

THE SQUIRREL SQUIRE

VOLUME 11

FALL 2019 - SPRING 2020

A YEAR TO REMEMBER

VANESSA H. DIANA, PH.D.



Rawan Ebrahim ('23) and Lisha Lopez ('23) arrive at WSU.

We kicked off the 2019-2020 academic year with much to celebrate: our biggest first-year class ever, 5 Honors Program student recipients of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Leadership, many Honors Program students presenting their work at the Celebration of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity (CURCA), and the Fall 2019 Commonwealth Honors Scholars' presentations of their Senior Honors Projects.

In January, we resumed

classes, study abroad, and pre-professional placements, welcomed Dr. Cornel West to WSU, and were looking forward to traveling abroad for service courses during Spring Break. And then the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in the United States. Classes went online, and we separated from one another to prevent spread of the virus.

We lost much in the spring. We grieve with those who have lost loved ones to the virus. Also painful are the smaller losses: spending time



Maninder Singh ('22) describes his environmental science research to Dean Emily Todd at CURCA.



Cindy Gonzalez Paulino ('23) sits with Dr. Cornel West before he addresses the crowd.

together with friends, classmates, and teachers on campus; traveling, working in pre-professional placements, performing in plays and concerts, competing in games and meets, presenting work at academic conferences, and of course celebrating in person the accomplishments of the graduating Class of 2020.

The WSU Honors Program family, like the nation, adjusted to living apart, and then, along with the nation, we drew inspiration from the

movement for social justice sparked by the deaths of George Floyd and so many others at the hands of police. The leadership team of the Honors Program commits to supporting our Black students and all people of color and to taking antiracist action where we have influence to make positive change.

Students, while we missed being with you all in person on campus, we are proud of

(Year to Remember, continued on p.2)



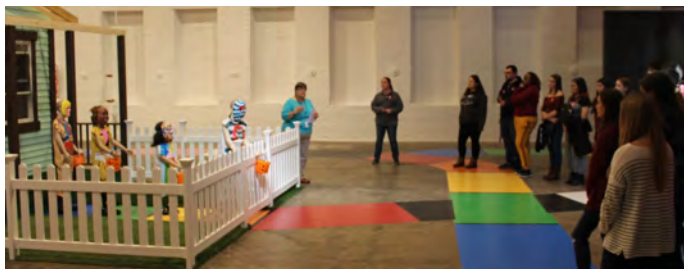
Sarah Remy ('21) writes about her COVID-19 semester on page 9.



The proud Honors Program Team celebrates Presidential Award for Excellence in Leadership recipients at a dinner banquet held in their honor. Left to Right: Dr. Glen Brewster, past Honors Program Director; Gretchen Konrad, Administrative Assistant; Dr. Hillary Sacket-Taylor, Honors Program Assistant Director; Thomas Howard, Bryan Pimentel, Hannah Griswold, Saltanat Aldabayeva, Thalita Neves, and Dr. Vanessa Diana, Honors Program Director.

FALL 2019 STUDENT HONORS ADVISORY COUNCIL HAPPENINGS

TOM MESPELLI



In October, a group of Westfield State Honors Program students joined Commonwealth Honors Program students from the Western MA region in a visit to the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, MA. Mass MOCA occupies a historically valuable industrial site and presents stunning galleries that left our jaws hanging. As October 31st drew nearer, a group of our fright fiends and Halloween lovers headed to McCray's Farm Monster Mash Scream Park for

expertly constructed haunted houses and a haunted hay ride, and SHAC held a spooky pizza party with pumpkin carving.

The weeks leading up to Thanksgiving break, for many, were the most challenging of the semester. The SHAC e-board organized a paint night to grant students an outlet for creativity and stress-relief. The event proved incredibly successful; an air of laughter and merriment lingered in Mod Hall as new faces mixed with old. Without a doubt the highlight of paint night was the



unveiling of Director Diana's artistic talent.

The 2019 fall semester ended with a bang. Not only was

achievement and hard work celebrated at the biannual Chinese Food Dinner, but Dr. Glen Brewster's 9 years as Director of the WSU Honors Program were recognized. Thank you for everything you have done Dr. Brewster! (For more on Dr. Brewster's tenure as Honors Program Director, please see *With Appreciation* story on page 4.)



Tom is a class of '22 communication major from Westborough, MA.



(Year to Remember, continued from p. 1)

the determination and resilience you showed during the spring semester. To the



A graduating class to remember in a year to remember! See pp. 18 and 19 for photos of Class of 2020 Honors Program graduates.

Spring 2020 Commonwealth Honors Scholars who presented their Senior Honors Projects on Zoom, hats off to you! To the first-year students who made it through your first year of college under extraordinary conditions, you have proven that you're tough. To those of you whose plans were completely upended this spring, you made the best of it, and we're proud of you. To those of you taking action to

promote social justice, we stand with you. And to our Class of 2020, we salute you! You've all proven that you have the adaptability to get through challenging times. We feel confident facing an uncertain future by your sides and can't wait to see Many of you back in Mod Hall eventually!

Dr. Diana is the Westfield State University Honors Program Director and a Professor of English.

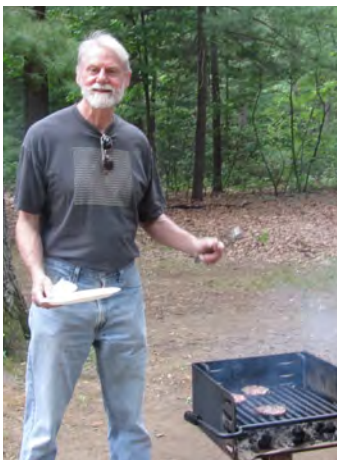
HONORS PROGRAM WELCOME WEEKEND 2019!



First-year Honors Program students and returning mentors break the ice during a busy Honors Program Welcome Weekend of pizza parties, breakfast in the Honors Center, and a cookout with games and tie-dyeing t-shirts at Stanley Park.

WITH APPRECIATION: DR. GLEN BREWSTER, HONORS PROGRAM DIRECTOR 2011-2019

VANESSA H. DIANA, PH.D.



Dr. Glen Brewster, Past Director of the Honors Program, Professor of English, and Grill Master Extraordinaire.

