



Official Press of the Westfield State University
Honors Program

The Squirrel Squire

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Social Media / Publication Contributors

The Squirrel Squire Team

Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor - Staff Editor

Gretchen Konrad - Staff Editor

Kaitlyn Egan - Student Newsletter Intern Fall 2022

Student Contributors - Margaret Ahern, Mekhi Bowen,
Kaitlyn Egan, Alyssa Hale, Mackenzie Healey, Haley Kane,
Sean Morrison, Izzy Piacente, Tatiana Reyes, Katy Schlaefer,
Gwyn Smith, Olivia Stafford, and Gabriella Zive
Alumni Contributor- Amber Stearns
Faculty Contributor - Dr. Vanessa Diana

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Abigail Bernier
Alyssa Hale
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Christopher Schoen
Gwyn Smith
Will Smith
Brianna Toomey

Our Honors Leadership!



Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor
Honors Program
Area Chair



Gretchen Konrad
Honors Program
Administrative Assistant



Follow us on Social Media!



First-Year Welcome

Class of 2026 Honors Students are Welcomed to the Nest



First-Year Students Posing in Front of the Globe

The Westfield State University Honors Program was excited to welcome 90 new Honors students from the Class of 2026 to campus one day prior to the rest of their class and two days prior to returning students in order to settle in, meet new friends, and learn all about what the Honors Program and Westfield State have to offer them! These students moved in on September 1st along with eight Peer Mentors and Student Honors Association President Caitlyn Pellerin, who volunteered to help welcome our new first-year class. Alongside Honors Program Area Chair Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor and

Administrative Assistant Gretchen Konrad, students first attended a welcome reception where Dr. Sackett-Taylor gave a presentation over delicious pizza made especially for us by our Dining Commons! Students learned about Honors courses, graduation requirements, research opportunities, and other Honors Program perks with icebreakers and games in-between. Also in attendance was Tom Convery of Alumni Relations and Class of 2024 Advisor, who generously gave specially designed Calm Strips to every first-year student. Calm Strips are adhesives that come in either a rough or smooth texture that when scratched may

reduce anxiety and regulate restless energy. It was so wonderful to see these students begin to connect with one another and be so engaged in learning about their Honors Program experience. As this event concluded, we invited our new students to participate in either a movie night or a game night put on by the Honors Student Leadership Team to continue socializing with one another and to ask their Peer Mentors any questions they had about the University or transitioning to life away from home, likely for the first time.

The next day was packed with just as much fun as the previous one. After meeting at the globe

bright and early, members of the Honors Team worked hard setting up our activities while others walked with our new Honors students to Stanley Park. Once there, we enjoyed a delicious picnic brunch of bagels and pastries, a fruit salad, coffee and juice! After everyone had enough to eat, we broke into groups where we made tie dyed t-shirts and completed a 'selfie scavenger hunt' where we took photos in various areas at Stanley to help familiarize our new students with a park WSU students so often utilize.

Ultimately, this was a very successful start to new academic year for the Honors Program.

First-Year Welcome, cont. on p.3

First-Year Welcome, cont. from p.2

Students from the incoming Class of 2026 began to get to know one another and make connections that will likely continue throughout their college careers and beyond, and participated in events put on by our Peer Mentors while being introduced to the program. I know I speak for all of us when I say that I am looking forward to seeing what the future has in store for our newest Owls.

*Written by Kaitlyn Egan,
Publication Editor,
Class of 2024
Criminal Justice & English
Dual Major
Hometown: Sutton, MA*



*Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor, Honors Program Director, Addresses Incoming First-Year Students
Incoming First-Year Students Enjoying Welcome Reception and Picnic Brunch in Stanley Park*



Honors Discovery Seminar



First-Year Students Comment on Their Honors Discovery Seminar Experience



"I am enjoying this class.

I am learning things that I didn't know before, and it is helping me transition into college well!"



*Mekhi Bowen, 2026
Majoring in
Criminal Justice
Hometown: Springfield,
MA*



"I love it, it's really useful. Especially for me as a commuter. It has made me aware of the resources that are available."

*Tatiana Reyes, 2026
Majoring in
Health Sciences
Hometown: Springfield,
MA*



"By learning new study strategies, I have felt more confident... if there is no class similar to this provided to non-honors first-years, there definitely should be."



*Olivia Stafford,
2026
Majoring in
Mathematics
Hometown:
Turners Falls, MA*



Discover Westfield



Students Profile Businesses in Downtown Westfield

"First-year students in the "Discover Westfield" Learning Community took the linked courses Honors Introduction to Community Planning and Honors First-Year Composition with Professor Dristi Neog, Department of Geography, Planning, and Sustainability, and Professor Vanessa Diana, Department of English. Featuring five class trips to downtown Westfield during the opening weeks of the semester, this learning community immersed students in the City of Westfield through hands-on activities and projects, visits to local businesses, interactions with guest speakers and community members, research, and a public presentation to city and university leaders. Students used their community planning and English composition skills to identify and promote the gems of downtown Westfield and to help envision future community development to increase student engagement in their college town. Their business profiles will be included on a new "Things to do Downtown" page on the Westfield State University website."

