

# THE HONORS BEACON

Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato



LEADERSHIP • RESEARCH • GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Issue X, Spring 2016



## Perspectives from International Honors Students

Introduction by Sara Baranczyk, '19 (Communication Arts and Literature Education & Physics Education; St. Paul, Minn.)

Being an undergraduate student may seem challenging enough when completing a degree in one's home country. Sometimes students take for granted the luxury of being in their comfort zones while learning about the world. It is one thing to read about a place, its culture, and its language, and it is a very different thing to experience that place. The following students have taken their studies to a global scale, traveling from around the world to learn not only their course materials, but also the American culture and experience.

Each story varies from one student to the next. Some students have been here for years while others started their studies in America only this semester. Some have been speaking English most of their lives while others learned it just prior to coming here. Coming to a new country brings with it several new challenges. From the weather, to the culture, to the feeling of homesickness, each student has a different approach to handling these new situations.

These students have pushed the boundaries of their comfort zones in order to become globally competent citizens. They describe the importance of experiencing the place and not just reading about it. Through all of their challenges, they have grown in the ways they perceive culture, language, and places.

### Hina Khurhsid, '16 (Economics; Lahore, Pakistan)



When my exchange program placed me at Minnesota State University, Mankato, I had no idea what to expect. I had never traveled away from home and the thought of going to a new place and a completely different culture was exciting but scary at the same time. I came here on January 8th, tired and cold. In my hometown you could get through winters with a single sweater. I had never seen snow before in my life and the cold made me want to curl up inside a blanket and hibernate until spring.

However, as days went by, the weather became the last thing on my mind and coming to MNSU seemed like one of the best things that had happened to me in my life. My favorite part about coming to MNSU was the diversity. In the past few months I've made friends from at least thirteen different countries. Just talking to all of these people has given me a whole new perspective of the world and has made me realize that we're all more similar than we realize.

Continued on page 4

# A Word from the Honors Staff

by Ginny Walters, Assistant Director



We are immensely proud of all that our program has achieved this year. In January, we welcomed a new Graduate Assistant, Leslie Kane, who has

been working with upper-class students to coordinate our fall retreat for first-year students and preparing to teach the Mentorship course in fall semester, among various other duties. At Convocation, we celebrate the graduation of our seniors who have worked very hard throughout their undergraduate career. In the fall, we will welcome a new cohort of first-year students to our program. We look forward to meeting these students at summer orientation! Our current students have achieved many accomplishments this semester, such as pursuing leadership roles on campus, becoming involved in the Mankato community, studying abroad, earning positions in summer undergraduate research fellow-

ships, and presenting research throughout Minnesota and the United States.

Honors staff have also been working hard to complete many projects, the largest of which is the new strategic plan which we will finalize this summer and begin pursuing in the fall. With the support and input of the Honors Council and Honors Student Council, we have developed a plan that we are proud of and that we look forward to pursuing. We are excited by the potential for continued collaboration with our partners across campus and in the community.

I would like to extend a sincere thank you to all Honors faculty, Honors Council members, Honors Student Council members, and office staff who have made this another outstanding academic year. Congratulations to all students on completing another academic year and achieving numerous goals along the way. It is truly a pleasure to work with each and every one of you. Enjoy your summer, and return to campus in the fall relaxed and ready for another successful year! 📧

# A Word from the Editor

by Sara Baranczyk, '19 (Communication Arts and Literature Education & Physics Education)



Welcome to the tenth issue of the *Honors Beacon* newsletter! I am very excited to be taking over the position of editor-in-chief of this award-winning newsletter. It has

been my privilege to work with and learn from Rachael Igo. I hope that the *Beacon* will only continue to grow from where it is now.

This issue of the *Beacon* takes a closer look at various approaches to fulfilling the three honors competencies: leadership, research, and global citizenship. This issue contains several personal stories, helpful information and advice.

The cover story is a collection of personal experiences from some of our program's international students. They describe

their different experiences with coming to the United States and what they have learned from traveling here.

The spotlights in this issue highlight the work that three honors students put toward building their competencies. I sincerely hope that you enjoy reading these articles and that you find yourself learning something new!

The writers of this issue came from all over the world to share their experiences with you, the reader. They put a tremendous amount of effort into this issue of the *Beacon*, and I could not be more proud of the final product. This newsletter would not exist without its writers. It only goes to show how dedicated the writers are to sharing exciting news, events, and reflections with the entire university campus.

Happy reading! 📧

## Spring 2016 Beacon Team

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# Alumnus Spotlight: José Barrivaldi

by José Barrivaldi, '13 (Biology; Bolivia)



I was born and raised in Bolivia. I had lived in two different continents, spoke four languages fluently, was married and had one son, all before I started the Biology program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. It would have been fair to say I was a “non-traditional” undergraduate student, or that I had a perspective on life in general, and I did. By completing the Honors Program at Minnesota


State University, Mankato, I received the necessary tools to not only broaden my horizons in life but also to be critical of them, of my own words/actions and their impact on society.