Fall 2019 saw change in the Honors Program leadership team with Dr. Glen Brewster returning to full-time faculty duties in the English Department after serving as Honors Program Director from 2011-2019. Dr. Brewster has made significant contributions to the lives and careers of the many hundreds of Honors Program students he has taught, advised, and mentored. A tireless champion of students committed to fostering their success in research and creative endeavors, Dr. Brewster never let an opportunity pass to encourage students to pursue the Senior Honors Project, to cheer them on as a reader or editor, and to celebrate their accomplishments upon completion. Determined to provide Honors students ac-

cess to professional development opportunities, Dr. Brewster organized and chaperoned the annual trip to the Northeast Regional Honors Council Conference, where each year since 2011 groups of 12-22 WSU students have presented their work to Honors peers from across the region. And whether manning the grill at our yearly Welcome Weekend cookout at Stanley Park, driv-



A favorite fall tradition: Dr. Brewster brings a group of Honors Program students to the Big E - Eastern States Exposition in West Springfield, MA.

ing vanloads of students to museums, films, or the Big E, or attending countless Student Honors Advisory Committee meetings, Dr. Brewster always worked hard to welcome students warmly to our community of learners. Dr. Brewster's goal in serving as Honors Program Director was to give young people opportunities to develop their interest and their talents at a crucial time in their lives. Asked about his reflections on the years he devoted to the Honors Program, Dr. Brewster commented, "developing personal relationships - with staff, Honors fac-

ulty, the members of the Honors Advisory Council, the other members of the Commonwealth Honors Programs, and the students - was a rich and rewarding experience for me. I will look forward to following the careers of the young men and women I had the chance to work with in the Honors Program." Dr. Brewster's devoted leadership was a gift to the Honors family, and

at WSU, where he will continue teaching Honors core and seminar courses and serving on Senior Honors Project committees. At WSU, Dr. Brewster is now coordinating the M.A. Program in English. We are especially proud of Dr. Brewster's contribution to Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honor Society, which boasts over 900 active chapters and approximately 9,000 members inducted annually. After more than 20 years of service to Sigma Tau Delta, Dr. Brewster currently serves as President. We congratulate Dr. Brewster on this prestigious position. And we thank him for the many years of service he devoted to Westfield State University's Honors Program.

Dr. Diana is the Westfield State University Honors Program Director and a Professor of English.



Dr. Sackett-Taylor leads a toast to Dr. Brewster and the unveiling of his commemorative portrait at the traditional Fall 2019 End-of-Semester Chinese Food Dinner.

The Squire Squad

Student Editors and Contributors: Sarah Balestro, Julianna Campbell, Emily Frost, Mary Hines, Thomas Mespelli, Chris North, Sarah Remy, Anna Szczebak, Melanie Voss, Andrew Warren.

Staff Editors: Vanessa Diana and Gretchen Konrad.

**Interested in contributing to *The Squirrel Squire*?
Send your story ideas and photos to
Professor Vanessa Diana at
honors@westfield.ma.edu.**

HONORS STUDENTS GO GLOBAL

ALL ROADS LEAD TO THE DUOMO

ANNA SZCZEBAK



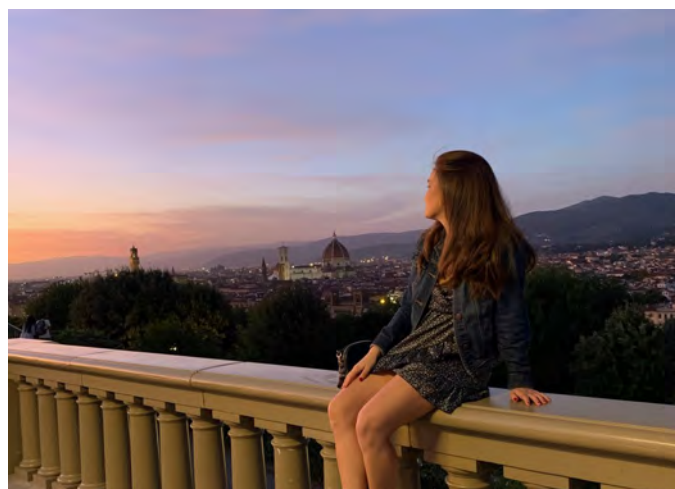
The famous dome of Il Duomo dominates the Florence skyline.

There's a saying I learned when I studied abroad in Florence, Italy, at Florence University of the Arts. It goes: "All roads lead to the Duomo." The Duomo is a gargantuan cathedral covered in intricate marble designs in the city center. Whether you're religious or not, you recognize the Duomo as one of the most iconic symbols of the city. And I came to realize that this saying is very accurate.

When trying to learn our way around the cobblestoned streets, my roommates and I got lost. A lot. Yet somehow

our haphazard wanderings always led us back to the Duomo. I walked by the Duomo Monday through Wednesday on my way to classes. I walked by it going almost everywhere, to my favorite gelato shop, coffee shop, late-night pizza place, and my favorite restaurant (whose truffle gnocchi appears in my dreams). I picked it out from the red brick maze that sprawled out below me every time my friends and I hiked up to Piazzale Michelangelo for sunset.

I saw some incredible art in Florence. Michelangelo's Stat-



Anna admires the sunset over Florence from Piazzale Michelangelo.

ue of David, Botticelli's painting Birth of Venus, and the amazing and intricate tombs of Dante and Galileo, but none of it compared to the sight of the Duomo. I ate Bolognese pasta in Bologna. I explored the Colosseum in Rome. I waded through the watery streets of Venice. I saw The Mona Lisa in Paris and the Ann Frank House in Amsterdam. But no matter how bleary eyed and exhausted I was from the weekend's travels, I was awestruck by the sight of the Duomo as it welcomed me home on the taxi ride back to my apartment.

I won't say studying abroad was all sunshine and rainbows. I got homesick. I had to adjust having each class for two and a half hours. I had to budget my money carefully. But I left with some incredible friends

and I left a more confident, independent, and well-rounded person. It sounds cliché, but I know I'll always be grateful that I chose the road that led to the Duomo.

Anna is a class of 2020 business management and English dual major from North Attleboro, MA.

Interested in studying abroad or in another state?

The International Programs Office can answer your questions about Study Abroad, Exchange Programs, Short-Term Study Abroad Programs, and National Exchange Programs.

For more information, visit the International Programs Office in Parenzo Hall lobby, Room 130. Or visit their website at <http://www.westfield.ma.edu/offices/international-programs-office>.

Get in touch with the Honors Program:

Email at honors@westfield.ma.edu.

Follow the WSU Honors Facebook and Instagram accounts for updates on upcoming events!

Check out the Honors Program web page at <http://www.westfield.ma.edu/academics/honors-program>

HONORS STUDENTS GO GLOBAL

A HUI HOU - UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN

SARAH BALESTRO



Sarah stands at the entrance to University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Aloha Kākou, Hello Everyone! This spring I travelled to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa to complete my semester through the National Student Exchange Program. I originally chose Hawai'i because it seemed like a tropical paradise where I could spend most of my days at the beach; the perfect get away from the New England winter. Once I got to Hawai'i, I came to the

quick realization that my perceptions of these islands were completely stereotypical. My views quickly changed once I started taking classes about the History of Education in Hawai'i. These islands seem to only get credit for their lush landscape and relaxing beaches, but Hawai'i is rich in culture, language, and history. I have always believed that place-based learning can be impactful. Hawai'i solidified how much wisdom you can gain from first-hand experience. I would have never learned as much as I did if I were to have studied the same information while being in Massachusetts.

My time in Hawai'i was filled with hiking, beach days, island hopping, sightseeing, shopping, and great memories with people from all over the country. Some points to note if you are ever to travel to the islands are to not wear a hat on top of Diamond Head, try not to get

a flat tire on the first day you rent your car, and don't expect to have someone else catch the lizard in your room. What you can expect to happen is to make lifelong friends, have memories you won't ever forget, and to eat some amazing acai bowls.