Provided by Professor Diana, English Department



*Written by Gabriella Zive
Class of 2026
Majoring in
Elementary Education
Hometown: Mansfield, MA*

"As someone who loves coffee and getting good grades, finding a local coffee shop with lots of seating right near my college campus is very important to me. Not only did I find a coffee shop, I also found an unforgettable experience. Walking into Circuit Coffee is like walking into a cozy home that you have been to just over a million times. The abundance of seating assures you have a spot to spread out your work or to simply enjoy a drink. You walk in and feel like you are part of their comfortable dynamic. The barista is not only taking your order, but they are asking about your day.

The owner, Ted Dobek, a Westfield State graduate, loves coffee and has a passion for creating a great experience between the customers and the barista. His degree in community planning helped him to appreciate the local items he brings in, and helped him realize that there is nothing like Circuit Coffee in the area.. His connection to Westfield also allowed him to bring in an abundance of local pieces... As everything in the world is becoming manufactured in one big store, it is important to find places that sell local items. Circuit Coffee has a plethora of locally sourced items for customers to enjoy."



*Written by Izzy Piacente
Class of 2026
Majoring in Psychology
Hometown: Mansfield, MA*

"Welcome to Hilltown Chic! You can find Hilltown Chic on School Street in downtown Westfield. This place is just right for both youthful, fun, college students and sassy, spunky older adults. Cassie started her "sassy, fun, and supportive" business by herself in December of 2020, during quarantine. In the midst of the chaos of this time period, Cassie wanted one thing, to use her artistic abilities and creativity to make people laugh. As manager Amy states, "Even if a person doesn't buy anything, she loves just hearing them laugh." I can confirm she has accomplished this goal. While the shop may look

small, it has a lot to offer. They carry everything, from totes, to signs, to hand towels and more. All of their products are either homemade or wholesale from local vendors. The tumblers are a great example of a homemade product, and guess who makes them.... none other than the manager, Amy! While they have so many homemade products, Amy confirms that about half of the store is from local artists. Open support for the LGBTQIA+ community and for the Black Lives Matter movement is something that you will be able to find at Hilltown Chic on their products. This is a safe space."

Upper-Level Interdisciplinary Honors Seminars



The Wire



This semester I took my final Honors course: the upper-level interdisciplinary seminar.

Interdisciplinary seminars are on a special topic, and they are discussion-based classes, normally meant for upperclassmen. Past examples have included Theories and Practice of Creativity, and a class on the Vietnam War.

There were two options to choose from for Fall 2022: African Warlords and Child Soldiers or The Wire based on the hit HBO television series of the same name. I knew about the TV show from my parents who were avid fans, so I signed up for the seminar on *The Wire*. And, boy was that the right decision. This class was full of life from day one, where we met on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:15-12:30 pm. The two professors teaching it were from two different departments: Economics - Dr. James Schlaffer and English -

Economics - Dr. James Schlaffer and English - Leah Nielsen, M.F.A. They were both energetic and superfans of the show, who wanted to teach a class on *The Wire* for ages. The class was also filled with students willing to learn, and some fans of the show. This was not a class for just watching TV! *The Wire* was a show that took on real-life topics such as unintended consequences, classism, the war on drugs and terrorism/ the impacts of 9/11 on the modern world. There was so much to see and hear, that it took a few watches and pauses to fully understand each episode. The episodes were also entertaining, and easily bingeable, but we were warned against that since we would miss a lot of what was going on. The way that the class was set-up changed a bit throughout the semester. We would be assigned a trio of episodes to watch, and then a reading response to complete. Topics for the reading response

would vary from the economics standpoint of supply and demand, and the more English side of things, with the cinematography and characterization. We would then meet on Tuesday morning to discuss what we had thought about the episodes. These discussions could carry over, almost until the end of class. They were so engaging, and it was so interesting to hear so many different perspectives of certain scenes like characters getting hurt or killed, and similarities like what we liked and disliked about a character.

Towards the middle of the semester we started to focus on group work. The class was split into five groups, and each group would present on a topic relating to *The Wire*. My group related the show to two famous mobsters/criminals in New England: Buddy Cianci and Whitey Bulger. Groups would also disperse material

before class, or plan an activity for the class to do.

The final project for our class was a research project that would be presented at the CURCA (Center for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity) Celebration. For our topics, we were again free to choose, but they had to relate back to the show. We had guest visitors including the director of CURCA, Dr. Lamis Jarvinen who spoke about the conference and gave us tips for our presentations.

At the end of the semester, we not only presented at the CURCA Celebration, but also presented to our class. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed *The Wire*

Interdisciplinary Honors Seminar. I got to know some of my classmates in the Honors Program, and reconnected with those who I haven't seen in a while.

