

# THE HONORS BEACON

Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato



LEADERSHIP • RESEARCH • GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Issue XIX, Spring 2021



MavLankans (student organization on campus)

## MavLankans: Remember Me Too

*Story provided by the President of MavLankans, Rukshan Vidana Gamage, edited by Jonathan Fjeld*

Being the president of MavLankans is not really a great deal of pressure as our community is small, even though we have done large events. MavLankans is a Recognized Student Organization at Minnesota State University, Mankato formed by Sri Lankan students with the support of alumni and the Kearney Center for International Students. Our mission is to always build a bond with all students & the community by gathering all Sri Lankans and successfully completing events that allows the campus and the local community to experience authentic Sri Lankan culture and traditions.

Being the president or not, it was always a pleasure for me to help everyone I could. However, things really changed once we faced COVID-19. We all were expecting a big change for 2020 but not such an unfortunate change as COVID-19. I had to worry about myself and my whole community, who were very helpful to each other in every possible manner. It was a big

weight and it still is until the community is stable again.

Especially as international students, COVID-19 became a great challenge economically as our home countries were greatly affected. It was hugely difficult to manage expenses such as rent, groceries, and utilities apart from tuition fees due to the fluctuating currency rates. International students were and are still limited to finding work hours within the university, which was a huge obstacle during the pandemic as the campus was shut down as well. Some students were forced to go on semester breaks, while others were forced to go back home. The students who managed to stay in the US faced homeless situations and some did not even have enough income to afford weekly groceries. As F-1 visa holders, we do not have the ability to work off-campus which challenged us mentally as that was the only option we were left with.

However, our organization, as well as other organizations, did their best to

help every student in every possible aspect. Remember Me Too Movement, an organization I was a member of, did a great deal to help to students, providing rent funds, bicycles, and food items to students. The Kearney International Office launched a new project, Mav2Mav, where I am also a peer leader. We're aiming to generate more on-campus positions for students and to help all students who need assistance academically or personally. With any questions they have, we have student teams who report to professionals and provide help to those in need as quickly as possible. These professionals reach them individually to make sure they are stable with their academics and their mindset to complete their work smoothly and successfully.

COVID-19 was a challenge not just for us but for the entire world, as we felt more unsafe and scared being away from home and locked down to a point where some

Continued on page 4

The Honors Beacon newsletter was awarded 1st place in the student print category of the National Collegiate Honors Council's newsletter contest for the 2014-2015 academic year.




## Associate Director's Note

Ginny Walters



One definition Merriam-Webster provides for adaptation is "adjustment to environmental conditions," which certainly describes the actions of everyone on college campuses for the last year. My journal from the last year is filled with writing that demonstrates frustration, angst, and exhaustion. But it is also filled with writing that demonstrates compassion, understanding, gratitude, and joy in the smallest of things. People in numerous areas of my life – personal, professional, spiritual – ask me to consider what I will leave behind and what I'll bring

with me post-pandemic. I can answer that question many ways, but I will focus on one for each. I plan to leave behind the misguided sense that I can control every outcome. The last year taught me that it is simply just not true. I suspect Honors students can relate to this lesson. I intend to bring more compassion into my post-pandemic life. The last year taught me to give people the benefit of the doubt and to listen more than I speak. As you read this edition of the Honors Beacon, you will find instances of students bemoaning what they want to leave behind and celebrating what they want to bring forward into their post-pandemic lives. I hope that our students' words inspire you to ask yourself the same questions as we (finally and hopefully) see the end of this pandemic. 


## Editor's Note

Michaela Reidell '21 (International Business, Management, and Spanish; Mankato, MN)



As the pandemic is on-going, it is truly inspiring to hear about the many ways students and staff have persevered. In this edition of the Honors Beacon, adaptation is prevalent throughout the stories told. Many of the Beacon writers faced and overcame obstacles during this time. These powerful stories gave me a sense of hope for the future because it showed everyone's resilience. In some ways, I hope students, faculty/staff, and the community read the articles and feel empowered for a better future.

One of the articles that really stuck with me was the story of the Sri Lankan community at MNSU. The story showcased the troubling times of the international student community. However, they banded together to form the Remember Me Too Movement on campus to provide support. The one message I took away from this tale is that "We're All in This Together".

Overall, I want to thank Jonathan Fjeld for being such a great advisor. I am very grateful for the opportunity to be the Editor-in-Chief for this edition of the Beacon, and I must say I couldn't have done it without Jonathan! 