I was already a sophomore when I met with Dr. Chris Corley in the History Department, and he told me about the Honors Program and the different ways it supports the best education for its students. At that point, I felt that I was wasting my time as a student by not taking advantage of so many great things. I felt as if I could have gained more out of my education, if I joined the Honors Program.

Whether through group projects, social activities, field trips or

fun activities like bowling, the Honors Program helped me grow as a human being. I was encouraged to do research and got the opportunity to study natural medicine in Peru and share my experience all over the country. These experiences greatly impacted the way I see education, society and ultimately the world and its place in universe.

After graduating, I was facing the same world as before MNSU, but things looked different to me. It seemed that the long hours of studying in the library and the endless nights trying to write an essay were not done in vain. All the group discussions and presentations, as well as all the questions and opinions I heard, turned into this special prism that allowed me to see life differently. I was able to see every problem like an opportunity to be exposed to different possible solutions. In other words, I was better able to navigate our society.

More than ever, there is a global need for conscientious professionals. It is difficult to find a job in a world dictated by a highly competitive and globalized market. There is a lack of leaders who can promote environments of collaboration, inclusion, and reflection at all levels of society. As a Maverick, I would like to express my sincere congratulations to the graduating class; you are already making a difference. Don't stop now. 

# Welcome Leslie Kane, Graduate Assistant


by Rachael Igo, '16 (Creative Writing; Mendota Heights, Minn.)



This January, the Honors Program warmly welcomed Leslie Kane as its new Graduate Assistant. She is from Lemont, Illinois and completed her undergraduate degree in Psychology and Theatre Arts at Augustana College. She currently attends Minnesota State University, Mankato to pursue a master's degree in Mental Health Counseling while taking classes through the department of Counseling and Student Personnel. She hopes to work in a college or university counseling center in the future.

Currently, Leslie is working closely with the Honors Student Council and the newly enhanced Peer Mentorship Program. She

is also preparing to teach the seminar *Developing Your Mentor Philosophy* in the fall of 2016. When not working hard, Leslie enjoys studying in coffee shops, going to plays, and swing dancing. She also loves chess and Harry Potter.

Leslie is thrilled to be the new Graduate Assistant. She says, “Truly, though, I am excited to be working with such talented and bright students. Coming from a liberal arts college, I really admire the work that it takes to become a well-rounded individual. Learning how to become a global citizen, doing research, and gaining leadership experience will set you apart from the rest. The Honors Program is setting individuals up for success after college and I am so glad to be part of the process.” Leslie fits perfectly into our program. We are lucky to have her, and we are glad she is enjoying her experience. 



Make a difference in the lives of those preparing to make a difference.

Because they have the opportunity to push themselves to do more here at Minnesota State Mankato, students in the Honors Program will be ready to push for success in the real world as well.

Supporting the Honors Program has an impact on students who will become widely recognized, prominent, distinguished leaders, researchers and global citizens who are able to bring about change in the world, no matter what their chosen discipline may be.

Giving to the Honors Program is easy; simply visit [mnsu.edu/giving](http://mnsu.edu/giving) and designate your gift to the Honors Program.

All the new experiences have motivated me to push myself out of my comfort zone. I represented Pakistan in a fashion show on Asia Night, which I probably wouldn't have done back home. I guess the key to fully enjoying new experiences and learning from them is to always stay open to new things.

**Meerim Ibraimova, '16 (English Language and Literature; Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan)**



Thanks to the Global UGRAD program, I had the opportunity to come to the United States and study here at Minnesota State University, Mankato for one semester. Studying abroad was my dream since childhood, especially in the US since I was interested in learning the English language. After learning about America at school for several years, I was convinced how the traditional saying, "To see once is better than to hear one thousand times" was true. Moreover, I realized that even though the language can be acquired in a classroom, the culture cannot.

This is why I decided to apply for the Global UGRAD program and experience America and its culture rather than learning about it in textbooks.

Since arriving here, I have been learning about the American culture through living its daily life and interacting with its people. I am happy to engage myself in the everyday life of an average American student and experience friendships. Along with learning this culture, I am trying to share my culture too. Kyrgyzstan is a small country that many people don't know about, so I am trying to participate in various international events in order to provide others with a better understanding of my country and culture as well as learn about theirs.

**Prathibha Mangedarage, '17 (Biology; Colombo, Sri Lanka)**



I still remember the day I left home to fly to the United States to start my college career. Even with all the sadness of leaving home and nervousness, I still felt excited about my new beginning. So much has changed since that day and I have grown to become a new person with a new outlook on life.

Although my journey here has been incredibly rewarding, it has also been challenging. Missing home, making new friends and trying to fit into a new culture, all while balancing the workload of college, has made my college experience a unique one. The most interesting part about my experience has been the transition from being a dependent teenager to an independent adult in a country across the world from where I grew up. This transition would have looked very different if I had gone to college in my home country. The exposure to a new culture and way of living

gave me a new perspective on life.

My excitement of being in a foreign country and interacting with people from a new culture had taken over all other emotions. I think this excitement helped me fully submerge myself into the new culture I was exposed to. Although it can be very difficult to stay away from family, it is also a unique experience that helps me grow.