The Wire, cont. on p. 7

The Wire, cont. from p.6

There was a great sense of community and bonding throughout this class. If this seminar runs again, I highly recommend taking it!

*Written by Margaret Ahearn
Class of 2023
Majoring in Communication
with Minors in English and
Writing
Hometown: Foxborough, MA*



Professors Nielsen and Schlaffer with Honors students in their Honors upper-level interdisciplinary seminar, The Wire.

African Warlords and Child Soldiers

I have a passion for working with children. As an Elementary Education major with a concentration in History, I chose African Warlords and Child Soldiers with Dr. Banwo as my Honors upper-level interdisciplinary seminar. During the semester, we read numerous articles and books focused on child soldiers including the books: *A Long Way Gone*, *Warchild: A Boy Soldier's Story*, and *Girl Soldier: A Story of Hope for Northern Uganda's Children*. These texts allowed me to gain a personal connection to the subject matter.

By taking this course, I increased my understanding of the importance of empathy. As teachers, we do not know what happens to children outside of the school building but we do need to ensure that we provide them a safe environment inside the classroom. Before taking this course, I knew nothing about the phenomenon of a child soldier. After completing this course, I had gained a stronger understanding of the phenomenon. The phenomenon of a child soldier is fascinating to

me because every single person's experience is different; however, the effects that each child soldier came out of the war with were the same. Every child soldier's life was forever changed, mentally, physically, and emotionally. The lives of these child soldiers were altered and at the end of the wars, they needed to adapt to a new life. The stories of these child soldiers really showed me to appreciate life because it can change in a minute.

*Written by Danielle Bain
Class of 2024
Majoring in
Elementary Education with
a Concentration in History
Hometown: Tewksbury, MA*



*Dr. Adeyinka Banwo (r.) with
Guest Speaker
Dr. Mohammed I. Ibrahim (l.)*



Honors Alumni Spotlight

Amber Stearns on the Appalachian Trail

I had the distinct pleasure of interviewing Class of 2022 Alumna Amber Stearns over the phone as she hiked the Appalachian Trail (AT). She began her journey on May 23rd, 2022, and as of today, October 26th, 2022, she has hiked just under 1,800 miles!

I first asked Amber what made her decide to embark on the Trail. She shared:

"During Covid and lockdown, I realized that spending time in nature improved my mental health considerably. Once I realized that, I started to contemplate a long distance backpacking trip where I could actually live outside. In my senior year, I didn't feel quite ready to enter the "real world" and I was still working on improving my mental health... I wanted to slow down and do something outside the box after graduation and the AT fit my needs... I think my decision to hike was solidified the day I purchased my backpack in December of 2021.

Gear can be expensive and I wasn't going to waste money on my gear and then not hike!"

I was especially interested in what this experience has been like for Amber thus far, who was kind enough to share with me:

"It's difficult to capture in words what this experience has been like. The last 5 months have been the hardest and the most exciting of my life. I wouldn't change a second of it... The AT has a culture of love around it that I didn't anticipate. I've been supported by other hikers mentally and physically, by strangers leaving water at trailheads during droughts, by shuttle drivers taking us to and from towns, by trail magic offerings of free food, by trail angels offering showers and

shelter, by passersby picking me up on the side of the road, by a woman offering us her van for the night and on and on and on!"

When I asked her how this experience has shaped her or changed her view of the world, she responded:

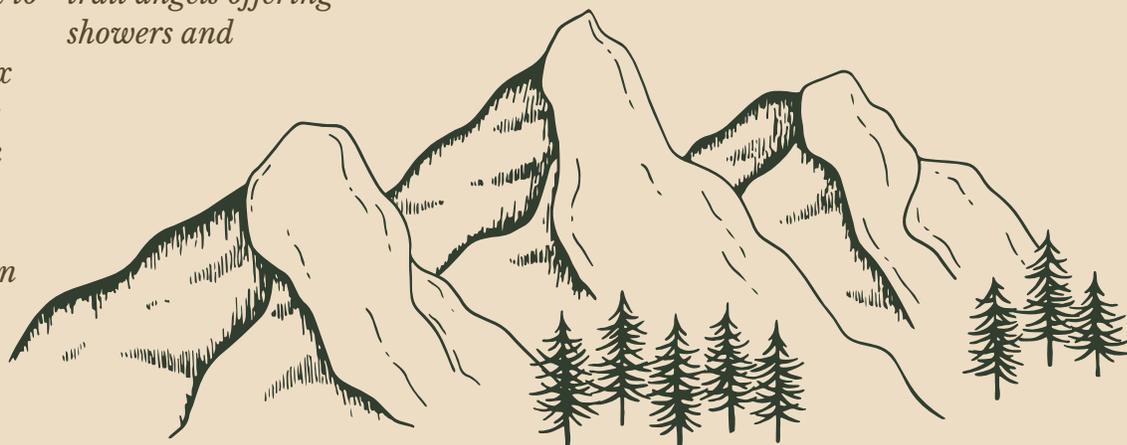
"The AT has both empowered me and made me a more optimistic, loving person! I've learned how to push my own limits, how to deal with stressful and exhausting situations, and I've been helped so often by so many strangers that I see much more of the good in the world than I did before the Trail. I had a pessimistic outlook created by the constant negative news that social media and the internet bombard us with.