## The Spring 2021 Beacon Team

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### In this Issue

MavLankans: Remember Me Too . . .	1,4
Teaching in South Korea in 2020 . . .	3
First-year Perspective . . . . .	4
Can I Study Abroad? . . . . .	5
Residential (Life) Development . . .	5-6
The Cancelled Year . . . . .	6
COVID-19 Mental Health Impact . . .	7
Getting Down to Business . . . . .	8
Student Government Experience . . .	9
Food Politics in the US and World . .	10



## Alumni Spotlight: Teaching In South Korea in 2020

Samantha Kozelek, '22 (Elementary Education; Waukesha, WI)



*This is an interview-style piece featuring Josie Braaten, an Honors Program alumna (Creative Writing, class of 2019), who talked about her experience living and teaching abroad during her fifteen month stay in South Korea, which included the peak of COVID-19 from February-June 2020.*

**Kozelek:** What fueled the idea to live and teach abroad in South Korea? How did it relate to your University degree?

**Braaten:** Living abroad was something that I've always wanted to do, because I've heard that actually living somewhere provides a complete view of a place than simply visiting. However, as a member of the Maverick Track and Field Team, I wasn't able to do a full semester study abroad session like I would have preferred. Teaching provided me with both the opportunity to live abroad for a significant period of time and actually interact with citizens of that country. I chose South Korea because I was intensely curious about it but heard it discussed so rarely. I wanted to learn about it as fully and organically as possible. As a creative writing major, the idea of having the opportunity to write in a completely new environment was incredibly exciting. Also, with all the English and Literature classes I had taken, along with being a language partner through the honors program, I was looking forward to sharing my love of reading, writing, and language through teaching English.

**Kozelek:** What subjects did you teach? How is teaching in South Korea similar/different than the U.S.?

**Braaten:** I taught my kindergarten class from 9 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. every day. With them, I taught phonics, grammar, reading,

writing, vocabulary, science, social studies, art, and math. In the afternoons, I taught advanced literature and writing class to 8 to 11-year-old elementary students. My school was a full English immersion school, so all classes were conducted wholly in English. Also, I was in the advanced section of my school, so all my students had been studying English since they were toddlers and were completely fluent. As a result, classes were conducted as they would have been in an English-speaking country. The curriculum for my kindergarten class was bookwork based, so my students did far more writing than other kindergarten classes I've observed in the U.S. Also, it was different how supplementary study was approached. After attending their Korean schools during the day, my elementary students would go to private schools for English, math, science, and some sport. They all had multiple schools that they would go between all in one day.

**Kozelek:** Was there culture shock? Was it difficult to adjust to life in South Korea?

**Braaten:** I wouldn't say there were any major shocks. I had prepared myself to not know what to expect. Easily, the biggest adjustment though, was not speaking Korean. I had been counselled on a few key aspects of Korean culture by my advisor with the International Teaching Academy. However, I didn't know any Korean. Once I got to Korea though, I participated in a local language exchange, and I was able to learn functional phrases.

**Kozelek:** What is the culture like there? What did a normal day look like?

**Braaten:** The culture was very respectful and social. People generally kept to themselves but were always incredibly polite and helpful in professional settings, in passing, or if you needed help in public. Social functions were very important and not just with friends. Co-workers, families, and different social clubs were always meeting for dinner and activities every night of the week. Specific social clubs like hiking clubs, cycling clubs, or running clubs were also a huge part of the culture.

**Kozelek:** Did this experience open your eyes to anything?

**Braaten:** This experience made me realize that everyone in every region of every country has a different reality and that there truly is not a set standard for "normal" or "right." As time went on, I found myself comparing Korea to the US far less. It just didn't seem important anymore. Analyzing the differences and focusing on what one place had or didn't have wouldn't make any difference and would just leave me thinking about something else, instead of living in and appreciating the moment.

**Kozelek:** How did your Global Citizenship skills aid you in your experience?


**Braaten:** My experience as a language partner prepared me for what it was like to approach English with an ESL speaker. In addition, it gave me clues as to what to expect for when I was in a country that wasn't my home. The global citizenship competency prepared me to approach this totally new situation with respect and the desire to observe and absorb, instead of focusing solely on myself and my experience as an individual.

**Kozelek:** How did your life in South Korea change as the Pandemic spread and peaked?

**Braaten:** Both international and travel between other regions in South Korea itself were shut down. Leaving your immediate neighborhood was also heavily discouraged unless absolutely necessary. It was also advised not to go into Seoul or any major tourist/densely populated places. Most restaurants, cafes, and shops stayed open, but masks and temperature checks were mandatory. Schools shut down briefly in March, but we were able to reopen in less than two weeks with additional safety measures.

**Kozelek:** Since returning, what are your goals for the future?

**Braaten:** In May, I'll be moving to San Francisco, and I'm currently working on getting my applications together to apply to Creative Writing MFA programs.