While in Hawai'i, my time was cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The moment I knew the pandemic had landed in Hawai'i was after returning from spring break and the streets of Waikiki were no longer bustling with people. The beaches were blocked with police tape and hikes were no longer permitted. The University was still offering housing and meals, but since the rest of the island was shut down I made the decision to come home and be with my family. My motivation after coming home went down drastically; classes that I was once excited to take were

now a chore. This proved the power of learning in different environments. Life may not be the same after this, but my advice is to not let that stop you. It may be a while before we can safely travel and study abroad again, but once that day comes, don't let fear stop you from exploring a new place. The memories you will make and the knowledge you will gain from this experience are irreplaceable.

Sarah is a class of 2021 elementary education and liberal studies dual major from Great Barrington, MA.



Aloha from Mānoa, National Student Exchange site



During a January J-term Environmental Science course in Costa Rica, Professor Tim Parshall and his students enjoyed a natural history hike led by Honors Program student and environmental science and regional planning major Maninder Singh through the Children's Eternal Rainforest, Costa Rica's largest private reserve founded by donations raised by children from 44 countries around the world (left). The group also explored forest regeneration on lava flows at the base of Arenal Volcano (right).

STORIES FROM THE COVID-19 SEMESTER

MY CORONAVIRUS EXPERIENCE: HOW I LEARNED NOT TO PLAN MORE THAN 15 MINUTES AHEAD

MELANIE VOSS



Melanie and her American roommate say good bye too soon as the study abroad semester is cut short.

On March 11, 2020, President Trump announced that travel to the U.S. would be banned from Europe. Waking in my bed in Spain, where I was spending the semester studying abroad, I sat up and rubbed my eyes in order to process this information with my American roommate. Our minds were racing: Did he mean the ban started at midnight... U.S. time? Did midnight mean Thursday night or Friday night? Would U.S. citizens be allowed back in after that deadline? Did I want to stay in Spain? We had gone to sleep the night prior with the knowledge that our time abroad was running out, but now we realized that we had to get home. And fast. We also realized this was our last time to enjoy the city, to see Spain, to shop. So we rushed out to do all three. I remember shaking the entire time I was packing. I forced myself to eat my last dinner with my host mom, despite my stomach feeling upset. The next morning, we boarded a flight

to Amsterdam. We had escaped Spain. We both felt a wave of relief, yet also a sense of uncertainty in the air. Walking around Amsterdam felt like we were stuck in time, before the world went to chaos. Yet, it was still one of my favorite places I have ever visited.

While getting ready to leave



Melanie and her friend enjoy a visit to Amsterdam during their final hours in Europe.

Europe, my roommate jokingly said to my friends and me: "You guys should fly into Denver! We can all quarantine together on my family's farm in Colorado for two weeks." We were excited about the offer at the time, but there were a lot of details to be worked out if we wanted to make it happen. Flash forward a few days, and we were getting a tour around the farm by my former roommate.

The five of us girls became close friends in Spain within the first week and remained a tight-knit group throughout our study abroad experience. By the fourteenth day of our quarantine, we had all fallen in

love with the farm and her family. Every day we kept ourselves busy. We took turns making dinner for everyone, we partook in painting classes taught by my former roommate (who is an amazing painter), we painted murals as a group, we threw my roommate's brother a tea party-themed birthday party, we

be able to turn a scary situation, being forced out of Europe because of coronavirus, into a positive one where I was surrounded by nature and friends.

While you may be focused on how you should have appreciated "regular life" a bit more, remember not to take this downtime for granted either. My travels in Europe, and especially those two stressful days, taught me a lot about myself and the world. I was capable of getting through an extremely stressful situation that I could not even fully comprehend. I am so young, and something so big is happening. Plans kept changing, and we all agreed to never again plan more than 15 minutes ahead. Enjoy every moment, and be grateful for every interaction. Let the change in the world reflect a positive change in yourself.

Melanie is a class of 2021 political science major from Wrentham, MA.



An unexpected turn to a semester abroad: living the farm life in Colorado.

STORIES FROM THE COVID-19 SEMESTER

THE ELUSIVE GOODBYE, MAY 2020

MARY HINES

It is right there, right in front of me, only a few weeks away and yet I cannot nor will I be able to grasp it. It is the proper goodbye that I have waited to attain since freshman year. I came into school nervous and expectant of the future. I was excited and yearning for all that college has to offer. It was a time of new friendships and discovery. I had to put myself out there like never before and worked at building friendships with people who were born hundreds of miles away from me. I was not thinking of how the ending would come, but I knew that one day I would have to say goodbye. I was not ready yet, but I knew that when that day came I would be. I would be ready to step out into the world as a college grad and make a name in the world of applied behavior analysis. Little did I know that when it would actually be time to say goodbye things would look so very different.

Instead of walking around from professor to professor



Mary sends goodbyes from afar with help from her four-legged friend.

and saying my thanks and sharing our last moments as teacher and student, I am now writing emails from my home expressing my gratitude.

Instead of enjoying the time I have home away from my university, I am craving to go back and sit in my specific study corner where the sunlight shines just right. When can I leave my home and ven-

ture on campus once more to visit Gretchen in the Honors Center and take a snack for the road? Alas, I am not allowed to meander through the hallways and enjoy time spent talking with friends in Wilson 116 and giggling until class begins. I thought I would be ready to leave it behind. I thought I was ready to say goodbye and graduate into this world, but I never thought it would happen this way.

My classes are online.

The small squares of faces whom I once sat next to laughing seem serious and unsure. Instead of lively conversation and discussion, there is silence. When someone speaks, their voice fills with uncertainty rather than with confidence.

Why are we so hesitant? We should be glowing with confidence and speaking with an assured tone, yet we have no idea what is next or what is coming.

Instead of saying goodbye, we say, "talk to you later" in fear that the last goodbye is the

last. The goodbye that we wanted we will never attain. It will always be elusive, just out of our reach. We can see it, we can dream about it, but we can never catch it. As seniors, we have worked long hard hours to one day look to one another with camaraderie leaving our university proud to step into our next season, but our next season is our now season, and our last season is our past season. We hugged saying goodbye for spring break, yet what we didn't realize was our spring break hug was our goodbye forever hug.

I am so sorry class of 2020... you have worked so hard and it's not to be cast aside. Be proud of yourself and end this year with your head held high and your heart at peace. While we cannot be together physically, we are together in spirit.

Authentically, me

Mary is a class of 2020 psychology major from Granby, MA.

HOW THE COVID-19 CRISIS IMPACTED MY SECOND SEMESTER

CHRIS NORTH



First-year students like Chris faced unexpected challenges this spring.

As a first-year student at Westfield State University, it came as a shock to me when I heard that my second semester was going to shift abruptly to online classes because of the COVID-19 pandemic. At first, I didn't have a clue what to do about accessing my courses, or how the syllabus for each course might change. I as-

sumed that I would have to be flexible and find out how my professors were going to help me complete the rest of the academic year.

