

Katelin Johnson

Honors Courses: Honors Music Appreciation, Honors World Civilizations from 1500, Honors Introduction to Philosophy, and Honors World Religions

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Honors Portfolio

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”?

I suppose there are some things I have always wanted to be: a good student, successful, liked, etc. But recently, I have found that the most important thing I want to be is a good person. We have all heard that “knowledge is power” but knowledge is also understanding, and I think that is one of the most crucial and beneficial traits that a person can have. College itself presents a unique opportunity to gain knowledge-and consequently- understanding, but I feel the Honors Program is specifically responsible for the amount of understanding I have gained while in my college career thus far. In my opinion, striving for understanding is synonymous for both being curious and exploring perspectives. You see, understanding is a small part of a larger idea that I try to model my life after: empathy. Understanding is simply one facet of a practice that consists of many parts with the goal of truly feeling what another feels. It appears to me that all along, my goals have lined up with the goals of the Honors Program. Being involved/engaged, being curious, and exploring perspectives all contribute to an overall understanding of the world, how it works, and the people in it. Honors gave me opportunities to be involved in the community at large through the HSA and my role as Community Engagement and Events Coordinator. Through the Honors classes that I took specifically, I was able to learn more than I thought would be possible at this point. I learned many things that I already wanted to know, and I was highly encouraged to expand upon that knowledge on my own. I know for a fact that my understanding has grown, and therefore, I have grown as a student, a citizen, and as a person in general. Being in the Honors Program at NWACC was truly an experience that I will cherish and remember for the rest of my college career and my life.

2. What was the best part of your experience?

I would say that the best part of my Honors experience was definitely the friendships that I made. In my opinion, relationships are one of the most important and educational aspects of life, and the Honors Program gave me the opportunity to connect with a wide array of people. In my position as Community Engagement and Events Coordinator of HSA, I was able to make many connections with individuals in both the Northwest Arkansas community and in the NWACC community that I know will be valuable in the years to come. While making connections in your community is always a wonderful thing, I am particularly grateful for the friendships that I forged with other students. In college it is so easy to isolate yourself. That’s what I did my first two semesters. I didn’t try to be involved or to make friends. However, that changed once I joined the Honors Program and, eventually, the Honors Student Association. Connecting with like-minded individuals who strive for academic excellence in the same ways that you do can be a very encouraging experience. I believe that all good friendships are reciprocally encouraging and beneficial, and I feel confident to say that I made some good friends in the Honors Program.

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?

Often times I feel there is a negative connotation associated to the label "community college." I notice that some people tend to discount a college's credibility simply because the word "community" is stuck somewhere in the name. Most people seem to be under the impression that "community college" is just a euphemism for "easy college." In some cases this might be true, but not at NWACC, and definitely not in Honors. I feel entirely sure that my experience in the Honors Program and in Honors classes has prepared me to transfer to a university. My certainty all boils down to one word: expectations. Sometimes in lower level classes it can feel as though the only thing expected from you is the bare minimum. While doing the bare minimum might help you pass, it won't help you succeed. From my experience, success is what the Honors Program is all about. In Honors courses specifically there is a higher level of expectations and a demand for excellence. You have to be present and engaged, and I think that makes all of the difference. Being in these classes and having these expectations surely rubs off on you. Thanks to Honors, I've learned to expect and demand excellence from myself. I know this will be a valuable tool to have whenever I venture into a giant lecture hall with over 100 other students and ask myself if any of it really matters. I will know the answer is "yes", because even if the professor expects only the bare minimum from every other student in the class, I will expect more from myself.

University isn't the only thing that the Honors Program prepared me for, however. It also helped me gain some valuable workplace and life skills. I would like to think that my Honors experience was a unique one, and I am forever grateful for it. The Honors Student Association was born just as I was joining the program, and I received the honor-and the privilege- to serve as the Community Engagement and Events Coordinator. My role was self-described as being, "...responsible for creating and organizing opportunities for Honors students to be involved both on-campus and in the community." Creating these opportunities for other students meant that I was also creating opportunities for myself. I learned many things in my role, but I think the most important thing is that it is hard work to coordinate things for busy people. It takes a certain amount of dedication and creativity to even attempt to get all students involved in some way, shape, or form, and being in this role forced me to expand those two attributes that I had (thankfully) already possessed. You know that saying, "Teamwork makes the dream work"? Well, in HSA, any doubts that I may have previously held about that statement were immediately disproven. In school, in work, and in life, being able and willing to work with others is vital to your own success in those areas. I had to work closely with the other HSA executives, the students in the program, and contacts within the community to ensure that these opportunities I was trying to create would run smoothly and be successful. Along these same lines, the most important skill that I developed and expanded upon during my time in the Honors Program and the Honors Student Association was my communication skills. Communication was the key to it all, and I know it will continue to be crucial in every aspect of my life.

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

The best advice I have for new members is to be as involved as possible. Like every experience, you will only gain an amount equal to what you put in. However, being an Honors student myself, I understand that we have a tendency to overextend ourselves, so don't do that. Only take on what you are positive that you can handle, but still stay busy! In other words; work hard, but not too hard. Your experience is meant to be an enjoyable one!

This next piece of advice might seem inconsequential, but I promise it is important. Spend time in the Honors lounge, and talk to the other students you see in there! I know from personal experience that the Honors Program has some of the most amazing, intelligent, talented, and kind students that you will meet at school. Take advantage of the opportunity that you have to make long-lasting good friendships.

Quick recap: be involved, work hard, and make friends. Your experience can only be what you make it: so make it a good one!