All of the ups and downs of my experience in the United States have truly helped me grow as a person. Most importantly, I learned the importance of traveling to new places and pushing myself to move out of my comfort zone. My experiences here are a constant reminder of how incredibly rewarding it is to go and see new places, meet new people, and explore new aspects about myself in order to keep growing as a person.

**Rasheed Al-Amari, '18 (Accounting; Sana'a, Yemen)**



"Transformational" is the only word to explain my time spent in America. I first came to this country in high school as a foreign exchange student, and I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to study here in college as well. I learned much about the American culture, and my host family learned much about Yemen. I became a cultural ambassador between my two homes.

Engaging with my host family unraveled a previously unknown part of me. I can recall with a smile how astounded my host father was when he dressed in traditional Yemeni attire. He was inspired to make his own Janbiya (ancient-style dagger) out of wood. Likewise, exploring the American traditions inspired me to join my high school baseball team and also dress up once as Captain Jack Sparrow. These experiences were able to reveal something I hadn't realized: I possessed the ability to adapt to new environments.

The slogan of *Better Understanding for a Better World*, the national interfaith conference that I was nominated to attend, was "We are one!" Nearly one-hundred Christian, Jewish, and Muslim exchange students gathered for three days to share their unique ideas and beliefs. It is staggering to remember the reciprocal love among this group and how the variation of our backgrounds did not hinder the bond of humanity we shared. This experience impressed upon me reverence for other people regardless of ethnicity, gender or religion and helped me think beyond my norm when considering international controversies.

Being an exchange student in a completely foreign society challenged me beyond what I thought I could achieve. It empowered me to investigate other beliefs and encouraged me to share my own. It was a life-changing experience whose revelations are imprinted in my life. It allowed me to proudly demonstrate my traditional Yemeni dance, proclaiming, "This dance is called Bara." 🇻🇳



Rio De Janeiro, Brazil

## Semester At Sea

by *Quentina Dunbar, '17 (Gender and Women's Studies; Coon Rapids, Minn.)*

I have been fortunate enough to sail on two consecutive voyages with the Semester at Sea program, academically sponsored by the University of Virginia. On the ship, students, life-long learners, staff, faculty, dependent children and crew live, study, and work together. Like a typical academic program, students take up to five university courses aboard the ship. What sets Semester at Sea apart from other study abroad programs is the many countries we are able to visit in just over one-hundred days each semester. Throughout the year we visited popular study abroad destinations like Italy and Spain, but we also sailed to nontraditional countries like Senegal, Trinidad and Tobago and Croatia. The Semester at Sea program is one of very few study abroad programs to visit Vietnam and the first to visit Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) and Mauritius. My travels have given me fantastic stories, a fashion-forward new look, rich cultural interactions, life-long friends, and a humbled outlook on the world in which we all live.

Traveling abroad has its many challenges from home-sickness to frightening encounters. In the end, things have a tendency to work themselves out for the better, but that knowledge does little to ease the tension in a new and uncomfortable situation. I usually try to avoid large animals, mostly out of fear, but I came to find that Henrique (the name I gave to my camel) was as calm and carefree as could be. I stared him down at first, assessing how freaked out I should be by his size, but he just lazily waited for me to get over it and hop on. Though the ride was a bit uncomfortable, my fear subsided. He and

all of his camel friends dropped my group off at a Berber camp in the Sahara Desert. Berber people are a marginalized nomadic ethnic group that makes up much of Morocco's population. Our tour guide, Amed, facilitated rich conversations about ethnic politics in Morocco while encouraging a true cultural exchange. We were welcomed as we shared laughs, listened to traditional Berber music, and looked upon the incredible assortment of stars during our night in the Sahara before returning to our floating campus.

Other challenges are not so easily recognized because they grow from within. Sometimes to accept change, all that is needed is a little push from a festival's activities. Neptune Day is a famed celebration of the Semester at Sea program. While I'm not permitted to discuss exactly what takes place, I can say the festivities commemorate the passing of the equator, where pollywogs become shell backs! I received shell back status in the fall but it wasn't until preparing for my second Neptune Day that I made the decision to shave my head as a part of the optional activities that take place on the day. I decided to wear my hair natural before cutting off most of my hair at the end of my senior year in high school. Somewhere between then and this trip I lost focus. My hair was damaged, mostly from burning my naturally coarse curls into straight submission so often. I tried to manage it, but my hair was damaged beyond repair. One of the many things I have learned from my travels with semester at sea is that it's okay to let go. It's okay to start over. I know that I don't have to hold onto something that's damaged, in this case

my hair, because I'm afraid of change. It's okay to stop something that isn't working and begin again with something new.

