the roots of truths I'd been conditioned with since childhood. I was having the time of my life, even if it was a rough adjustment. I loved learning, and the teaching style of honors classes particularly suited my upbringing. I didn't like lectures, but in my honors classes, we held discussions and learned from both our professors and one another.



1(clockwise from bottom left) Susanna, Angie, Josie, Josiah, Sharon, and Sabrina working on SKD decorations

Several months after starting college and joining the Honors Program, my family left an unhealthy religious environment I'd spent my entire life in. It was an overwhelming experience. I was disillusioned by my past but still wary of my liberal college professors - I didn't know what to trust. I'd never felt so lost, confused, and alone in my entire life.

What I found, however, was a supportive community willing to take me in. The people I met in the honors program accepted me and gave me time to adjust to their perspectives, ideas,

and worldviews. I'll never forget the kindness and empathy I was shown during some of my darkest times.

Since those rocky early days, I have grown immensely in the Honors Program. I mean really, in the most understated and mild terms possible I think that the Honors Program has completely changed my life. I've been encouraged to explore my curiosity, to pursue deeper understanding outside the classroom, and to use my abilities to give back to our community.



Because I was allowed to explore curiosity in *2 Danielle, Misty, self, and Damilola in Honors Geology*

my honors classes, I created my own final project for Honors World Literature and ended up presenting my research at the Great Plains Honors Conference. It was scary being forced to speak publicly out of my comfort zone, but that challenge became such a rewarding accomplishment. Curiosity is what got Niala Gotel and I interested in a project where we created a mini-documentary with the help of the HSA. We presented our documentary at the 2020 NWACC Springs Arts and Cultural Festival, and later learned we pioneered the first student-led panel in the SACF's history. Because I was encouraged to be curious, I have learned new things which opened up new opportunities - simply because my professors let me self-guide my learning and think outside the box.

My honors classes have also broken us out of the traditional classroom environment and helped show us that learning doesn't have to look like lectures and essays. My Honors World Civ class took place in restaurants, and Dr. Sevin Gallo would discuss pivotal historical events across the world while we ate corresponding ethnic foods. (It was the first time I'd learned about things like the Haitian revolution *and* the first time I ate sushi.) I also got to take a field trip to the *Men of Steel, Women of Wonder* exhibit at Crystal Bridges for my World



4 Self-created meme from Honors American Literature



3 Reece Hodgson, Minoah Milam, and self at the Crystal Bridges exhibit

Literature 2 class with some of my classmates. In Honors Geology, we took a virtual tour of Tar Creek in Pilcher, OK, where we learned about the ethical dangers of mining without proper geological understanding. And even within the classroom my honors classes found ways to break the mold. I was often given unique assignments that encouraged creativity. In just my honors literature classes alone, I've had to: draw emojis to represent book characters, write creative stories in response to novels, and create meme booklets as a "translation" of some of our primary source texts. Yes, I got to create memes for a letter grade. It was amazing.

Because our honors classes are also focused on community engagement, I got to interact with my peers and volunteer as a part of the learning environment. In my Honors Survey of the Universe class I helped sort through donated eclipse glasses to give to the people of Argentina



5 Astronomy with Anna, Kat, Brice, and self

during their summer 2019 solar eclipse. It was neat reading messages left by the previous owners and knowing we were a part of that exchange. And through the Honors Student association, I volunteered at nursing homes and for street cleanups. It made me realize how little my day-to-day life is focused on helping others, which is something I'd like

to change in the future. Because my honors classes were community oriented, I met some of my best friends in my honors classes, and in the Honors Study Area.



6 (clockwise from bottom left) Game night with self, Minoah, Abby, Tarun, Reece, Josiah, and Kat

Section II

Takeaways from Honors

I think being homeschool my entire life made the idea of going to a 4-year university an intimidating step to take. By going first to NWACC, I feel more prepared to take on a bigger institution. Some of the Honors Classes I've taken at NWACC have been just as difficult as upper-level courses, and I think because of those high standards I'll be more ready for the workload in a four-year institution. I've been taught to think critically in my classes, and to achieve excellence in my work, skills that will aid me beyond the classroom itself.