*Samantha Kozelek is an Elementary Education major from Waukesha, Wisconsin that graduates in 2022.* 

parents feared they wouldn't be able to see their children if they contracted the virus. Some students couldn't attend their parents' funerals. Honestly, we felt like nobody cared for us other than just trying to push us away. We had a very strong bunch of people, on the other hand, providing us all the assistance and care they could to keep the students safe and running. COVID-19 has been an experience of a lifetime that made the international students more open to exploring every possible option that would support their academics and survival. The pandemic gave us a good lesson and made all of us stronger and more focused in life.

I encourage all international students to reach out to the Kearney International Office if you have any issues, as the office staff is linked to all the departments to provide the best for us!

Keep in mind that the Maverick Food Pantry provides perishable and non-perishable food as well as toiletries for students in-need. The pantry is run by Diversity and Inclusion in partnership with Student Government and the Kearney Center for International Students. The full pantry is open Mondays 11 A.M. to 2 P.M., Wednesdays 1-4 P.M., and Fridays 10 A.M. to 12 P.M. It is located in 142 Carkoski

Commons.

Campus Cupboard is located at Crossroads Lutheran Ministry next to campus and is open 11 A.M. to 2 P.M. every Tuesday.

For more resources, visit <https://mankato.mnsu.edu/academics/online-and-off-campus-programs/university-extended-education/resources/>

*Rukshan Vidana Gamage is the President of MavLankans and senior Management Information Systems major.* 📧

## First-Year Perspective



Hannah Welch

As we all may know, this pandemic has not been the easiest for people, especially students. At Minnesota State University, Mankato, students had to shift their learning style to "FlexSync". With this, students have the option to either come in-person to class, granted if they are feeling healthy and well, or stay at home and access their classes online. I personally was very grateful for MNSU for giving me this opportunity to stay safe at home while also learning and earning credits for my degree.

This fall, as an incoming freshman,

I had no idea what to expect from college itself with everything changing. I had expectations that everything would go back to "normal" as soon as the academic year started. However, my expectations were wrong. I had to immediately adapt to the new learning environment of my desk at home and my computer screen. I imagined classes to be much different as well. I never thought I would take an online class before this started. Now, I attend all of my classes online. With that, I feel that learning and interacting with the class is much easier for me over Zoom. I don't feel the pressure and anxiety from other

people online as I would in the classroom. However, I know that for others, it may be the complete opposite.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, I've had to adjust to limiting my social life. Before, I would hang out with friends for dinner, a movie, or coffee. And now, I've had to adjust to either texting or calling them. It gets hard not seeing their faces or seeing what their reactions are when we're talking. I would like to thank the Honors Program and their team for setting up fun game nights/meetings for students to relax, destress, and have fun. I've attended a few of those, and I was never disappointed. The meetings have definitely been helping with everything going on. Besides that, to entertain myself and not go insane from boredom, I've done more painting, baking, and reading. This has truly been a time to rediscover myself & what I love.

With everything being said, I am thoroughly grateful for MNSU and their opportunities they have given to students throughout the pandemic. Some advice I have for current or future students during this time is to make sure to read everything your professors give you. Almost all of that information is very important and will help you understand the concepts more. Although right now may be very troubling, lonesome, confusing, and stressful, there is always a light at the end. Take time for bettering yourself right now, and surely the rest will follow.

*Hannah Welch is a 2024 graduate, originally from Tomah, WI, majoring in Psychology.* 📧



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](https://mnsu.edu/giving) and designate your gift to the Honors Program.



# Center for Education Abroad & Away (CEAA): Can I Study Abroad?

Kadiatu Kamara, '24 (Nursing; Gambia) discusses the status of studying abroad with CEAA Interim Education Abroad Advisor Anna Ochs.



Center For Education Abroad and Away office

The Center for Education Abroad and Away (CEAA) provides opportunities for students to participate in off-campus experiences. Whether that be a faculty-led program in Belize, a semester in Alaska or an academic year in South Korea. They connect students with an impactful experience wherever their passions and goals land.

CEAA's Anna Ochs explained that, "like everyone, we had to adjust how we do our jobs and support students at the Center for Education Abroad and Away. We have been working remotely and utilizing Microsoft Teams and Zoom to connect with students for advising, which has given us the opportunity to find new avenues to connect with students and our exchange partners using technology."

Since the pandemic, in-person travel has not occurred, but the CEAA is still finding ways for students to engage in global

experiences through virtual programs with their program providers and exchange partners.

Throughout the whole pandemic, they encouraged students to engage in global and local programming. Those opportunities have never fully gone away – they have just taken place virtually. Anna claims, "It has been really exciting to see the number of students who have been completing applications and showing interest in programs even during uncertain times."


Although official MNSCU guidelines have suspended travel for now, the CEAA is still looking toward Fall. They are accepting applications for the 2021-22 academic year and already there has been an increase in applications as students are ready to do in-person programs again.

