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Graduating in Fall 2024
Liberal Arts & Sciences
Honors courses:
Introduction to the United Nations
College Chemistry I
English Composition II

The Honors program has given me a profound sense of belonging to something larger than the pursuit of a degree. It has made me realize that academic life is not solely about personal accomplishment, but about sharing a journey with like-minded individuals who are united in their commitment to enhancing the quality of human interactions and fostering a deeper connection between people and the world around us.

Having relocated to the United States just five years ago, I was eager to continue my education, albeit in a new field of study. Adapting to the American educational system posed a significant challenge, particularly as a non-native English speaker. Yet, the warm sense of community at NWACC, enhanced by participating in the Honors program, eased my transition in ways which I had not anticipated. From the moment I began attending classes in the spring of 2023, both professors and fellow students made me feel welcome and supported, helping me settle into this new academic environment.

In the fall of 2023, I enrolled in Introduction to International Relations with Dr. Matt Evans. As the semester drew to a close, Dr. Evans introduced me to the Model UN conferences and, to my surprise, recommended me for the Honors program. At the time, I knew very little about the program and, like many students, I had misconceptions that it was reserved for academic “overachievers” with exceptional IQs, and that the coursework would

be overwhelming. However, I soon discovered how invaluable the Honors program is—not only for its academic rigor, but also for how it hones essential skills such as writing, verbal communication, and critical thinking. Engaging more deeply with the program and my studies has proven to be an immensely rewarding experience.

Engagement, Curiosity, and Diversity

In Chemistry I, with Dr. Lois Chun, who became one of my absolute favorite professors due to her involvement and her eagerness to help us understand the course's content, we worked on an EMPACTS (Educationally Managed Projects Advancing Curriculum, Technology and Service) project throughout the semester. I had proposed to work on a topic that explored the presence of toxic chemicals in solvents and paints and how it impacts art students. To my delight, my peers decided to go ahead with the proposed topic and they selected me as the leader of the group. Working together in an efficient and

friendly manner to inform the community about the dangers of heavy metals and other harmful chemicals in paints and solvents was an incredibly rewarding experience. Figure 1 shows one of the pie charts we included in our research paper after we surveyed NWACC art students on how frequently they used various types of paints.

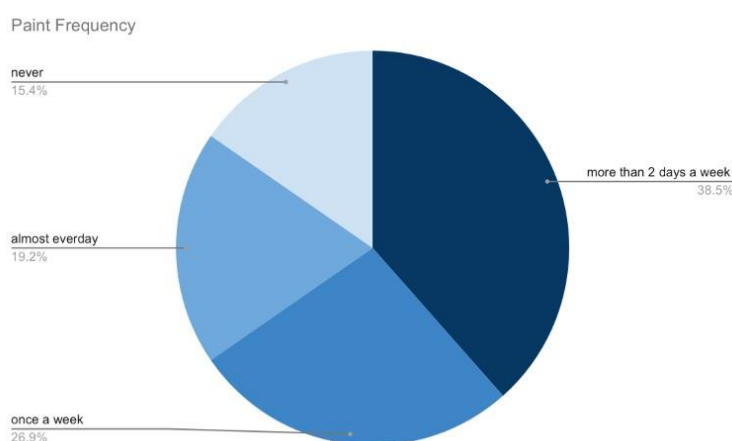


Figure 1

Outside of the academic realm, one of the experiences that I enjoyed the most was being part of the J-Street Clean Up (Fig. 2). It was my first time participating in such an endeavor and it was not only great to engage in fun conversations as we moved up and down the street, but also to relax the mind after a busy and productive semester. Not to mention, these busy roadways are much more prone to large amounts of litter due to all the traffic in the area, which really subtracts from the beauty of the greenery. But such roads are also much more aesthetically pleasing when they are clean and this trash clean up once again demonstrates the power of like-minded students and faculty.



Figure 2

Thanks to Professor Sabrina Chesne and her teaching philosophy that writing is a process, I can safely infer that positively everything is a process in life. And because both English Composition II and Chemistry I required research

for essays, the instructors' guidance and recommendation to use the NWACC library and set up appointments with the librarians and the Writing Center was well received. I used those invaluable resources extensively. Even though the Book Club is not part of the Honors program, it was through Professor Chesne that I learned about it. The Book Club was one of the best experiences on campus and outside of class that I have been a part of. For this reason, I would like to extend my gratitude to Professor Chesne for being a true force for cultivating curiosity in class as well as outside of class.

The Honors program offers endless opportunities to explore new topics from different perspectives. I learned that there are multiple ways of approaching an essay through peer-reviewing in English Composition II. Getting feedback from my peers invariably offered me a fresh perspective that I could utilize to improve my writing style. As a member of the Honors program, you will meet students that have similar or different perspectives on every topic. Ultimately that is the beauty of the program - the diversity of viewpoints and the possibility to learn from others. In the end, no matter what path each one of us will follow, there is a camaraderie between the Honors students that has enriched our time within the college as well as beyond the walls of the classrooms.

What I Will Take Away

I will be transferring to the University of Arkansas with a bittersweet feeling because I do not wish that the experience which the Honors programs has offered would come to an end, even though I am certain that I will never forget what it has taught me. What I will take away from it are the three concepts explained in the previous paragraphs: engagement, curiosity, and diversity. What each one of us takes away from such a program is different, though I can say with conviction is that it will be positive and enriching experiences. I am a better student and a more well-rounded individual because of the Honors program and I can certainly say that others will feel the same.

Personal Highlight: Participation in Model UN

Although I ultimately pursued other aspirations, International Relations has

always been a field that intrigued me, and in the fall of 2023, I finally enrolled in such a course. My only regret is that I did not take the Honors version of the class from the outset. After Dr. Matt Evans introduced me to the Model UN, I enrolled in Introduction to the United Nations - Honors the following semester. Through that course, I had the privilege of meeting excellent students who were part of the Honors program. Many of these peers have since graduated, but their impact and legacy continue to resonate at the college.

In February 2024, I had the extraordinary opportunity to join Dr. Evans and seven other NWACC students on a trip to



Figure 3

New York City to participate in the National Model UN Conference (Fig. 3). It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience—one that allowed me to immerse myself in the workings of the United Nations and to visit its Headquarters, something I had once considered an unattainable dream. Representing NWACC at such a prestigious event, surrounded by participants from the best universities and colleges across the globe, was both humbling and exciting. Such experiences which broaden the mind and fuel passions within are hallmarks of such programs like the Honors program.

My Advice to Future Participants in the Honors Program

The best advice is often simple, straight-forward advice and thus I would offer the following based on my journey of enrichment through the Honors program: Do not be afraid to challenge yourself and explore new topics and perspectives. We are all in this together, no matter the academic path we choose.