During the fall semester I had the opportunity to attend a Barcelona soccer match at their home stadium, Camp Nou. Semester at Sea organized a trip to the game but a friend and I decided to attend independently. Not having to worry about reserving a seating area for a large group, we were able to score some awesome tickets just a few rows back from the field. From our seats we had a spectacular view of the maroon, navy and gold speckled stadium. The energy of the arena was mind-blowing as roughly 100,000 people joined to share the spirit of comradery and competition. I'm not much of a "futbol" fan but I am now fully aware of the bridges an international sport like soccer can transcend. People from all over came together. The city of Barcelona was covered in game goers; I even met a fellow Minnesotan on the train to the stadium. Something about the excitement of the game and diversity of the crowd made the world seem much smaller. Regardless of nationality, language, or age, we all gathered to revel in the excitement of the game.

Way back in the day, I was an athlete with a mean competitive streak. Not winning was not an option. During my later years of high school I traded in my sprinting spikes for scripts. But if I needed a reminder of my intense need to succeed, the Sea Olympics served as just that, with six-hundred students, two-hundred staff, faculty, dependent children, and lifelong learners, seven "seas", and a whole lot of fun!

*Continued on page 10*

## Research Spotlight: Okhumhekho Kassim

by Kristine Dunnum, '19 (Human Resource Management; La Crescent, Minn.)



As part of their competency development, students in the Honors Program partake in research projects of their choosing, within whichever field interests them. Okhumhekho Kassim (Biomedical Sciences, '17) has been working


with a group of students on a research project over the past year. He and his team presented their research from February 9th-11th at the Minnesota Wildlife Society Annual Meeting in downtown Mankato.

For their research project, Okhumhekho and his group looked at parasites in two species of ducks at Lake Winnebigoishish in north-central Minnesota. They began their research last spring and have been working on it for about a year. The project took so long because they tested the birds before they migrated for winter and retested them after they migrated back to the lake. For this project specifically, they were looking at

the DNA of the ducks. However, the interesting part of this project that he highlighted on was that they focused on the healthy birds rather than the birds that came back sick.

Okhumhekho said the presentation of the completed project was a great experience. He enjoyed talking about the project and having people ask questions about it. He enjoyed answering questions from people who are in the profession he is studying. One question that he was asked multiple times was what he learned from doing a large research project. He responded that he increased his critical thinking skills by using the knowledge that he had gathered from various classes and applied them

during the hands on research project.

When asked about what advice he had for other students, Okhumhekho stressed that, "Students must have time management skills and the ability to focus on the main concept of their project." He expressed that students also must have a passion for what they are doing because they could spend a considerable amount of time working on it. As far as future research projects, Okhumhekho has started working on a new research project that involves surgeries on rats. If you ever want to talk with Okhumhekho about his work, check the science labs first! 

## Global Citizenship Spotlight: Parker Scott

by Prathiba Mangedarage, '17 (Biology; Colombo, Sri Lanka)



While most of us imagine the perfect spring break to be a trip to Florida, California or even just a relaxing week at home watching Netflix, Parker Scott (Statistics, '18) spent his spring break traveling to Germany and Austria. He traveled with twenty-four other students


and two professors, Dr. Nadja Kramer and Dr. Joseph Kunkel, as part of a study tour for his *Topics in German Studies* class.

For Parker, traveling to Costa Rica and Panama with his dad when he was in high school sparked his interest to study abroad in college. When asked about his favorite part of the trip to Germany and Austria, Parker explains, "I was very impressed with the architecture. We don't have the kind of old gothic and baroque style architecture here in the United States. In Vienna there was a church that was constructed with sandstone that was such a poor quality that they are constantly repairing it. The attention to detail on the outside of the

building was amazing!" He also enjoyed the food, his favorite being Döner that he said is a must-try.

Parker also experienced the cultural differences between Germany and the United States. What he found most interesting was how culturally diverse Germany was. He said "One time on the subway, I heard four different languages at once." He had also noticed cultural differences between Germany and Austria. "Both Germany and Austria are unique in their tempo and the importance of having time to oneself. Especially in Austria I noticed that things were much more relaxed and not rushed. When sitting down in restaurants and coffee houses I noticed that the servers didn't

make me feel rushed to order, eat, pay, and leave so they could fill my table with another paying customer," he said.

Parker also had some great advice for any student who is on the fence about the idea of studying abroad. "Just do it! If you have even an inkling of desire to study abroad, talk to someone at the International Center to get some information and talk about the possibilities!" he said. Parker's time studying abroad has taught him valuable lessons about the world and the people who live in it. "It is something you will never forget," he said, adding that he has yet to meet someone who regrets studying abroad. According to Parker, opportunities to travel the world can be life-changing. 

# Leadership Spotlight: Rachael Igo

by Libby Guss, '18 (Social Work & Spanish; Mankato, Minn.)



Rachael Igo (Creative Writing, '16) is a great asset to the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Many readers of the *Honors Beacon* newsletter will recognize her name, as she was the Editor-in-Chief of the publication from the fall of 2013 to the fall of 2015. She succeeded Alyssa Phillip (Mass Media, '15) and is followed by


Sara Baranczyk (Communication Arts and Literature Education & Physics Education, '19). Working on the *Honors Beacon* was just one of the many jobs she had as the Media Relations Director, a job she helped to create. In this position, she was in charge of the *Honors Beacon*, the Honors Lounge blog, and the Honors Program's social media outlets. The *Beacon* itself is a large production to take on and the editor is responsible for organizing the newsletter, creating articles, finding people to interview, communicating with alumni, editing articles, mentoring writers, and putting it all together in the layout.