The shift to online courses was tricky for me. I'm the type of individual who favors routine over spontaneity, and when I found out that I was about to spend the next 1½

months in isolation, figuring out how my classes were going to be conducted for that long period of time was pretty exhausting to say the least. I also found it quite hard to motivate myself to complete my work, but at least I was able to turn

(COVID-19 Crisis, continued on p. 8)

STORIES FROM THE COVID-19 SEMESTER

MOURNING WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN

SARAH REMY

When I left Westfield State on March 5th to go home for spring break, I never imagined the next time I returned to campus would be to move out. Every college student knows that the eight weeks that wind down the school year brings some of the best parts of the year. The weather gets warmer, the days get longer, and the anticipation of summer creeps in. Due to COVID-19, all of the plans for after spring break were canceled with a single email. Now instead of completing homework in the living room of my apartment with my roommates, I complete it in my childhood bedroom with my dog as my roommate. I now no longer tell my parents that I love them over the phone, I say it every time one of us leaves for work. My parents and I are all essential employees, which puts me more at risk for coronavirus than I was at school, especially since they both work in a hospital. While I'm thankful for the health of everyone I love, I wake up every day mourning what should have been.



Sarah's Fosbury Flop gets her over the bar in the High Jump competition.

A daily look at the calendar reminds me of something that should have been. The end of March should have brought my initiation to Kappa Delta Pi, the education honor society. I should have been in Albany the first weekend of April for the Northeast Regional Honors Conference to present the first half of my Senior Honors Project. The following weeks should have brought track and field's annual home meet, celebrating my senior teammates on our senior day, our track formal, and having our out-

door MASCAC championship meet on home turf. After fracturing my shin last spring and being out for the season, losing another track season shattered my heart. Staying motivated through an injury was hard enough. Staying motivated when I have yet to see the results of months of physical therapy is a mental game like no other.

In between major events should have been hours of laughter with my roommates, nightly team dinners, and making memories that would

last a lifetime. Those hours have been replaced by scrolling through old pictures and wanting to relive those days more than anything. My classes are suddenly online, so I'm missing eight weeks of the in-person education that I prefer. I know college is about the degree, but the experiences that come with living at school are important too. It seems silly to be sad about all of these cancellations while there are people dying. However, I'm reminding myself that I am allowed to mourn the big and little things I had been looking forward to. COVID-19 has taught me to value every moment you get. To appreciate the in-person conversations, laughs, and hugs. While I'm so thankful coronavirus has not affected my family, I am counting down the days until I return to Westfield.

Sarah (Class of 2021) is a history and secondary education major from Brockton, MA.

(COVID-19 Crisis, continued from p. 8)

in all of my assignments on time. In this new world of social distancing, I maintained my relationships with my professors and advisors via Zoom meetings and my friends via group chats/direct message. Personally, it feels really weird not being able to see my peers

in person, especially for an extended period of time, but it's also very convenient that we have apps that can allow us to continue our friendships and our social connections. Overall, considering that I have always had some trouble making friends and motivating myself to hang out with friends more, this crisis is actually

making me feel more inclined to check up on people and find out how they are doing, and in a way, this may help boost my social confidence.

The ultimate Frisbee team was one of the club sports I was looking forward to participating in during the spring because I knew my Frisbee throwing practice was finally

going to be put to the test. Sadly, that didn't end up happening this spring, but I am grateful that I have another three years of tossing the Frisbee with my friends and teammates to look forward to.

Chris (Class of 2023) is a regional planning major from Hopkinton, MA.

AWARD-WINNING HONORS STUDENTS

PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP

Five Westfield State University Honors Program students were among those recognized in December with the 2019 Westfield State University President's Award for Excellence in Leadership. Recipients exemplify the mission of the University through their activities and achievements in the areas of academics, co-curricular involvement, civic engagement/community service, and leadership. These five Honors Program students are role models who demonstrate just such excellence. Congratulations to the Presidential Award for Excellence in Leadership recipients!



Saltanat Aldabayeva '21 is a chemistry major, biology and mathematics minor. She maintains a 3.9 GPA while serving as an executive board member of the Student Honors Advisory Council, a Presidential Student ambassador, a student representative for the College of Mathematics and Science, a microbiology lab work-study student, and a member of the First Responders Club and Gamma Sigma

Epsilon. She teaches science and math subjects to younger students as a Teaching Fellow for DNA Science at Summer Portals, and to her peers as an academic tutor in the Banacos Center and has volunteered with students at the White Oak School. She has presented her work publicly on campus and was accepted to present to an even larger audience at the Northeast Regional Honors Conference in spring of 2020.



Hannah Griswold '21 is a nursing major. She has maintained a perfect 4.0 GPA while serving as an academic tutor, a peer mentor in the Nursing Club, a group coordinator for the National Society of Leadership and Success, a member of the American Holistic Nursing Association, and a member of the women's Rugby team. Hannah participates in various healthcare-related research and service projects on campus and in the community, and she represents her major department as a speaker during open house events for prospective students.



Thomas Howard '19 is a history and political science dual major with a concentration in International Relations. He graduated as a Commonwealth Honors Scholar in December after completing his Senior Honor Project on Islamic Sufism and interfaith dialogue. His leadership roles included Vice President of Student Life in SGA, President of the Student Honors Advisory Council, Coordinator of New Student Orientation, and Honors Program Student Leader Intern. His academic accomplishments include a CURCA summer research fellowship, numerous academic presentations on campus and at regional and national conferences, membership in three academic honor societies: Pi Sigma Alpha (Political Science) Phi Alpha Theta (History), and the national Honor Society Phi Kappa Phi. In the local community, Tom held numerous internship positions related to his major fields: he served as an intern for State Representative Angelo Puppolo, and for the Westfield Athenaeum Ar-

chives. He also served with Students for District Attorney Gullini, and as student representative on the Westfield Whip Museum Board.



Thalita Neves '21 is a communication and criminal justice dual major. She maintains a 3.9 GPA while holding such leadership roles as Vice President of Finance in the Student Government Association. She has served in the important campus governance positions of Student Trustee on the University Board of Trustees, Student Representative to the Westfield Foundation Board, and member of the Search Committee for the Vice President of Student Affairs, Budget and Planning Committee, and Advisory Committee for Equal Opportunity, Diversity, and Affirmative Action. Thalita regularly participates in local community service activities in Westfield and also participated in a service trip to Guatemala focusing on delivering water filtration systems.

(President's Award, continued on p.11)

AWARD-WINNING HONORS STUDENTS

(President's Award, continued from p.10)



Bryan Pimentel '20 is a criminal justice and political science dual major with a concentration in International Relations. He will graduate as a Commonwealth Honors Scholar as he completes his Senior Honors Project on international sports and crime. He has maintained an impressive GPA of 3.8 while serving in many leadership roles on campus, including Head Orientation Leader, Honors Liv-

ing and Learning Community Resident Assistant and Head Resident Assistant, Class Council and Student Government Association, Multicultural Student Association, Student Honors Advisory Council, and Lambda Sigma Honor Society. Having presented at the Northeast Regional Honors Council Conference (NRHC) since his first year, Bryan ran for and won the position of Student Representative to the

NRHC, which gives him the responsibility of planning all student activities for the conference this coming Spring in Albany. Bryan traveled to the National Collegiate Honors Council conference in New Orleans, LA, this fall with Professors Diana and Sackett-Taylor, where he presented at the NRHC business meeting to update members on plans for the regional conference.