Being outside and meeting new people every day has shown me that more often than not, people are good! They want to help you! If we put out good energy and kindness into the world, we'll receive that back."

Don't get her wrong though, hiking the Appalachian Trail has not been an easy feat:

"It has been SO HARD. The trail is both physically and mentally exhausting. I've dealt with severe knee pain, blisters, bone bruises, falls, bug bites, freezing temperatures and sweltering temps, hurricane and tornado warnings, falling trees, mud pits, river fords, rock scrambles, a heavy backpack, hiker hobble,

Honors Alumni Spotlight cont. on p. 9



Honors Alumni Spotlight cont. from p.8

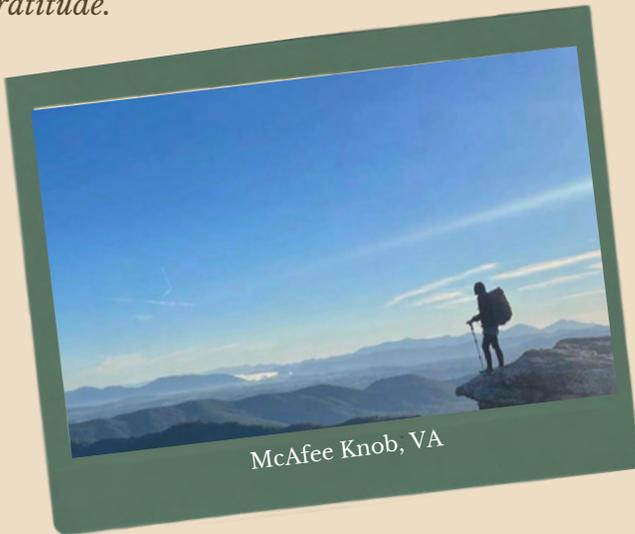
constant grime, and lack of sleep. It's so hard. I cry all the time, but I also laugh all the time! I have bad days that are always followed by good days, by camaraderie, and great friendships. It's hard, but I've learned how to be uncomfortable and how to practice gratitude. I was told by another hiker early on that the best way to get through the rough sections is to practice gratitude."

Her message to future hikers? DO IT:

"I'm sitting in my tent at a hiker hostel in rural Tennessee surrounded by friends as I write this. I never once imagined my life would look like this, and I think that's part of the magic of it all. I'd never even been CAMPING before setting foot on this trail! Believe in yourself and the good in others. You got this."

Congratulations Amber, you are truly exceptional. I know I speak for everyone when I say that I absolutely cannot wait to see the remarkable impact you will have on this world. If you are interested in learning more about Amber's hike, check out her blog at: amberontheat.wordpress.com

*Written with immense pride and admiration by Kaitlyn Egan, Publication Editor, Class of 2024
Majoring in English and Criminal Justice
Hometown: Sutton, MA*



McCafee Knob, VA



Mt. Katahdin: Northern Terminus of the AT



1,000 Miles Hiked!

Additional Alumni News



Professor Vanessa Diana (c.) caught up with Maddy Scott (r.) and her wife Jenna (l.) in December at the Hot Chocolate Run for Safe Passage in Northampton.

Congratulations to Maddy Scott, Class of 2019 University Honors Scholar and English and Communication dual major, on her recent marriage. Maddy completed her master's degree in school counseling this fall at UMass Amherst, and will begin her new position as an elementary school counselor at Chester Elementary in January 2023.

Honors Advisory Committee



HAC Student Members Reflects on Their Work Thus Far



*Gwyn Smith
Class of 2024
Majoring in Political
Science with a minor
in Communications
Hometown: Pittsfield,
MA*

"My subgroup within the Honors Advisory Committee is focused on creating a strategic growth plan for our Honors Program. Based on our recent Commonwealth Honors Program site review, we wanted to take the feedback that was provided to create a plan to help move the program forward. By creating a strategic growth plan, we are taking a step past goal-setting and actually coming up with plans to assure the program will succeed further. It has been great for me as a student to see the inner workings and thought processes that go into making sure our Honors Program runs well and it gives me a new appreciation for the program and the staff involved."



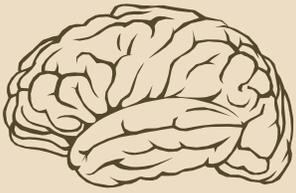
*Mackenzie Healey
Class of 2025
Majoring in Nursing
and Psychology
Hometown: Mendon,
MA*

"In my HAC working group, I'm working with Honors faculty members to revise the curriculum for upcoming Honors students. We've worked together to consider the needs of all types of students aiming to earn Honors Scholar recognition, including their class schedules depending on their majors and plans for Senior Honors Projects. My group has examined the curriculum timelines of our sister schools for guidance, and I've had the privilege of sharing my own ideas as an Honors student as to what Honors curriculum should look like."