In addition to her work with the Honors Program, Rachael was an Intensive English Language Institute (IELI) tutor her

junior year. Through this program, she was matched with an international student with whom she met twice a week. She helped to prepare the student for the TOEFL test, which is an English-proficiency test for international students. She has also presented research on students' feminist identification and values at Minnesota State with fellow honors student, Hailey Gorman (Environmental Science, '17). Rachael also served as the vice president of the Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society during her junior year and as the president her senior year.

Through her leadership positions, Rachael says she has learned the importance of communication. In regards to her job as the Media Relations Director, she worked with many different people

throughout this campus to organize the news items and produce award-winning newsletters. She is very thankful for the opportunities the Honors Program has given her. Memorable moments include living in the learning community her freshman year, passing her senior portfolio defense, and, of course, when the *Honors Beacon* was awarded 1st place in the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) newsletter contest last year. She was able to attend the national conference in the fall of 2015 and accept the award on the program's behalf.

Rachael is a prime example of honors students at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She is a competent leader, researcher, and global citizen and is sure to find great success in her future. 

## Honorable Mentions

- Congratulations to the following students for receiving campus-wide Student Leadership Awards: Mariah Haffield: Outstanding Collegian, Ali Oku: Commitment to Culture Responsiveness, Makenzie Petzel: Big Ideas, Real World Thinking, Rachel Newinski: Rising Star
- Congratulations to the following students for presenting their research at the Undergraduate Research Symposium: Brooke Jones, Stephanie Peterson, Anna Rice, Kaylin Peterson, Okhumhekho Kassim, Uyi Imasuen, Tatiana Soboleva, Ryan Colakovic, Thu "Amy" Nguyen, Megan Sandberg, Zachary Petzel, Hunter Berbrich, Marielle Jenquin, Katelyn Hainson, Katelyn Malecha, Allison Maleska, Nicole Soley, Clair Palo, Nana Afua Asong-Morfaw, Claire Achen, Bethany Koshak,

- Kristine Dunnun, Nyairah Abdullah
- Congratulations to the following students for presenting their research at the Upper Midwest Regional Honors Conference: Ali Oku, Jonathan Smith, Okhumhekho Kassim, Leslie Kane, and Sarah Aldrich.
- The following students presented their research at the National Conference of Undergraduate Research: Ryan Colakovic, Brooke Jones, Thu "Amy" Nguyen, Kaylin Peterson
- Stephanie Peterson and Natalie Moses presented their research at Posters in St. Paul.
- Congratulations to Hailey Gorman and Rachael Igo for receiving Project of the Year Award for their research from the President's Commission on the Status of Women.
- Congratulations to the following

- students who received competitive awards: Stephanie Peterson, Natalie Moses, Hailey Gorman
- Congratulations to the following seniors who will be graduating this May: Kwame Akyeampong, Ryan Colakovic, Corey Ennis, Shelby Flegel, Mariah Haffield, Katelyn Hainson, Rachael Igo, Makenzie Petzel, Zachary Petzel, Austin Rau, Anna Rice, and Tatiana Soboleva.
- Congratulations to the following students who be Learning Community Coordinators next year: Madie Hoffman, Spencer Sulfow, Ana Leyva, Liesel Theusch, and Okhumhekho Kassim.
- Congratulations to Kate Anderson who was elected MSSA off-campus senator.

# My Creative Research

by Sarah Aldrich, '18 (Spanish Education; Jordan, Minn.)

Being able to tailor each of the competencies to fit one's interests and major is one of the many perks of the Honors Program. Research, while it might seem daunting and rigid at first, is just as flexible. Last semester, as I scanned the Honors Weekly Newsletter, I came across a unique opportunity in Dubuque, Iowa where the Streamlines Undergraduate Languages and Literature Conference was going to be held at Loras College. The proposal called for presentations in either Spanish or English about topics like linguistics, British literature, women's studies, literary theory and modern languages. What captured my attention was that the conference also called for creative writing pieces. As a Spanish education major, I was very excited at the idea of being able to present a piece of creative writing in the second language I am studying.

In order to achieve this goal, I found a mentor in my professor and Spanish Club advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Harsma. Finding a mentor to guide me and build a relationship with beforehand was a huge advantage when I began conducting my research. I worked with Dr. Harsma on the translation cohesiveness of my fictional prose piece "Tinta." She also helped me develop my first abstract and apply

to the conference. I met with Dr. Harsma twice a week over the course of a month and later met with Sandra Castañeda Medina, a native speaker, to fine tune the colloquialism of "Tinta."

This experience has allowed me to foster all of my Honors Program competencies. Working collaboratively with Spanish professors introduced me to new vocabulary and allowed me to have a better command of the language. Independently seeking out this research gave me the opportunity to present at a conference which helped me improve my leadership and communication skills. Presenting at conferences is a great way to get in touch with other students and actively participate in an academic community. My experience in Dubuque led me to the opportunity of publishing "Tinta" in an undergraduate journal from Clarke College called *The Tenth Muse*, furthering my research competency.