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION '29 WHO SHINE' AWARD

Commonwealth Honors Scholar Carly Thibodeau of Mendon, MA (Class of 2020) is Westfield State University's '29 Who Shine' award recipient for 2020, an award from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education to 29 graduates throughout the Commonwealth who exemplify the values of community service and academic experience. Westfield State's Board of Trustees recognized Carly's accomplishment at its quarterly meeting.

An economics and environmental science dual major with a 4.0 GPA, Carly is a recipient of the Westfield State Univer-



Westfield State University President Ramon S. Torrecilha congratulates Carly Thibodeau, Westfield State's recipient of the '29 Who Shine' Award.

sity President's Award for Excellence in Leadership and completed a Senior Honors Project titled "Consumer Preferences for Sustainable Certification in Costa Rica's Tourism Industry."

Examples of Carly's campus

leadership include captain of the women's swimming and diving team and president of the University's student ambassadors. Carly said, "Receiving Westfield State's '29 Who Shine' Award has made the loss [of time this

spring] a little easier knowing that I experienced all I could at WSU, and made memories (including receiving this award) that I will cherish forever."

After graduating from Westfield State, Carly will pursue a master's degree in sustainability at Tufts University. "I hope to work to improve sustainable practices in large corporations, by promoting strategies for reducing carbon footprints and implementing business policies that lead to a healthier planet," said Carly.

Excerpted from WSU NewsWise.

AWARD-WINNING ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT



Creativity pays off for Brittany.

Brittany Phillipo, Class of 2021 business management and regional planning dual major, received a Concept award from The Grinspoon Entrepreneurship Initiative in the amount of \$400. The award is given to recognize "entrepreneurial spirit, creativity, and curiosity." Brittany's concept, developed in

Professor Kim Sherman's interdisciplinary upper-level Honors seminar on creativity and innovation, is to create an e-commerce store that compiles sustainable fashion brands into one website, which would make shopping for sustainable fashion easier and more accessible for the consumer while taking the guesswork out of

which companies are actually sustainable and ethically sourced. Dr. Sherman said of Brittany's success, "Her research into the business concept as well as her passion for the idea were a winning combination!" Brittany is planning to continue working on the project for her Senior Honors Project next year.

UPPER-LEVEL INTERDISCIPLINARY HONORS SEMINARS IN REVIEW

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF 3-D MOLECULAR ANIMATION

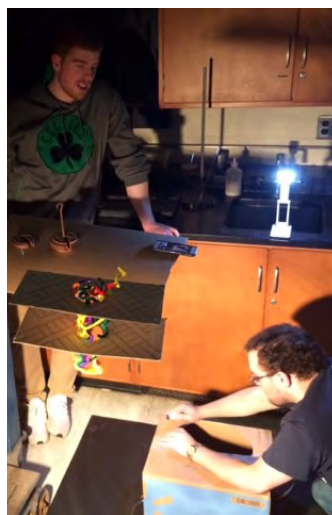
ANDREW WARREN



Saltanat Aldabayeva prepares her video explaining the role of the placenta and the umbilical chord in neonatal abstinence syndrome (model courtesy of the Nursing department).

Many students, myself included, would balk at the idea of taking a class with the name CHEM 399H, the Art and Science of 3D Molecular Animation, most likely thinking that this must be the hardest chemistry class the university has to offer. Being an economics major, an advanced level chemistry course was not the expectation I had for my junior year interdisciplinary honors seminar, but this class

only taught me a lot, but was also enjoyable. Students in the class had a diverse range of majors including chemistry, nursing, biology, criminal justice, art, and economics. All the students brought different skill sets to the class, which widened our scope of knowledge for our project, as well as helped to balance the educational and creative sides. We focused on the molecules of addiction, specifically those involved in the opioid crisis.



Drew Pahl and Cameron Young prepare a physical model of receptor recycling.

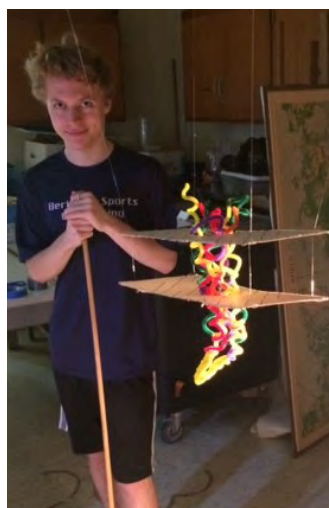
The class split into groups and published videos relating to addiction and some of the molecules behind it. The groups were motivated by the idea that we would be showcasing our work at an event dedicated to educating first-year students on the ongoing opioid crisis, called "Molecules of Addiction." Each video had a different topic, all centered around the idea of addiction. Groups had students from different majors, allowing for different ways of thinking and

new approaches to the opioid crisis. My group's video focused on the economics of addiction; others focused on the life saving drug Naloxone, on how people become addicted, on the difference between two addictive drugs, and also on the phenomenon of mothers passing on their addiction to their babies.

Students were exposed to ideas that they would not normally experience in their four years, such as video editing, voice acting, animation, and interviewing. Skills learned in this course will be valuable for us to utilize later in life; they will aid in other courses in the future as well as employment.

Andrew is a junior economics major from Westfield, MA.

All students in the Honors Program take one upper-level interdisciplinary Honors seminar. A list of upcoming seminar topics for the next few years is available in the Virtual Honors Center.



Holden Nelson holds on to the "model-manipulator stick"



Austin Buckner, Elizabeth Ferrara, and Brandon Sullivan use the 3-monitor editing studio for their naloxone video.



A still of the video made by Andrew Warren, Chinanu Onuoha, and Rosita Ramirez. Art work by Chinanu.

UPPER-LEVEL INTERDISCIPLINARY HONORS SEMINARS IN REVIEW

GENDERED MESSAGES FROM GREEK GODDESSES TO DISNEY PRINCESSES

EMILY FROST AND JULIANNA CAMPBELL



The resemblance between Kyle Hobson and Teddy Roosevelt is uncanny!

Honors Program courses at Westfield State are designed to be more personalized, have a strong emphasis on interaction between the students and professors, and foster the opportunity for students to be experimental and creative with different ideas. Dr. Morin's upper-level interdisciplinary Honors seminar *Gender and the Environment* perfectly captured all of these goals. The class had two main areas of inquiry throughout the semester: What is the connection between gender and the environment in the context of U.S. history? And to what extent is the environment gendered? For many students in the class, this was a new and fresh perspective on the issues of environmental degradation and gender inequality.