The study abroad options include the 20+ exchange universities or the eight program providers. The CEAA also provides placements for domestic programs through the National Student Exchange (NSE), an amazing consortium of over 170 universities from the US, Canada, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. Students are able to pay MNSU tuition and exchange at a host university. Universities in the consortium include research institutions, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), minority-serving institutions

(MSIs), large public universities, private schools and everything in between. NSE campuses also offer an opportunity for Honors students to participate in their host university's Honors Program as well.

If a student is not able to go abroad, there are on-campus ways for a student to experience new cultural practices and perspectives. MNSU has a unique global mindset as the University has and 1,300+ international students who are a part of the campus community. There has also been an ongoing initiative to incorporate a global curriculum with the addition of a Collaborative Online International Learning components. These partnerships with our exchange universities will allow students to learn from international faculty and collaborate with other students from around the world.

Each semester we host an Education Abroad and Away Fair that highlights all of our programs and opportunities for students and throughout the semester meet with Learning Communities, RSOs and classes. We also host a variety of events throughout the semester which will be posted on our Instagram (@mnsustudyabroad) and Facebook (@MSUCEAA).

(Three things to remember: 1) You can earn academic credit while abroad or away! 2) Financial aid can be used for all approved programs! 3) Programs are available for all students from every major! 

## Residential (Life) Development

Kadiatu Kamara, '24 (Nursing, Gambia)



The Covid-19 pandemic has been a global concern for quite some time. Organizations, institutions, governments, businesses, and families worldwide have had to make drastic adjustments to deal with the pandemic. Social activities and interactions have all come to a sudden halt, and ever since, we have been adjusting to the idea of the "new normal". Like other institutions, Minnesota State University, Mankato

How the University's Residential Life has adapted to COVID-19.

has been affected by the pandemic. The residential halls have been forced to make adjustments, whether it is with the number of students on campus, the moving-in-and-out process, and the University Dining Hall. The university adhered to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) safety guidelines, and although students were not restricted from staying on campus, the University consolidated everyone into one building (Preska) in an attempt to control the virus. As a result, most of the residents did not have a roommate, however, the option of still staying with their current roommate was available.

Check out cards were given to residents when moving out, which they dropped off

at the front desk with the keys after emptying the room. The move in process also changed dramatically because students were asked to sign up for a time slot that was about two hours. They had the option to participate in a drop and go, returning with no guests to set up their rooms. Another option was to sign up for a move-in time where a couple people could help them move in. These processes ensured limited numbers of people in the hallways and buildings for social distancing.

There was also a guest restriction of one guest between the hours of midnight and 8:00 am to avoid close proximity and to limit the number of people in a room. Nonetheless, they were allowed to have visitors outside of these hours. However, when in orange status (increase of COVID-19 cases),

(Continued on the next page)

guests who did not live on campus could only be in the lobby space or bigger areas (not in the students' rooms). In addition, hand sanitizers were provided on every single floor so that students could sanitize after touching a door handle or having contact of any sort.

There was also limited occupancy in lounges and community kitchens. Community advisors' (CAs) floor meetings or programs in these lounges were no longer possible in-person due to the 30 to 40 residents per floor. Hence, CAs have had to be very creative with their ideas, either cater for 9 people in the lounge, host events outside campus in bigger spaces (sports dome, outdoors, etc.), or host virtual meetings. Unfortunately, there has been a lot of student zoom fatigue, so in-person activities are better received.

The University Dining Center also made




University Dining Center

some changes with restrictions of occupancy and seating areas as well as hours of operation. Nevertheless, food choices remain the same, and to-go boxes are popular.

At the beginning of this year, the number of people living in the apartments was limited to ensure each person got a room to themselves. Therefore, apartments for up to five people were limited to three with the bathroom, living area, and kitchen still being shared. Occupancy in Stadium

Heights and other communities on campus were close to the traditional occupancy until Thanksgiving, when classes were moved online. Housing refunds were made to students who had most of their classes online and left.

Despite this, Area Director Emily Ender said the staff has been creative in developing new programs and hangouts, both virtually and in-person. Ender is the area director for Stadium Heights, Preska and McElroy. For each residential hall, Ender has an eye to the future, noting that, "One of my hopes for the future is that we reflect on what's been learned this past year and continue to offer innovative and creative solutions to ensure students have positive experiences in the residence halls."