This semester, I continued my creative research through an Honors Practicum. In March, I presented at the Spanish Undergraduate Research conference hosted here at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The session in which I presented had two other presenters and an au-

dience of about twenty to twenty-five students and faculty. After presenting, there was time to discuss the presentations and ask each other questions. This allowed not only for the audience to engage with the presenter but also for the presenter to think more critically about his/her own work. In April, I presented at the Upper Midwest Regional Honors Conference (UMRHC) at Scott Community College in Bettendorf, Iowa. After having been a part of the planning committee for last year's UMRHC, it was exciting to be on the other side of the conference experience as a presenter. At my third presentation of "Tinta," I had the chance to refine my presentation style, which evolved to become performance-like.

As students in the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato we have an obligation to ourselves to make the most out of our college experience. One of the ways to do that is to become integrated into the research community. I urge students to find a research experience that fits their major(s) and interests them. Keep your eyes open for what makes you passionate and don't turn down a good opportunity when it comes your way! 📌

## Excerpt from "Tinta"

Cierro los ojos, empiezo a tocar y un murmullo nostálgico me invade. Me conmueve: no solo toco música; la música me toca a mí.

Pero es un dueto irreal.

La segunda parte verdadera falta; siento una pena; siento que la música debe ser más, que he perdido algo. En realidad yo he perdido algo.

Veo la cara de mi hermana cuando cierro mis ojos. También la veo en fotos, en el espacio donde estaría si estuviera viva hoy.

Veo su rostro cuando miro hacia la nada: una pared en blanco, el cielo despejado, una acera vacía. Quizás es así porque ella ha caído en la nada; ahora no hay más que una pila de cenizas en su tumba.

Imagino la cara de una mujer que se ha perdido en el tiempo.

## Excerpt from "Tinta" Translated

My eyes close, music hums from my instrument, and a nostalgic murmur invades me. It moves me: I am not just playing music, but the music is playing me.

But it is a false duet.

My true second part is missing; an ache crescendos through me, reaching to my fingertips, flowing out of them and into the song. But it does not change the feeling that I have lost something. Because I have.

I see the face of my sister when I close my eyes. There she is, too, in photographs, in the spaces where she would be if she were alive today.

I see her face when I look toward nothing: a white wall, a clear sky, an empty sidewalk. Perhaps it is this way because she has fallen into nothing and is not more than a pile of ashes at her gravesite.

I imagine the face of a woman lost in time. And I too become lost as the music transports me.



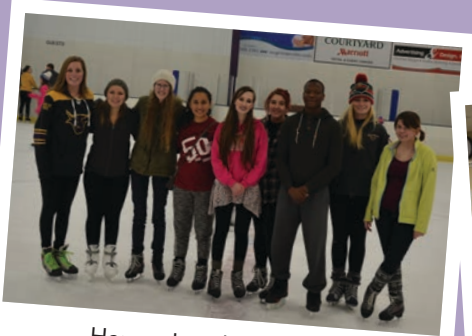
# Honors in Pictures



Honors Student Council



Ali Oku presenting to students before African Night



Honors Ice Skating Night



Pizza 'n' Prof Night



Honors Bowling Night



Upper Midwest Regional Honors Conference



Okhumhekho Kassim presenting at the Undergraduate Research Symposium

# Mentor-Mentee Mashup

by Katelynn Malecha, '18 (Exercise Science & Pre-Occupational Therapy; Lonsdale, Minn.)

The mentorship program provides a welcoming environment for new students where mentors encourage them to take advantage of opportunities offered by the Honors Program. The mentors complete the *Developing Your Mentor Philosophy* course as part of the Leadership and Civic Engagement Learning Community. They apply their learning by serving as peer leaders at the freshmen retreat or attending events such as the Mentor-Mentee Mashup which was held for the first time on February 16th. This event allowed new honors students to meet mentors and interact through games and activities.

The event began with snacks and casual conversation. The Leadership and Civic Engagement Learning Community Coordinator, Ali Oku (Biomedical Sciences, '17), and First Year Honors Learning Community Coordinator, Katelynn Malecha (Exercise Science & Pre-Occupational Therapy, '18), and Honors Program Graduate Assistant, Leslie Kane, led and facilitated the event. With one mentor and three to five mentees per table, everyone learned names and a few fun facts about each other through discussing group icebreaker questions such as, "What was your childhood nickname?" or "Who is your role model?" At the end of the evening, everyone was quizzed on their group's responses to these questions as an extra twist.

After everyone shared their responses, participants had to write the names of their role models on a leaf and tape it onto the tree. The team with all their leaves on the tree first was awarded 100 points for that activity. Another fun activity during the mashup was Honors Jeopardy. Teams of mentors and mentees



competed to answer questions about the Honors Program as well as fun facts about the honors staff members. Freshman AbdulRahmane Abdul-Aziz said, "It was a fun, competitive learning environment where we got to know each other and the staff and bond."