We started the semester by learning about ancient religious traditions such as Egyptian, Greek and Roman, and Judeo-Christian. Many of the

gods, goddesses, and stories in these religions were connected to nature, the Earth, or family in some way. The class moved into discussing a variety of other historical topics such as Native American women's connection to the land, the life of women on the Oregon Trail (which was accompanied by a short classroom game of the Oregon trail), and analyzing WWI and WWII visual propaganda. We also covered more recent events like the impacts of Hurricane Katrina, the issues of environmental justice and injustice, and the evidence of gender and the environment connections in current popular

discuss historical and present-day events regarding both gender and the environment. The small classroom size made it so that every person could express their thoughts. We had a range of discussions, readings, viewings, games, group activities, projects, and lectures to help each of learn in our own ways.

For our final project, each student was tasked with finding a source that they were interested in that related to both gender and the environment. We were allowed to analyze movies, books, television shows or anything else we wanted. Students found a con-

nection between gender and the environment in many different forms including *Wonder Woman* (2017), *Labyrinth* (1986), a Wiccan handbook, *Parks and Recreation* (2009-2015), *Avatar the Last Airbender* (2005-2008), the Flint, Michigan water crisis, and many others. We were all amazed about how the stereotypical connection between gender and the environment that we had been studying for months was still very much alive in modern media. Although we all had our unique topic, all related to the central ideas of gender and the environment. This course offered useful lessons and information for students in all majors and future career paths. The interdisciplinary approach to learning challenged students to synthesize information and consider new perspectives on important issues.

Emily (Class of 2022) is a history and political science dual major from Auburn, MA. Julianna (Class of 2020) is an English major from Springfield, MA.



Emily Frost starring as Wonder Woman, coming soon to a classroom near you!

culture. The whole class loved studying the interplay of gender and the environment in a wide variety of Disney films.

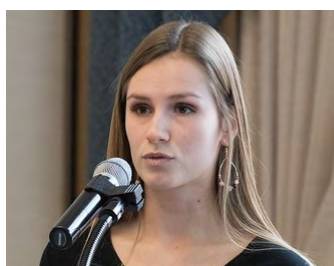
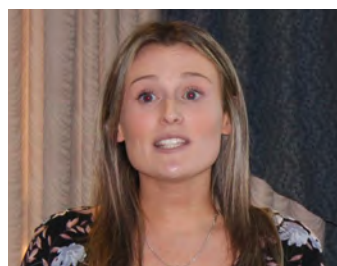
Dr. Morin's Honors Seminar helped me to think about gender stereotypes, sexism, and gender roles in connection with environmental history. We were consistently excited to attend this seminar because everyone was able to express their opinions and genuinely



Julianna Campbell, Bryan Pimentel, and Mackenzie Jackson discuss beauty product advertisements from the 1920s.

COMMONWEALTH HONORS SCHOLARS

FALL 2019 SENIOR HONORS PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

**Austin Buckner****Julianna Campbell****Erin Doyle****Sarah Dunn****Ashley Gilligan****Olivia Hamparsoomian****Tyler Houle****Thomas Howard****Alexandra Jackson****Corey Pooler****Gregory Wilcox**

The designation of Commonwealth Honors Scholar is awarded to students who complete a minimum of four Honors courses (at least one upper-level Honors seminar) with a B or higher, maintain an overall GPA of 3.30 or higher, and complete a six-credit, individually designed Senior Honors Project (SHP). Listed above are recipients, their major(s), their SHP titles, and their Project Advisors.

Austin Buckner: Biology, *The Effects of Tattoo Ink on Macrophage Survival and Function during Dermal Wound Healing*, Dr. Kristen Porter.

Julianna Campbell: English, *Theology of My Body*, Beverly Army Williams, M.F.A. – F'19, Leah Nielsen, M.F.A. – S'19.

Erin Doyle: Movement Science, *Is Cross Education Truly Directional? A Prospective Cohort Study*, Dr. Paul Cacolice.

Sarah Dunn: Elementary Education and Liberal Studies, *Teaching Through an Anti-Racist Lens Using Children's Literature*, Dr. Megan Kennedy - F'19, Dr. Miriam Tager - S'19.

Ashley Gilligan: English, *Narratives of Health and Illness in the English Language Arts Classroom*, Dr. Elizabeth Starr.

Olivia Hamparsoomian: Psychology, *College Class Size and Student Impacts*, Dr. Joseph Camilleri.

Tyler Houle: Nursing, *The History of Opioid Use in the United States*, Dr. Susan Scott.

Thomas Howard: History and Political Science, *Sufism: A Bridge to Interfaith Dialogue*, Dr. Mark Abate.

Alexandra Jackson: Nursing, *Malnutrition in Guatemala: A Multiple Case Study Perspective*, Dr. Jamie Rivera.

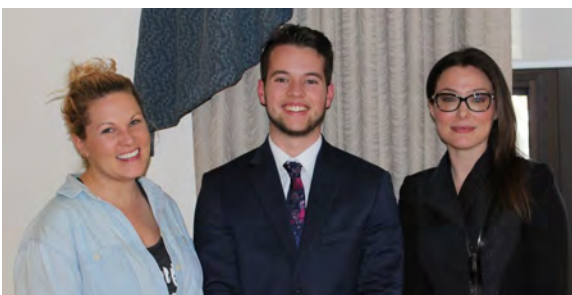
Corey Pooler : Mathematics, *Mathematical Zendo*, Dr. Philip DeOrsey.

Gregory Wilcox : Biology, *A Pilot Study Comparing Clinical Decision Making of Student and Expert Nurses*, Dr. Marcia Scanlon.

INTERESTED IN
LEARNING MORE ABOUT
SENIOR HONORS PROJECTS?
CONTACT
THE HONORS PROGRAM TEAM

SENIOR HONORS PROJECT COMMITTEES - F'19/S'20

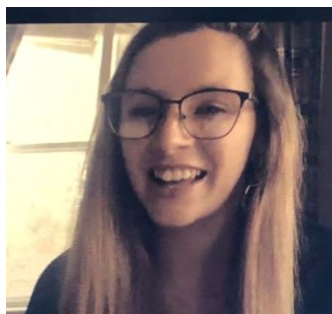
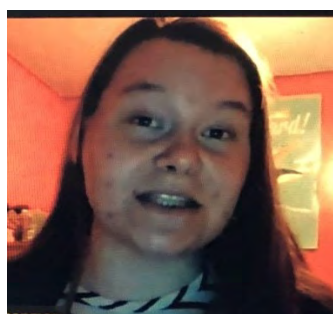
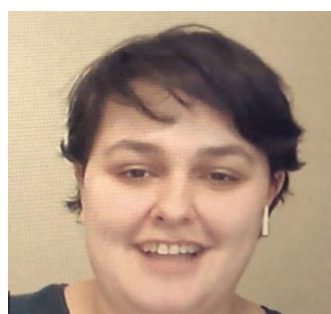
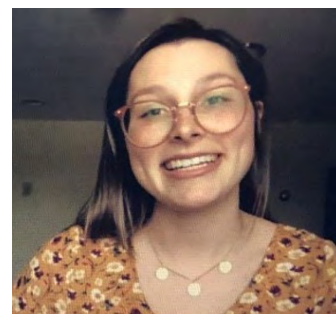
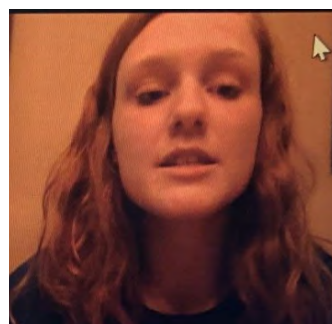
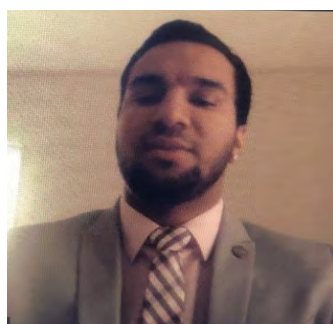
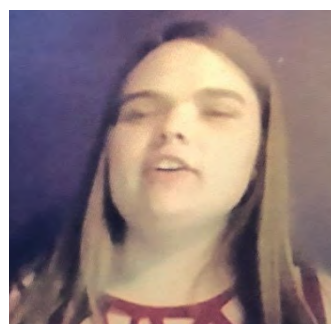
SUPPORTING STUDENT RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY



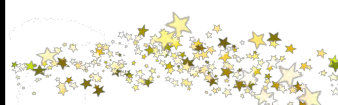
Students carrying out their year-long research or creative Senior Honors Projects are supported by committees including a Project Advisor, Second Reader, and Honors Reader, as well as a Library Liaison and Reading and Writing Center consultant. Congratulations to the newest class of Commonwealth Honors Scholars!

COMMONWEALTH HONORS SCHOLARS

SPRING 2020 SENIOR HONORS PROJECT VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS

**Haley Bernier****Katherine Chapman****Hanna Ciepiela****Mary Hines****Jennifer Oglesby****Bryan Pimentel****Taylor Rivers****Carly Thibodeau**

The designation of Commonwealth Honors Scholar is awarded to students who complete a minimum of four Honors courses (at least one upper-level Honors seminar) with a B or higher, maintain an overall GPA of 3.30 or higher, and complete a six-credit, individually designed Senior Honors Project (SHP). Listed are recipients, their major(s), their SHP titles, and their Project Advisors.



Haley Bernier: Nursing, *My Yoga Book: A Tool to Improve Attention within The Classroom*, Dr. Wilma Ortiz - S'20, Dr. Naomi Walton - F'19.

Katherine Chapman: Psychology, *State Anxiety and Visual Attention: A Free Viewing Eye-Tracking Experiment*, Dr. T. Alex Daniel.

Hanna Ciepiela: Social Work, *The Evolution of Client Self Determination: The Club-*

house Model, Dr. Nora Padykula.

Mary Hines: Psychology, *Autism's Gateway to Higher Education*, Dr. Jorge Reyes.

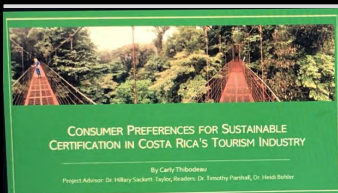
Jennifer Oglesby: Social Work, *Experiences of Professional Caregivers Working with Dementia Patients*, Dr. Katherine Walsh.

Bryan Pimentel: Criminal Justice and Political Science,

International Sports and Crime, Dr. Heather Brown.

Taylor Rivers: Athletic Training, *The Effect of Therapeutic Ultrasound at a Midrange Temperature*, Dr. Paul Cacoli-

Carly Thibodeau: Economics and Environmental Science, *Consumer Preferences for Sustainable Certification in Costa Rica's Tourism Industry*, Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor.



Commonwealth Honors Scholars completing their Senior Honors Projects in the Spring of 2020 faced quite a challenge: suddenly sent off campus, their plans for wrapping up research,

writing, and conferring with their committees were abruptly upended with the shift to remote work. For some this shift meant making major changes to methodology. For all, the usual in-person SHP presentations at the end of the semester were replaced by Zoom presentations online. Nevertheless, they persisted and excelled! With the help of emojis and active chats, friends, family, and mentors applauded from across the US and abroad as these resilient scholars shared their impressive work. We are so proud of you all!

UNIVERSITY HONORS SCHOLARS



The designation of University Honors Scholar is awarded to students who complete a minimum of six Honors courses (at least one upper-level Honors seminar) with a B or higher and maintain an overall GPA of 3.30 or higher. Listed below are recipients and their major(s).

Massara Almafrachi: Business Management

Olivia Barbeau: Elementary Education and Liberal Studies

Danielle Bass: Business Management

Hannah Bennett: Elementary Education and Liberal Studies

Lillian Bruffee: Movement Science

Julie Carroll: English

Amaris Colon-Chairez: Social Work

Tanner Deegan: Biology

Sydney Demarais: Social Work

Jenna Eckstrom: Elementary Education and Liberal Studies

Jonathan Gerrard: Music

Michaela Grady: Criminal Justice

John Hislop: Communication

Chandler Hutchison: Communication

Caleb Joyce-Vorce: Business Management

Connor Kennedy: Psychology

Kirsten Longbottom: Mathematics and Economics

Caitlin MacNeill: Business Management

Alexandra Massaro: Business Management

Faith McNamee: Mathematics

Drew Pahl: Biology

Thomas Rizzo: Business Management and Criminal Justice

Abigail Schoner: Criminal Justice and Chemistry

Emily Slote: Elementary Education and Liberal Studies

Justine Surette: Elementary Education and Liberal Studies

Anna Szczebak: Business Management and English

Katelyn Thibault: Criminal Justice

Carolyn Wallace: Elementary Education and Liberal Studies

Cayce Williams: Special Education and Liberal Studies

Gianna Young: Criminal Justice and Psychology

David Youngerman: Business Management

Roman Yusenko: Business Management

CLASS OF 2020 GRADUATES OF DISTINCTION

Congratulations to three Honors Program members of the Westfield State University Class of 2020 who have been recognized with prestigious academic distinction. Commonwealth Honors Scholars Julianna Campbell, an English major from Springfield, MA, and Carly Thibodeau, an economics and management and environmental science dual major from Mendon, MA; were among the four members of the undergraduate Class of 2020 who shared the honor of being named Valedictorian, all achieving what Robert Kersting, Ph.D., Westfield State's interim provost and vice president for academic affairs, called "the remarkable benchmark of a perfect 4.0 GPA!"

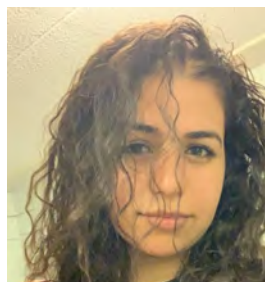
Congratulations also to Salutatorian and University Honors Scholar Sarah Dunn, an elementary education/liberal studies major from Holden, Mass. We are so

proud of these students and of all members of the Class of 2020, who earned their degrees during an incredibly unusual and challenging period of time.