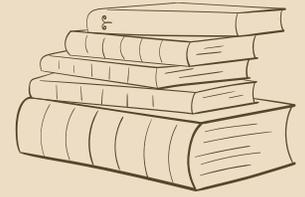


*Alyssa Hale
Class of 2024
Majoring in
Mathematics and
Secondary Education
Hometown:
Pepperell, MA*

"Currently in my HAC group we are working on revising the Honors Program PLATO page to make it more accessible. With having registration just happen we wanted to make sure students were able to find the information they needed easily. We also added the Honors Program Instagram link to our PLATO page so students are able to see the Instagram updates right on the PLATO page. Another huge thing we are working on is an archive for the previous SHPs so that Honors students are able to access all previous SHPs."



CHP Meeting



Commonwealth Honors Program Meeting

On Friday, October 28th, I had the opportunity to travel to Worcester State University with our Honors Program Director, Professor Hillary Sackett-Taylor, and a fellow student for the Fall 2022

Commonwealth Honors Program (CHP) Meeting. This was the first of two meetings that I will attend during this academic year in my role as a WSU student representative to the CHP. This meeting is a chance for the program chairs and staff that work at the different Honors Programs throughout Massachusetts to get together to discuss their programs, the needs of the programs, and so much more. There is also a student portion where students representatives in attendance have the opportunity to meet and talk about potential social events or opportunities that they would like to help facilitate and participate in that they feel would

further enrich the student experience in an Honors Program.

Two other students and I were given a few hours and a prompt that asked something along the lines of:

“If we had \$1,000 to put towards any experience, what do we feel that we would want to do as an Honors Program?”

We discussed potential activities where students from the Honors Programs from across the state would participate in a joint event. After a lot of discussion, we chose an idea to take back to our Honors Program chairs and present the idea to them to see if it would be something that they would be interested in funding for the students. We thought it would be really fun to do a community service project together.



Something like a food packing event, where anyone who was interested in participating would come together to socialize while also doing something towards a greater cause. We loved the idea of this event because the food that we package can be divided among the different Honors Programs, taken back to their respective local areas, and donated to different food pantries or organizations for people who experience food insecurity.

After presenting this idea to the CHP committee, they seemed to really like it. We are now working on gathering information and determining the logistics to be able to put our idea into action. We will provide this information to the committee for them to vote on; hopefully making this plan a reality. Community service is a core value of many Honors

Programs and I'm really excited to have an opportunity to meet students from all across the state to work together to help those in need at the same time. I also can't wait to attend the next Commonwealth Honors Program meeting in the spring!

Massachusetts is the only state in the country to offer an integrated network of Honors Programs throughout the public higher education system. There are Commonwealth Honors Programs (CHP) in the community colleges, the state universities, and on the campuses of the University of Massachusetts.

*Written by Gwyn Smith
Class of 2024
Majoring in Political
Science with a minor in
Communication
Hometown: Pittsfield,
MA*

Student Honors Association (SHA)



Caitlyn Pellerin
President & HAC Rep



Mackenzie Healey
Vice President & HAC Rep



Brianna Toomey
Secretary



Will Smith
Treasurer



Kaitlyn Egan
Historian



Gwyn Smith
Publicist & HAC Rep



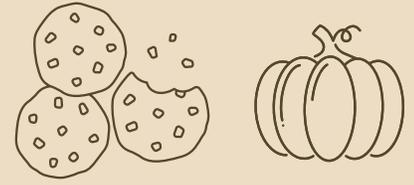
Alyssa Hale
HAC Rep



Abdullah Arshad
Commuter Rep



Student Honors Association (SHA)



Pumpkin Carving, Paint and Sip, and Cookie Decorating Photos



Students and Honors Program Director Dr. Sackett-Taylor enjoy SHA Sponsored Events. We hope to see you at our future events! Please check your email and Honors social media posts for information.



Community Service Internship



Incorporating Service Into The Honors Experience

My name is Haley Kane and this semester I was the Honors Program Student Service Coordinator Intern. Service work is one of my passions and I was excited to bring my love of service into the Honors Program. The main project I worked on this semester with Honors Program Director Professor Hillary Sackett-Taylor was the Day of Service events. This semester Westfield State University had their first Day Of Service event on Tuesday, October 18, 2022. Academic Affairs was leading the event, however, many divisions across campus were involved. The Honors Program teamed up with the Career Center to plan two events for the day. Junior Delgado, Director of the Career Center, worked with us on these projects. The first event was a group of off-campus service projects in the Westfield area. We wanted this to be similar to HOOT Day,

an event held a few years ago where WSU students volunteered in the community. We knew this would not be exactly like HOOT Day, however, it was a smaller scale version of it. We had groups of students volunteering at the Westfield YMCA and Westfield Boys and Girls Club. I volunteered at the YMCA where I raked leaves and performed other landscaping jobs they had for us.