After all the points from the evening were added up, the winning team was awarded a gift card to Caribou Coffee to enjoy coffee together, and everyone walked away with the memories of the event and new friends. Mentor and sophomore Kellie Wong said, "I thought it was a great way to meet some of the new students in the Honors Program! It was fun and interactive and I would recommend doing it again!" The program is very happy with the way this event turned out and is excited to host similar events in the future. 📍

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## Semester at Sea (continued from page 5)

The Sea Olympics was a day-long event filled with a variety of activities. The shipboard community was split into seven different groups, or seas, based on similar cabin locations. Activities of the day included three-on-three basketball, synchronized swimming, relay races, tug of war, musical chairs and a lipsync competition to round out the evening. The seven seas duked it out for 1st place and semester-long bragging rights. I am more than proud to say that my sea has come in first place two semesters in a row! Winning isn't everything, though. The best part of the sea Olympics is the bond between sea members that lasts through the end of the semester.

While sharing in the human experience of friendly competition has its thrills, even more important is the human experience of giving yourself, your time, and your

work to others. It was hot enough outside that we were practically baking. My task wasn't glamorous; I had to dig a six foot hole in the backyard for the septic tank. As a matter of fact, I listened to the Holes movie soundtrack the entire time. I didn't know many of the others in my construction crew very well, but we all developed a kind of friendship after our Semester at Sea Habitat for Humanity experience. Something about suffering through miserable heat for a truly humbling cause brought us together. The most special part, however, was getting to talk to the future homeowner on breaks. She was injured badly when a car swerved off of the road and pinned her between the vehicle and a wall. Due to her injuries she is no longer able to work. She spoke with such hope and told the stories of a proud mother. After two years her new home for

her and her two children was completed in December, just before Christmas. I've volunteered plenty throughout my life but it meant so much to give back to someone in need during such a privileged time in my life.

As spring semester comes to a close, I can't say enough how grateful I am for all that I've been able to see and do. My travel has put faces, names, and experiences to the current events of places far away from home. I have a newfound confidence in my capacity to navigate and connect cross-culturally. After circumnavigating the globe, I am excited to bring my ability to go with the flow as well as my thirst for thrill back home with me. I have seen the world in a way I would have never thought I could, and I have learned to live in spite of fear. 📍

# Course Reflection


by Madie Hoffman, '19 (Mass Media; Omaha, Neb.)

I was interested in developing my leadership and interpersonal communication skills during my first year of college, so I decided to enroll in the Honors Leadership and Interpersonal Communication course taught by Dr. Kristen Cvancara. I was curious to see how this course would develop my own leadership style and develop my knowledge of how to apply my leadership skills to my interpersonal communication skills. Through various readings on leadership theories and interpersonal communication principles, I was able to develop a deeper understanding of my role as a leader.

In the course we discussed how our past leadership experiences have shaped our current leadership styles and how knowledge of different leadership theories and interpersonal communication patterns can further develop our own style. The course was broken down into three different groups of theories: psychological, social, and cultural. For each section we covered a small range of leadership theories and interpersonal concepts. From there each student chose a theory and concept he or she found the most interesting and reflect on how the concept and the theory are connected in a reflection paper. Being able to connect the two practices together, I am able to understand and apply my new integrated leadership style to my future leadership roles.

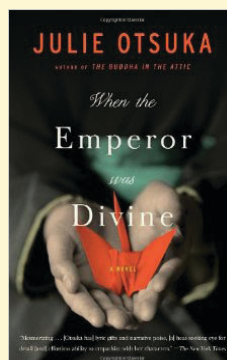
Before I took this course, my view of leadership was a person that had the necessary skills to help themselves and/or a group of individuals reach a certain goal. The skills ranged from being charismatic to having good listening skills to being motivated. After taking this course I have come to see that all leadership styles

are different and that one person's leadership style changes with whatever leadership position or role he or she holds. I have expanded my view of leadership so it doesn't come down to just the specific skills a person has but also how they behave, interact, react, and even adapt in everyday situations. I have learned how the different types of leadership styles can connect with interpersonal communication and change how leaders accomplish tasks. From this course I was able to find a few leadership styles that I can combine and use in my future career and make myself become the leader I want to be.

To end the course the class was assigned a case study where we chose a leader, interviewed the leader, and observed the context of his or her leadership role. This aspect of the course showed how I can later use the practices I have learned to aid me in my own leadership roles. This class helped my research skills because of the research and reflection I had to do for the class assignments and class discussions. The research paper helped show everything the class was able to teach me. My leadership skills and knowledge have been broadened. I know more about interpersonal communication practices, and I am able to recognize them through production and reception of messages. I am able to identify communication traits in others as well as create a greater sense of empathy within myself for others during our communication. This course has taught me how I can combine different leadership practices and use them to make myself a better leader. I have strengthened my leadership competence because of this course. 