*Kadiatu Kamara is a Nursing major and first-year international student from Gambia.* 

## The Cancelled Year: Lessons Learned from COVID-19 in 2020



*Dhaval Bhakta shares about the lessons he has learned going through the pandemic as an international student.*

International students come to the U.S. to meet new people, understand the culture, participate in sports, and get educated in the world-renowned universities in the U.S., all of which was taken away within the period of 30 days. All sports were canceled, and students were forced to isolate themselves into their rooms, some even forced back into their countries. Isolation kicked in and everyone faced extreme financial hardships. Education was halted and was eventually moved virtually. This pandemic made a huge impact on everyone's life. As an international student living in the U.S., I was essentially cut off from every family member I knew, and I remember booking tickets for a summer trip to India that was canceled.

Things were tough but I do not want to spread negativity and despair; there is

enough of that in the world. I was taught to always find leverage and use it to navigate through troubled times. People will tell you to stay positive, but they won't tell you how. What I have learned is to defeat the situation, you have to realize where you stand in the given situation. Once you know what you stand to gain and what you stand to lose, the next step is to turn the advantage into something you want to accomplish. For example, when I lost the privilege of in-person class meetings, I tried to find things I could do with all the time I had. Since the classes were online, I found an internship and moved to Texas to leverage my free time. I had never been to Texas, and I always wanted to do door-to-door sales, so it lined up perfectly because I intended it to. Through the internship in Texas, I was taught how to push what I thought was my ceiling. Imagine going out six days a week in the Texas heat and talking to people about their home security on their doors. It gets tough but the rewards are just as valuable. I was connected with many people, learned, and ate a ton of homemade food. I made a lot of lifelong friends and traveled through the entire state of Texas. I vividly remember my manager telling me the importance of getting 1% better every day. It is a life principle for me and so is the importance of being nice. While talking to a sweet lady in Corpus Christi, she told me, "It is nice to be important, but it is more important to be nice." You don't need a title to be a leader and that has stuck with me since.

Remember you have been through tough

times before if you are ever in a position of crisis. Remember to also have the courage when facing the issue and to find leverage. It is not always easy to find happiness, but if you make peace with the worst outcome, handling the entire situation becomes easier and you will face it with a new perspective. Fear is just false evidence appearing real, so face fear in its eyes and defeat it like a champion you are. See you down the road!

When you feel lonely, recite this poem to gain the courage to rise and prevail:

Invictus

*Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.*

*In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.*

*Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds and shall find me unafraid.*

*It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul.*

-William Ernest Henley 



# COVID-19 Mental Health Impact



The COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly turned our world upside down. As a collective, we had to adapt, transition, and persevere. Just like any other aspect of our lives, the pandemic had a massive impact on mental health and mental health care. I had the privilege of interviewing Kim Sommers from the MNSU Counseling Center, who was able to provide insight, advice, and resources to those of us who feel these impacts personally. Sommers notes that “college aged students have been impacted by this pandemic in so many ways: moving to online learning; separation and isolation from friends and family; navigating increased financial stress; dealing with ambiguous loss (no graduation ceremony, cancellation of homecoming and other events).” Not being able to walk in graduation or attend Honors Banquet in-person is a massive loss for not only myself but also all of our graduating seniors. This reality of ambiguous loss is practically universal for all students in one way or another. Sommers describes that it is completely understandable for students to be struggling with their mental well-being because “we are all able to handle a huge amount of stress, BUT we have a limit on how long we can manage that stress effectively. As that “surge capacity” for stress has worn out or been tapped for too long, mental health and wellness declines.” And as we passed the mark of a year of the pandemic in March, we are all feeling pretty tapped.

The pandemic also impacted mental health care and how we can take

care of ourselves. Sommers explains the Counseling Center and most other mental health care providers transitioned to online counseling and services through Zoom Healthcare, which is essentially a more secure and confidential Zoom platform. They also created more online resources and seminars for students to take advantage of at their own discretion. In light of these shifts, Sommers notes she is pleasantly surprised with the effectiveness of telehealth! For those who have access to reliable internet, mental health care has become far more accessible.

Unfortunately, this is not the case for anyone who doesn't have the internet, technology, or a safe space at home to participate in sessions. To help combat this, the Counseling Center has created a “Zoom Room” for students who may share a dorm and don't have a private place. This is a room in the Counseling Center for students to come and attend their telehealth appointment in a safe and private area. Sommers says the “best way to get started at the Counseling Center is to call 507-389-1455 to schedule a screening appointment with one of our counselors who will then work with you to develop a care plan and provide referrals to other services. The Counseling Center provides screenings, seminars, workshops, individual and group counseling, behavioral stress management instruction, and case management.”


On a final note, I asked Sommers what advice she would give to students who are feeling lost or stuck. She suggests, “When you are feeling lonely, lost, or stuck the best thing to do is make a plan to get active and make the first step on that plan happen. If feeling lonely, say yes to invites, say yes to going to the dining hall with someone you don't know well or attending a group or student activity.