7 HSA Officers of Fall 2019: Niala Gotel, Josie McMillan, self, Tarun Eisen, and Josiah Vallone

The honors program has also helped me grow as a leader. Because of the Honors Student Association, I was able to take on leadership positions as first the secretary, and then later president of the club. Being a club president made me realize I was too much of a perfectionist, and that good leaders know how to delegate and collaborate with others as a group. I took some of the experiences I had as president of the HSA into my job, where I was a supervisor managing an entire team of people. Learning how to communicate with others and work together is something I'm still learning how to do, but those abilities have grown stronger as a result of my time in the honors program.

Section III

A Specific Moment to Share

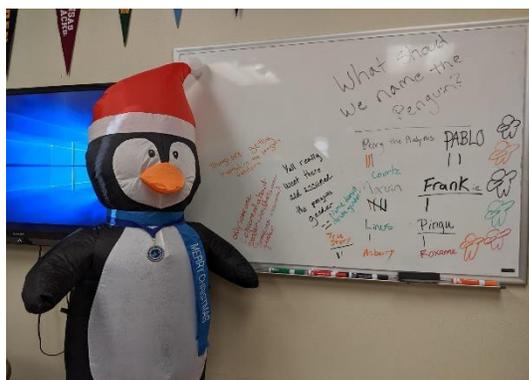
Where to even begin? This is almost an impossible question - there's no single moment that can adequately sum up my experience in the honors program. I could talk about the time where I laughed so hard I cried while trying to deliver a presentation about Jonathan Swift. I could tell you about the countless late nights where my friends and I holed up in the Honors Study Area; playing board games, eating junk food, and only leaving after campus security told

us that NWACC was closed. I could talk about taking naps on the beanbag in the study area because it felt like my second home, or about my classmate who bought me lunch when I didn't bring any food with me one day. I could talk about the road trip to Tyler, TX for the Great Plains Honors Conference - my hands shook during my entire presentation,



8 a well-planned photo of (L-R) Savannah, Cody, Nhan, and Jessica

but afterwards Sabrina only focused on how well I did. I could recount the deepest conversations I've ever had as well as the stupidest ones, laughing and arguing with my friends in the honors study area between classes.



9 One of the weekly honors polls, featuring Marvin the Honors Penguin

There are too many moments to pick from.

There's the Christmas party of 2018, a night that several other students have also written about, where we bonded over silly board games and I felt like I truly *belonged* for the first time in a long time. Or I could simply talk about how uplifted I felt by the feedback from my honors professors. I'll always be

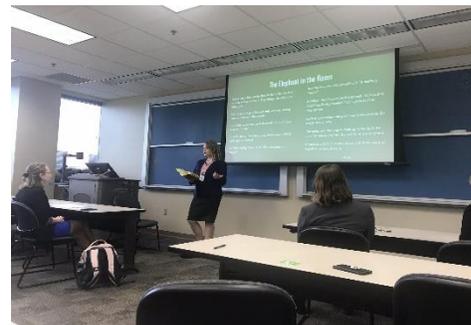
amazed by how they go the extra mile for all their students. I could talk about reading emails on my bed during the pandemic of COVID-19, horribly depressed but uplifted by the small encouragement from my honors professors.

Do I talk about the compassion my professors showed me when I desperately asked for extensions on my papers? Do I talk about the friendly smiles and kind words exchanged in passing down hallways, small reminders of the larger community I'm part of? There are too many moments, too many good memories. I'll carry all of them with me.



11 GPHCC of 2019 with Chelsie Moline, self, and Ashton Moore

10 Honors Awards Ceremony of 2019



12 Presenting at GPHCC of 2019

Section IV

Advice to the Future Members

One word - *engage*. Engage with your professors, engage with your learning, and engage with your fellow students. You will only get out of the Honors Program what you put into it - but there is a *gold mine* here waiting for you. Try new things, take unusual classes, participate in whatever random events you can. Spend some time in the study area and chime in during the next dumb conversation. Learn the names of your classmates. Talk to your professors after their lectures just because you can. What you'll find, over and over again if you read through these portfolios, is that the honors program is made by the *people*. It's the people that have impacted us all the most - and that's where you'll get the most as well.