At the Boys and Girls Club, the students helped clean and organize their supply closet. This event was from 9-12 and at the YMCA, we made a lot of progress and the workers appreciated our help. I'm glad I had the



Haley raking leaves at the Westfield YMCA

opportunity to volunteer and I hope we have other volunteer opportunities both at the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club. After the morning events, we held an event at which we had a panel of speakers from the Peace Corps, Teach For America, and City Year.

Each organization provided students with beneficial information on how to be involved with service after graduation. The representatives answered our questions and they were all happy to be there. As an Education major, I was



Haley with Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor, Honors Program Director and Economics Professor, and Junior Delgado, Career Center Director, along with representatives from the Peace Corps and Teach for America

excited to talk with the representative from Teach For America. I hope that everyone who attended learned some valuable information and might consider volunteering for one of these organizations. The Day Of Service events were excellent and as the Intern, I'm really glad I was involved with the planning of these events.

The next big event I was involved with was the Community Conversation with Westfield State University's President Dr. Linda Thompson and the City of Westfield's Mayor Michael McCabe. This event occurred on Wednesday, October 19, 2022. It was a discussion about the ways the University and the City of Westfield can be connected. I had the honor of speaking at this event and sharing my experiences both as a student at Westfield State University and in the City of Westfield.

Community Service, cont. on p. 15

Community Service, cont. from p. 14

Speaking at an event like this gave me confidence and I am proud that I was a speaker. I was able to talk about the connections I have created with Westfield such as my student teaching at Southampton Road Elementary School, the Pen Pal Program with the Westfield Middle School, volunteer work from the Day Of Service, and the

networks that I have developed with the Westfield Kiwanis. A lot of the people who attended the event were residents of Westfield, business owners or people involved with volunteer work. Everyone who attended had wonderful ideas. I met several people at the event and have started talking with them about having Honors students as volunteers.

Overall, I left the event knowing that there was still a lot of work to be done; however, I felt hopeful and inspired. These were two of the biggest events of the semester and both events have helped me grow as a leader. I'm grateful for these opportunities and I have loved being the Honors Program Student Service Coordinator Intern. I'm looking forward to next semester!



Haley with Michael McCabe, Mayor of Westfield

Written by Haley Kane
Community Service Intern
Class of 2024
Elementary Education and
Psychology Dual Major
Minor in Spanish
Hometown: Franklin, MA



LinkedIn
Network



Experience as the Honors Program Social Media Intern

As one of the Social Media Interns for the Westfield State Honors Program during the Fall 2022 semester, I created and implemented a LinkedIn page to help us build our brand as an Honors Program. As a part of this, I connected with Honors Program alumni from the past 5 years to help build a networking foundation. Our next goal is to plan an alumni networking event in Spring 2023 at a local off-campus establishment, to not

only help inspire and motivate the current Honors Program students, but to also connect them with Honors Program alumni mentors. Past graduates will have the opportunity to catch up with each other and share experiences they have had since graduating from Westfield State.

My Social Media internship also included building a new YouTube page on which we posted how-to videos on topics such as advising and

registering for classes as an Honors Program student. We included many students in our videos to allow them to share their Honors Program experiences and describe how the program has helped them during their time at Westfield.

Additionally, we have continued to build the Honors Program Instagram page to help get the word out to our followers about a variety of Honors Program and campus-wide events including Student Honors

Advisory (SHA) events such as Bingo Nights and Pumpkin Carving and Gingerbread Decorating Contests, along with Senior Honors Project Presentations and more.

This internship has truly helped me to build professional skills such as collaboration and team-building which will be beneficial for me after graduation!

Written by Sean Morrison
Social Media Intern
Class of 2024
Majoring in Accounting
Hometown: Framingham, MA

Honors Goes Abroad



National Student Exchange Program to Hawaii

The National Student Exchange Program allows students from a participating state school to spend a semester or up to a year at another state school of your choice. Before going on my exchange, I learned about the program from my mom who went on her college exchange program to California. Hearing about her experiences made me want to have ones of my own.

When I realized I could go to Hawaii, I'll admit I was ecstatic but also a bit apprehensive. From Massachusetts to The University of Hawaii at Manoa was over 5,000 miles. I'd literally be an ocean away from home. Going to Hawaii without knowing anyone there was also scary but through the exchange program as well as my classes at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, I've met many amazing people.

My apprehension diminished almost immediately upon arrival when I realized just how many opportunities were available to me. Since being in Hawaii, I've gone to beach clean ups, gone snorkeling, and even gone on hikes (which if you know me you'll understand just how crazy that is).