Kassidy Tocco, '21 (Special Education; Marshall, MN)

It's important to call your friends – texting and Snapchat are great, but nothing does more to combat loneliness when you have to stay social distanced than talking to someone on the phone. If you are feeling lost, do something that makes you feel competent and capable – maybe that's picking up a crafting project that you started but haven't finished, or making a meal that is one of your best, most trusted recipes. If you are feeling stuck – MOVE. Truly going for a walk can be incredibly helpful. Getting out of your bed and going to sit on the couch can be helpful. Literally, getting out of whatever four walls you feel stuck in can be powerful and lead to more movement and feeling less stuck.” Even though the pandemic continues to affect our lives in less than ideal ways, I am reminded by this interview of just how many people are in my corner and the services I know I can turn to. Whether it be the Counseling Center or the Honors Program, we have a community and support to get ourselves through.

Below you will find resources provided by the Counseling Center. I hope you will find them as helpful as I have. Here is their website for information about all of the different services they offer: <https://mankato.mnsu.edu/university-life/health-and-safety/counseling-center/about-the-counseling-center/counseling-center-stepped-care-model/>

Additional Online Counseling Center resources (e.g., seminars): <https://mankato.mnsu.edu/globalassets/counseling-center/media/seminars-spring-2021.pdf>

“Coping with COVID” website with articles and other resources: <https://mankato.mnsu.edu/university-life/health-and-safety/counseling-center/getting-started-with-the-counseling-center/covid-distress/> 

# Getting Down to Business: Honors in Integrated Business Experience (IBE)

*James Ziegeweid spotlights the Integrated Business Experience program and an Honors student's past experience in it.*

Unique opportunities to develop Honors Program competencies can be found across our campus community and can help prepare students for future careers. The Integrated Business Experience (IBE) is organized by the College of Business at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Many honors students take advantage of this great opportunity in order to develop useful transferrable skills for those pursuing a degree in business, including Autumn Ritter. Autumn is a junior who is majoring in Business Management and minoring in Business Administration, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and Nonprofit Leadership.

In Autumn's words, the IBE is a semester long program "where students take four core classes together and use the materials from those classes to create and operate a company". Over the course of the semester, students had to work together to create their own product and create a business plan which is then presented to a bank in order to secure a loan. Students then market their products and have the opportunity to run their own business, solving different issues as they come about and gaining insight into daily business operations. At the end of the semester, all of the profits that each company generates is donated to a nonprofit that the company chooses. Autumn's company, Gold Horn, sold hydro-dipped water bottles, "Saturdays Are for the Mavs" flags, and various stickers. Their company was successful and donated \$2,345.55 to MyPlace Mankato.



One of the hydro-dipped water bottles sold by Ritter's IBE company, Gold Horn.

Over the course of this project, students are given a variety of opportunities that are relevant to the Honors Program. "During the IBE program, I held the position of Vice President within my company. This meant I was responsible in helping to make a lot of important decisions, and I worked closely with the executive board", said Autumn. She continued, "It also was essential for




A group of Integrated Business Experience students (picture taken pre-COVID).

our company to conduct market research at the beginning of the semester. We conducted various surveys to get real feedback about what products students were interested in, and we applied this research to our final product selection." These experiences that Autumn had during her involvement in the IBE gave her the opportunity to develop her leadership and research skills, which allowed her to earn full credit for the Honors 499 Individual Study course.

Within this experience, students are also given the opportunity to think critically in order to solve different issues. Autumn was involved in the IBE last year when the COVID-19 pandemic began. This created a significant challenge for Autumn and her group as "all of our group collaboration shifted to virtual, and it made it a lot harder to make decisions and have full participation. We also had planned to sell solely on campus, and this obviously became impossible during the pandemic." Gold Horn then had to change their previous plans and think quickly on how they could adapt. Finally, they came up with marketing and selling their products completely online. As the pandemic began, businesses across the country had to find a way to adapt, similar to Gold Horn. By learning how to think critically and developing problem-solving skills, IBE students were given the opportunity to cultivate skills that they can use over the course of their professional careers.

Overall, the Integrated Business Experience is a great opportunity not just because students can develop transferrable skills that will be applicable to a variety of different careers, but because it also provides an opportunity for Honors Students to develop the Honors competencies.