Congratulations to Co-Valedictorians Julianna Campbell (left) and Carly Thibodeau (center) and to Salutatorian Sarah Dunn.

CONGRATULATIONS, 2020 HONORS PROGRAM GRADUATES!



Massara Almafrachi



Olivia Barbeau



Danielle Bass



Hannah Bennett



Haley Bernier



Lily Bruffee



Austin Buckner



Julianna Campbell



Julie Carroll



Katie Chapman



Hannah Ciepiela



Amaris Colon-Charez



Tanner Deegan



Sydney Demarais



Erin Doyle



Sarah Dunn



Jenna Eckstrom



Jonathan Gerrard



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Michaela Grady



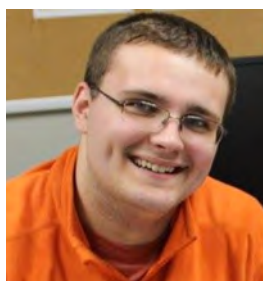
Olivia Hamparsoomian



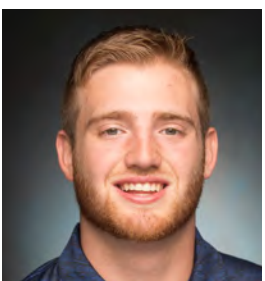
Mary Hines



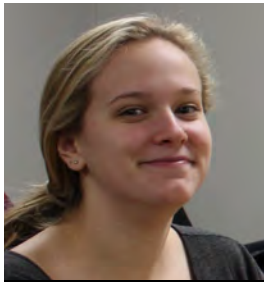
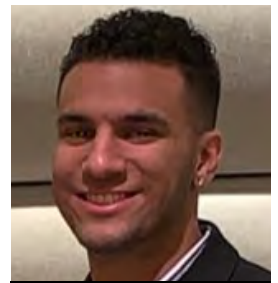
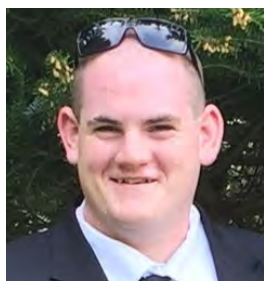
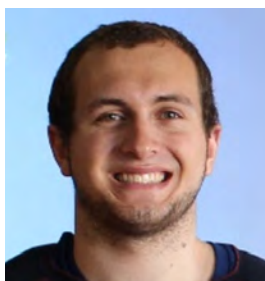
John Hislop



Tyler Houle



Chandler Hutchison

CONGRATULATIONS, 2020 HONORS PROGRAM GRADUATES!**Alexandra Jackson****Caleb Joyce-Vorce****Connor Kennedy****Kirsten Longbottom****Caitlin MacNeill****Alexandra Massaro****Faith McNamee****Jennifer Oglesby****Drew Pahl****Bryan Pimentel****Corey Pooler****Taylor Rivers****Thomas Rizzo****Abigail Schooner****Emily Slote****Justine Surette****Ana Szczebak****Kaitlin Thibault****Carly Thibodeau****Carolyn Wallace****Gregory Wilcox****Cayce Williams****Gianna Young****David Youngerman****Roman Yusenko**

ALUMNI NEWS

Karolina (Bak) Weagle, Class of 2015, University Honors Scholar, is a lawyer with Parker and O'Grady, Attorneys at Law in Southampton, MA.

Christian Biseinere, Class of 2018, Commonwealth Honors Scholar, B.S. Computer Science, published his Senior Honors Project article in the Northeast Regional Honors Council Journal, *Illuminate*, in November, 2018.

Chelsea Cox, Class of 2016, Commonwealth Honors Scholar, B.S. Business Management, was one of 7 women selected as a 2020 Women to Watch Award winner by the Massachusetts Society of Certified Public Accountants. The award recognizes women who have made outstanding contributions to the accounting profession, their communities, their firms or companies and to the development of women as leaders. Chelsea was selected in the Emerging Leader category, reserved for professionals with 15 years of experience or less.

Jennifer Oglesby, Class of 2020, Commonwealth Honors Scholar, is pursuing a MSW at Bridgewater State University's Advanced Standing Masters of Social Work program, this is a 2 year part-time program.

Jarrold Petersen, Class of 2019, Commonwealth Honors Scholar, B.S. Biology, has published his Senior Honors Project with Professor Jason Ramsay in the Journal of Experi-



Commonwealth Honors Scholars **Chelsea O'Connor** (Class of 2016, B.A. English) and **Connor Swan** (Class of 2016, B.A. Political Science and B.A. History), were married this fall in the company of many Honors Program friends. The couple first met at Honors Welcome Weekend in the Fall of 2012.

mental Biology. Jarrod is pursuing his PhD in the Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Department at Brown University.

Anna Szczebak, Class of 2020, University Honors Scholar, is pursuing an M.B.A. and working as a Graduate

Assistant at University of Massachusetts Boston.

Nicolas Taliceo, Class of 2016, Commonwealth Honors Scholar, and Dr. Julian Fleron, WSU Professor of Mathematics, will publish "A Prime Example of the Strong

Law of Small Numbers" in Mathematics Magazine, work stemming from Nicholas' Senior Honors Project, for which Dr. Fleron was his advisor. In 2018 Nicholas graduated from The University of Texas at Dallas with an M.S. in Geospatial Information Sciences. Nicolas also published his SHP in the *On-Line Encyclopedia of Integer Sequences*.

Carly Thibodeau, Class of 2020, Commonwealth Honors Scholar is pursuing a master's degree in sustainability at Tufts University.

Jessica Ulmer, Class of 2006, Commonwealth Honors Scholar, defended her dissertation *Deaf Individuals' Ways of Navigating Graduate School* to complete her PhD in Technical Communication and Rhetoric at Texas Tech University.

Woody Woodger, Class of 2015, Commonwealth Honors Scholar, has accepted an offer to attend the MFA program in Creative Writing, Poetry, at American University in Washington, DC. He will be attending this fall with a full merit scholarship. Woody's plan is to be part of the teaching assistantship program. Woody's poem *Erk Shaves* will be published in the 2020/2021 Winter Issue of *Lily Poetry*.

We're glad to see our alumni's Senior Honors Project work is still paying off!

Alumni, send us your news!

Erk Shaves by Woody Woodger

He manages like a miner who found a dinosaur bone but doesn't want anyone else to know. Trans, it's his first time shaving a face. He measures the dirty curves of my neck with his finger's gentle brush. When satisfied, he nuzzles the blade toward my own stubborn Adam's apple the one I wish to remove and reseed in his own throat. He moves his cramps slightly towards his thumb when his wrist starts to tire. His grip is a crane operated by butterflies raising a boulder. Afterward, he chisels out my cheeks to find they've grown soft under this eternity. Like the miner, he marvels at the secret he has earned, but cannot yet dislodge. He takes a thin pick to free my every last fracture. To watch him learn manhood must sometimes be held like a wet orchid petal is a sooty beauty. Strength with no muscle. But now he can marvel again at the soft bone in the mine wall so that he can dig on without ever putting the razor down.