Katy holding a parakeet

Before coming to Hawaii, I had an idea in my head about Hawaii being mostly a tourist destination. Since being here, my ideas about that have changed greatly. Taking a literatures of Hawai'i class as well as a Hawaiian culture class, I've learned so much about the history of the islands and

about many of the traditional practices still used today by native Hawaiians.

Being here, I've also learned about many of the animals and plants that are an important part of Hawaiian culture. One of the species native to Hawaii is the green sea turtle. Having gone snorkeling on the island as much as possible, I've seen the turtles first hand in the ocean. Admiring these turtles is an amazing opportunity but it's important to be careful and maintain a safe distance so they don't get disturbed or hurt.

Along with learning about the animals in Hawaii, I learned about important plants, including kalo, specifically the traditional process that is used to cultivate and grow it. One of the things that students are given the opportunity to do at The University of Hawaii at Manoa is to participate in service

learning projects at The Center for Hawaiian Studies on campus. My roommates and I were given the chance to help with getting the lo'i ready for kalo. The practices that we were taught have been used for centuries.



Hawaiian Green Sea Turtle

*Written by Katy Schlaefer
Class of 2024
Majoring in English
Hometown: Lee, MA*





Award-Winning Honors Students



President's Award for Excellence in Leadership

"Ten students were acknowledged for their achievements on December 2, 2022 as Westfield State University held its annual President's Award for Excellence in Leadership during a ceremony held in Scanlon Banquet Hall. Established in 2007, the President's Award for Excellence in Leadership recognizes the achievements of highly qualified students. Student recipients must have a grade point average (GPA) of 3.3 or higher and demonstrate an array of volunteer services performed in the local community and on campus. Along with an essay, students must complete an application listing their co-curricular activities, leadership experience, and volunteer work. Speaking at the event, President Linda Thompson, DrPH, MPH, RN, FAAN, said, 'By the record of your actions and involvement at Westfield State, you have all demonstrated that you understand that standing on the sidelines will not be a part of your life. You have decided not to be a spectator, but you are here to be in the game, ready to contribute, ready to lead, ready to make a difference.'"

-Dr. Linda Thompson, University President in Welcoming Address



Michaella Cesarini serves as a co-president of the Sustainability Club and is a member of the Student Education Association of Massachusetts. She is a member of Westfield State Honors Program, a member of Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society, Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society and is a peer mentor for international students. Michaella has been a volunteer for the Westfield YMCA and a volunteer for Read Across Westfield.



Levi Ekstrom serves as president of the Queer Straight Alliance, a group he helped to restart after the pandemic, is a class officer and representative for the Class of 2023, is head resident assistant, and a Pride Committee member. He is a member of the Honors Program and has worked on the Lifetime Owls Advisory Board.



Victoria Reyes is a student ambassador and recruitment leader for the Urban Education Program, a member of the Latino Association for Empowerment, and a member of the Tri-Beta Honors Society. She is a member of the Honors Program where she serves as a peer mentor. Tory has been a notetaker for the Banacos Academic Center, a Learn-to-Skate volunteer, and a volunteer at the Pottenger Elementary School.



Aaron Lessing serves as President of the Student Government Association. Aaron has been a member of the commuter council, the Law Club secretary, and vice president of the WSU Student Ambassadors. Aaron is a member of Westfield State's Honors Program. He has volunteered at the Boys and Girls Club of Westfield, the Owl Ball, WSU Homecoming, and contributed to the WSU Pen Pal program.



Emily Fluet is the general news editor and co-editor-in-chief for the Westfield Voice student newspaper, on the executive board of the Lambda Sigma Honor Society, board secretary for the Lambda Pi Eta Honor Society, and vice president for academic life for the Student Government Association. She is a member of the Honors Program and plays with the Women's Rugby Club. Emily has volunteered in local political campaigns and assisted WSU programs such as campus open houses, Family Weekend, and Fresh Check Day.



Holden Nelson is president of the Math Club, a group he revived after shuttering due to COVID. He is a member of the Honors Program, a STEM tutor, a student representative of the Chemistry Department Curriculum Committee, and a representative of the NECHE Accreditation Committee. He has been a member of the Biology Club, the Musical Theater Guild, the Quidditch team, and was a student intern for the U.S. Department of Energy Science Undergraduate Laboratory. Holden also served as an intern for the Westfield River Watershed Association.



Annalise Cramer is co-president of the Biology Club, vice president of the Math Club, a music director for Westfield State's campus radio station, WSKB, and was a stage manager for the Student Theater Association. She tutors high school students in math and biology and was a speaker and presenter at the Biology and Environmental Science Seminar series. Annalise is a member of the Honors Program and also president of the Westfield State chapter of Pi Mu Epsilon and a member of the Biology Department Curriculum Committee.

Congratulations to all of this year's award recipients (listed below). The students spotlighted in this article are all Honors Program scholars.

Gita Adhikari '23, Psychology major, Springfield, MA.

Brianna Becotte '24, Criminal Justice major, Griswold, CT.

Michaela Cesarini '23, Elementary Education and Liberal Studies major, Duxbury, MA.