*James Ziegeweid is a 2024 graduate from Arcadia, WI, majoring in International Business and Spanish for Professions. *



# Student Government Perspective: Brian Swancutt



Being part of the Student Senate can be overwhelming sometimes, even in the best of circumstances. During my time in the Student Senate, I have been able to serve as both a Residential Life Senator and as the City and Local Affairs Coordinator, previously known as Legislative Affairs Coordinator. In my position as a Residential Life Senator, I represented the interests of students that live on-campus. One of the ways that I represent on-campus students is by sitting on the Student Affairs Committee, which all Residential Life, At-Large, and Off-Campus Senators sit on. In this committee, we talk about issues that affect our constituents and how we plan to move forward addressing these issues throughout the semester and throughout the year. Additionally, I represented my constituents through attending the weekly meetings of the Student Senate. This was the place where we would give updates on the projects we were working on, advance the issues that we care about, and overall try our best to attend to the needs of students here at MNSU, Mankato. The projects that I worked on personal-


ly have varied wildly throughout my time in Student Government. My two greatest achievements were ensuring that all five Student Government coordinators got paid for the work that they did. Previously, only three of the five coordinators received a stipend. This ensured that people would want to fill these positions regularly and that those who held these positions would be sufficiently motivated to have work completed in a timely manner. The second big achievement was organizing the first-ever Student Government lobbying day at the Minnesota State Capitol. That day, we were able to talk to elected representatives about including money in the state budget for Phase I of the Armstrong Hall demolition and redesign. This priority was ultimately sidetracked and never included in the final budget bill due to COVID-19, but it was an incredibly important conversation nonetheless.

There are two major challenges that I faced during my time in Student Government. The first of these issues is balancing this commitment with everything else going on in my life. I try to acknowledge that I am a person first, a student second, and a Senator third. The other big issue I faced is personality conflicts. There are plenty of different types of people in and around the Senate, and learning to work with them is hard but essential to ensuring projects are completed.

One very important thing to note about Student Government is that it is often

quietly working behind the scenes in order to best represent the interests of students. For instance, over the summer, Student Government was able to ensure that classes moving from in-person to FlexSync would not incur an online differential fee that is often levied on online classes. We were the first and only campus to guarantee that students would not have to pay more for classes that had to move online due to factors outside of anyone's control like a pandemic. Student Government worked toward securing an official place in the collective governance system that is practiced here at MNSU, Mankato. Under collective governance, all bargaining units being affected by a policy or rule change have a seat at the table when discussions about a policy change are being made. Student Government was only unofficially recognized as being a part of this system in the past, but this new policy guarantees Student Government a place within that system.

To anyone who is on the fence about joining Student Government, make the decision and go for it. The one piece of advice I would give is that while it is important to make friends and connections within the Senate, do not get involved in the personal drama that may occur when people work closely together for a long time. Avoiding that will make your tenure in the Senate much more tolerable and productive.

*Brian Swancutt is a senior from Rochester, MN majoring in Social Work/Pre-Law. *

## Honorable Mentions

The following Honors students received Student Government Leadership Awards:  
Emily Schiltz (Big Ideas, Real World Thinking), Aaron Pacheco (Rising Star)

The following Honors students presented at the 2021 Undergraduate Research Symposium:

Nicole Aadalen	Lelti Asgedom	Muna Awel	Emily Bollendorf	Quinlan Brogdon
Mykenzie Cole	Jonathan Fjeld	Kianna Fladland	Mackenzie Glaser	Rebecca Guss
Jada Harley	Molly Hill	Liberty Hombe	Nicole Jecha	Simale Kadir
Meaghan Keohane	Emma Knutson	Vanessa Kotek	Samantha Kozelek	Abigail Larson
Riley Lehmer	Gabrielle Matthieu	Maureen Nghambi	Roman Parpart	Kade Patterson
Mackenzie Reed	Jamie Rogers	Jane Sakowicz	Emily Schiltz	Brian Swancutt
Annalisa Tostenson	Rachel VanKuelen	Emma Vogel	Marius Vold	Jessica Wimp

## Class Spotlight: Food Politics in the U.S. & the World

Hannah Welch, '24 (Psychology; Tomah, WI)



Dr. Josh Berkenpas

Welch: What Honors course are you teaching?

Berkenpas: I'm teaching HONR 401: Food Politics in the U.S. and the World.

Welch: Where have you taught before Mankato?

Berkenpas: I went to Western Michigan University and studied Political Science and American Politics/Theory. After that, I taught U.S. Government at Western Michigan University as a graduate student. In 2016, I came to Mankato and started teaching this course, Food Politics in the U.S. and the World.

Welch: Is there any background you can give on your class? Why did you choose to teach it?

Berkenpas: Food Politics in the U.S. and the World allows students to learn about how food interacts with politics. Essentially, how the food on your plate gets there, and what's involved with it getting there. And as for why I'm teaching it, I always had an interest in this area for research. In 2016, I wrote a paper on topics in Food Politics. I also believe that I can give students the skills that are important to the Honors Program, such as leadership, research, and global citizenship.


Welch: What are some goals that you hope students will achieve in your class? What do you want students to gain?