## Indulge in the Common Read this Summer!

For more information about the common read, please visit [www.mnsu.edu/commonread](http://www.mnsu.edu/commonread)



## Fall 2016 Courses

### Sensitivity to Disability

Dr. Andrew Phemister

This class is designed to promote a better understanding of many topics and issues, including your own experiences, thoughts, beliefs, and "first-impressions" about a disability and the individual who has a disability.

### Professional Communication and Interviewing

Dr. Christopher Brown

This course emphasizes the performative aspects of communication, specifically how to engage in strategic communication in professional settings.

### Understanding Connections Between Language and Culture

Dr. Anne Dahlman

This seminar has been designed to improve students' understanding of the connections between learning a language and obtaining global/cultural competency.

### Growing the Leader in You

Cynthia Bemis Abrams

Only through understanding the basic principles of leadership can one be a better judge of good and bad leadership. By the end of this class, a student will grasp these principles, hold insights into how to incorporate them into daily living and recognize the nuances of cultural context.

### Developing Your Mentor Philosophy

Leslie Kane

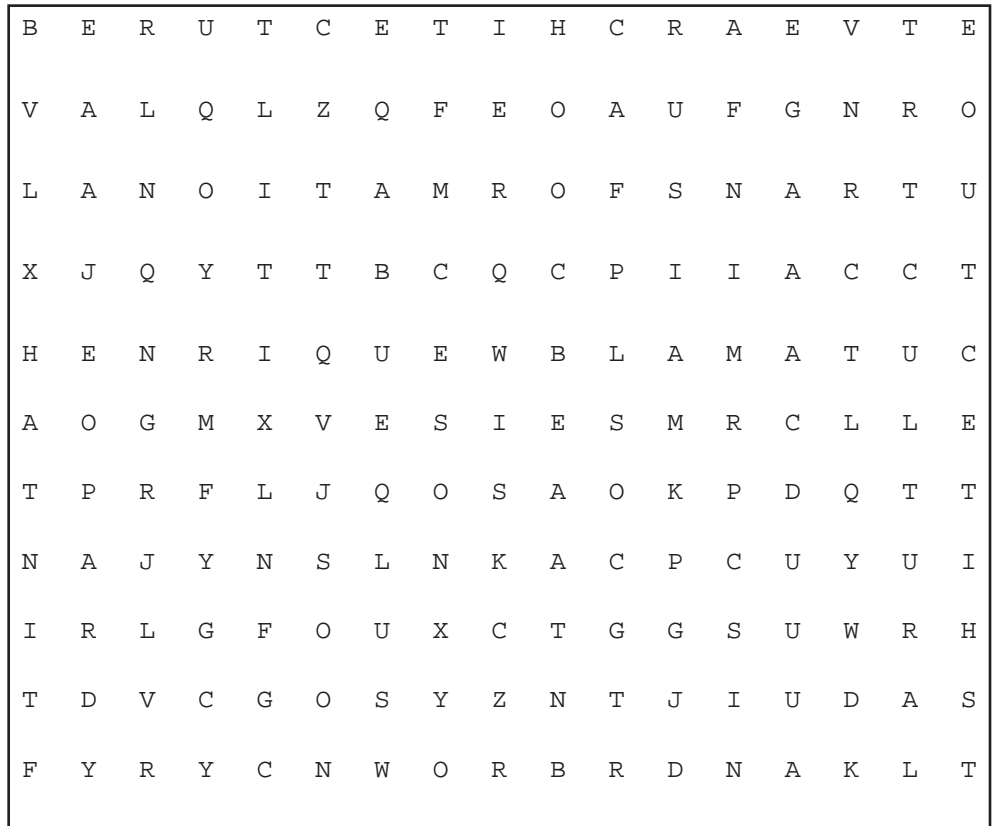
This course will provide opportunities for in-depth investigation into leadership styles and methods, aiming to guide discovery and development of each student's personal mentor philosophy.

# Honors Fun Corner: Word Search

by Rachael Igo, '16 (Creative Writing; Mendota Heights, Minn.)

## Clues:

1. What is the one word Rasheed Al-Amari uses to describe his time in America?
2. What did Alumnus José Barrivaldi study when he was an undergraduate student at Minnesota State University, Mankato?
3. Our Graduate Assistant Leslie Kane is pursuing a masters in Mental Health \_\_\_\_\_.
4. What did Quentina Dunbar name the camel she rode on in the Sahara Desert during her Semester at Sea trip?
5. What animal did Okhumhekho Kassim and his research team observe for parasites in Lake Winnibigoshish?
6. Besides the food, what was Parker Scott's favorite part about his spring break trip to Germany and Austria?
7. What is the name of Sarah Aldrich's story she wrote in Spanish for her creative research project?
8. At the Mentor-Mentee Mashup, the students played Honors \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The three theories that the course *Leadership and Interpersonal Communication* was divided into were psychological, social, and \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Which professor is teaching Professional Communication and Interviewing next fall?



Answers to last issue's puzzle:

Freshmen, Katelynn Malecha, Fresh, Erika Allen, Cultural, Ecuador, Cross country, Emotional, ECHO, Streamlines

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Big ideas. Real-world thinking.

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