Annalise Cramer '23, Biology and Mathematics dual major, Windsor, MA.

Levi Ekstrom '23, Criminal Justice and Ethnic and Gender Studies dual major, Whitinsville, MA.

Emily Fluet '23, Communication and Political Science dual major, Gardner, MA.

Aaron Lessing '23, Criminal Justice and Political Science dual major, Chicopee, MA.

Holden Nelson '23, Chemistry and Mathematics dual major, Dalton, MA.

Victoria Reyes '24, Biology major, Wilbraham, MA.

Lindsey Spindel '23, Health Sciences and Movement Science dual major, Mendon, MA.



President's Award Recipients



Senior Honors Project Presentations

SHP Presentations on December 5, 2022

Hannah Robins

(Elementary Education and Liberal Studies; School of Education, Arts, Communication, and Humanities).

Title: Supporting Students in the Elementary School Classroom: Social Emotional Learning



Dr. Juliet Lee and Librarian Corinne Ebbs with Presenter Hannah Robins

Nicole Erickson

(Elementary Education and Liberal Studies; School of Education, Arts, Communication, and Humanities).

Title: Social-Emotional Learning Strategies, Student-Teacher Relationships, and Academic Success



Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor and Dr. Juliet Lee with Presenter Nicole Erickson

Sadie Petta

(English; School of Education, Arts, Communication, and Humanities).

Title: Clean, Professional, and Annoying: What Teachers Can Learn from Student Attitudes Toward Grammar Instruction in a Middle School English Language Arts Classroom



Dr. Wyatt Hermansen with Presenter Sadie Petta

Irene Dimitroglou

(Nursing; School of Health, Natural Sciences, and Human Services).

Title: You Are What You Eat, and So is Your Baby! The Effects of the Prenatal Diet on Children's Likelihood to Develop Psychopathology Later in Life: An Integrated Review



Dr. Amanda Salacinski, Dr. Robin White, and Dr. Joan Kuhnly with Presenter Irene Dimitroglou

Madeleine Carey

(Criminal Justice and Psychology; School of Criminology, Psychology, Social Justice, and Public Policy).

Title: The Effect of Pet Images on Stress Reduction



Dr. Princy Mennella with Presenter Madeleine Carey

Madeline Borowski

(English; School of Education, Arts, Communication and Humanities).

Title: Jane Eyre and The Modern Reader: A Pedagogical Approach



Dr. Elizabeth Starr and Dr. Glen Brewster with Presenter Madeline Borowski



Honors Announcements



Honors Research Symposium/Alumni Networking Event

We have an exciting announcement! In the past, Senior Honors Project presentations for our Commonwealth Honors Scholars were held in the afternoon during the last week of classes. In order to more fully display our Honors students' significant achievements to a larger audience, we are hosting our first Honors Research Symposium, followed by our Honors Program Alumni Networking Event!

This day-long event which combines Senior Honors Project presentations, the conferring of Commonwealth and University Honors graduation cords and medals, and an alumni networking dinner will be held on Saturday, April 22, 2023. Along with parents, champions, and friends, we will be inviting Honors Program students from local community colleges to showcase our Honors Program and promote greater transfer rates between the community colleges and Westfield State University. Overall, this event will promote a higher level of engagement from all parties. More details to come!

Are you interested in contributing to the Spring 2023 edition of the Squirrel Squire? Do you know a WSU Honors Alumni you think should be featured in our spotlight?

Contact Kaitlyn Egan, Student Editor
@kegan8835@westfield.ma.edu
for details!

Northeast Regional Honors Council Conference 2023

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, March 30th - April 2nd

"The Northeast Regional Honors Council (NRHC) is an organization of students, faculty, and administrators dedicated to the encouragement and support of undergraduate honors learning. The NRHC provides its members with opportunities for the exchange of information, ideas, and assistance through its annual conference, its newsletter, and its scholarships. The NRHC encompasses Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Quebec, Ontario, and the Maritime Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island."



WSU Honors Program Attendees



Project Title:
Laboratory Lies: The Farak & Dookhan Drug Scandals and the Future of Laboratory Internal Controls

Daniel Currier



Project Title:
Violence towards Native American women—What can we do to help?

Caitlyn Pellerin



Project Title:
Incorporating Service Into The Honors Experience

Haley Kane



Project Title:
Addressing the Challenges of a Ketogenic Diet by Determining its Effect on the Neurological Development of Drosophila

Samantha Biseinere



Project Title:
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIWG)

Kaitlyn Egan



Project Title:
Practicing Sustainability in Pharmaceutical Companies

Brianna Toomey



Project Title:
What is Islam & What do Muslims Believe?

Abdullah Arshad



Project Title:
Intersections of Criminal Justice – Prisons, Media, Neighborhoods

Mekhi Bowen

*We will be entering this edition of The Squirrel Squire into the NRHC Publication Contest!
We won second place last year for our Fall 2021 Edition.*