Berkenpas: Well, first off, I would like for students to develop an appreciation for the food system and to learn how it interacts with politics. And like I said earlier, they should know what things go into food on their plates. Honors students especially should get a good understanding for leadership and justice with this class. By the end, they should want to change at least something within the food system in this country. Students in this class also will develop and use 21st century citizenship skills such as critical thinking, writing, and political vision as well as being aware of global citizenship.

Welch: What are some challenges that have occurred during this course since adapting to a new online format?

Berkenpas: There haven't been too many major issues with the honors course, however with my regular courses, the microphones and internet connections have interrupted class a time or two.

Welch: How will this course help Honors students connect to the "outside world"?

Berkenpas: Well, in the course I teach about a various number of things that go on outside of just the food being produced. I go into topics such as politics of sight and animal farming and how those relate to the meal that you're eating. Basically, if more people knew the process of how their food gets delivered to them, many would think twice about the food they eat. I also teach about the impact that this process has such as on animals, the environment, workers, and consumers. I hope that honors students will connect these problems to the things around them such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, etc. It's all political, really. 

## Summer 2021 Courses

Reading the News  
(HONR 401, 3 cr.)  
Online, Rachael Hanel

In this class, you will learn the importance of finding credible news and information from a variety of sources. You will understand the historical context of media in the United States and how we arrived at this point. You will engage with print, online, and broadcast sources, discovering a variety of information that you may otherwise not seek out on your own.

## Fall 2021 Courses

Interdisciplinary Undergraduate  
Research (HONR401, 3 cr.)  
(Wednesdays & Fridays, 2-3:15 p.m.),  
Leah White and Ginny Walters

This course will help students to become more knowledgeable about the process of conducting research, including understanding what research looks like in different disciplines, skills associated with doing high quality research as an undergraduate student, participating on an interdisciplinary team to start an original research project, and preparing to present the completed research project at the MNSU Undergraduate Research Symposium.

*This course is intended for Emerging Researchers Learning Community students only.*



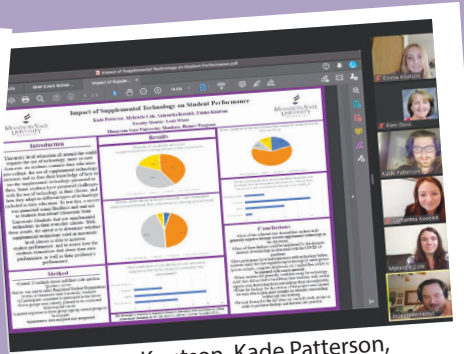
# Honors in Pictures



Emily Schiltz and Mason Vlaanderen participating in the Honors Scavenger Hunt



Quinlan Brogdon's Undergraduate Research Symposium Poster



Emma Knutson, Kade Patterson, Mykenzie Cole, and Samantha Kozelek's Undergraduate Research Symposium Presentation



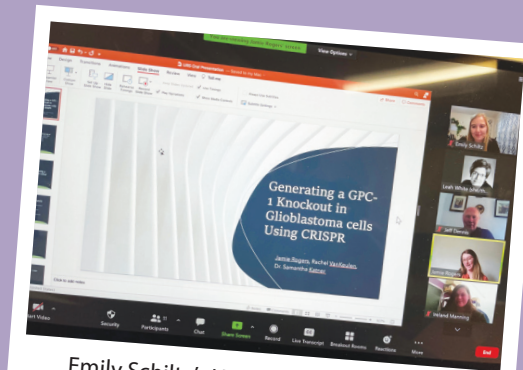
Photo taken by Wade Davis, Ferdy snow sculpture



Molly Hill's Undergraduate Research Symposium Presentation



Molly Olson and Keara Murphy with their Honors Medals and Ferdy.



Emily Schiltz's Undergraduate Research Symposium Presentation



Becca Guss's Undergraduate Research Symposium Presentation

# Honors Fun Corner: Word Search

by Michaela Reidell, '21

## Clues:

1. What grade did Josie teach in South Korea?
2. Professor Berkenpas says, "It's all \_\_\_\_\_, really".
3. Students had to shift their learning style to \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Dhaval claims that \_\_\_\_\_ is false evidence appearing real.
5. What should you say to invites, according to Kim Sommers?
6. What was the name of Autumn's company? (2 separate words)
7. A major issue Brian faced with his commitments of Student Government was what?
8. Which International Office at MNSU launched Mav2Mav?
9. The National Student Exchange includes 170 universities from the US, Canada, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Emily Ender hopes that Residential Life will continue to offer \_\_\_\_\_ solutions.



Answers to last issue's puzzle:

Answer 1: Finland, Answer 2: President, Answer 3: Asanas, Answer 4: Zoom, Answer 5: Video game, Answer 6: Three, Answer 7: Missouri, Answer 8: Meditation, Answer 9: Senior, Answer 10: Business

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