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THE HONORS REPORT

NOVEMBER 2022



Enjoy our Thesis Edition!
The November edition includes:

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The Honors Report is looking to feature Honor College students' accomplishments! Please submit your "Points of Pride" or nominate a friend to be featured, so we may acknowledge and celebrate these achievements! Reach out to Dr. Thyrum with your ideas.

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Millersville University
HONORS COLLEGE

SAVE THE DATES!

Honors College *Movie Night* is on *Friday, November 11th* at 7:00pm in the 4th floor South Village study lounge. Come out to watch *Tangled* and enjoy some popcorn and other snacks. We hope to see you there!



Do you need a place to study for finals or collaborate with a group of peers? The library is now offering reservations for semi-private individual study spaces for use by individual students as well as group study rooms for two or more students. You can reserve group study rooms or semi-private individual study spaces on the library website.

POINTS OF PRIDE

Matthew Teare, a junior Honors student majoring in Meteorology and minoring in Mathematics and Data Science, is the recipient of the 2022 NOAA Ernest F. Hollings Undergraduate Scholarship. The scholarship includes a two-year financial award, as well as a 10-week paid summer internship, which Matthew will be fulfilling at the NOAA facility in Buffalo, New York.



Matthew Teare

Honors students **Caroline Alvarez, Neily Landman, and Alex Lloyd** assisted with the South Central PA Medical Reserve Corps vaccine clinic on Thursday, October 20th. Over 160 members of the Millersville University community received vaccinations for COVID-19 and flu.

DEMYSTIFYING THE THESIS DEFENSE

by Elias Peluso

As you progress through your curriculum, one thing that has (hopefully) been on your mind at some point is your Honors thesis. As a capstone requirement for graduating from the Honors College, students will complete a thesis, creative project, or research internship. For those of you unfamiliar with the thesis, it is an independent research paper and/or project that students traditionally complete throughout their final year at Millersville. The topic of your thesis is largely up to you. The thesis process is finished when you give your thesis defense. Honors student Jade Sambrick describes it clearly:

“You will present your thesis to your committee, which consists of your advisor and two other professors. You will most likely create a presentation to help you share your work. I created a slideshow with an overview of the process of working on my thesis, my research, and my findings. I shared about how I chose my topic, my method, what I wrote about in my literature review, and my findings and what I concluded from my research. Your committee will ask you questions. It is very discussion-based and an opportunity for your to talk with them about your work. Then, you will leave the room while your committee decides whether or not you have successfully completed your thesis. They may also share any ideas they have for revisions you can make to your work.” **-Jade Sambrick (she/her), Early Childhood Education Major & Integrative STEM Education Methods Minor, Class of May 2023**

DEMYSTIFYING THE THESIS DEFENSE CONT.

The defense process is not as daunting as it may sound - it is more or less a final presentation on a topic you are already very familiar with. Our very own **Dr. Thyrum** has laid out nine tips for planning your thesis defense:

1. Attend someone else's thesis defense at least once before you have your own. Regardless of whether or not someone's defense relates to your major, attending a defense of any topic will help you better understand the process.
2. When your thesis is nearly complete, work with your thesis advisor and your committee members to schedule a date for your defense. Finding a time that works for your entire committee can be challenging, so start early and take the time to find the best date and time.
3. Your thesis advisor must reserve a room for your defense. A good option is the conference room on the first floor of Franklin House or a conference room in your academic building.
4. Let the Honors College know when you have decided on your date, time, and location. If desired, your advisor and you can give permission to have your defense advertised to the Honors College to invite others to attend.
5. "Practice your presentation many times. Practice in front of an audience of friends or family. After you present, have them ask you questions so you can practice answering questions."
6. "Dress nicely for the defense, give your presentation, and hold your head up high. You worked on this project and know it better than anyone else."
7. "If you get a question from your committee that stumps you, do your best to give an answer. Look over to your thesis advisor – perhaps they can help out a bit. You can always complement the question and say you'll look into that question and get back to the questioner. Not being able to answer a question is not the end of the world. It happens."
8. "Have your signature page available at the defense. The committee MIGHT sign that day after your defense is over. OR, they might want to sign after you complete any revisions that are requested."
9. "Don't forget to send a PDF of your final, completed, approved thesis to the Honors College (i.e., Dr. Thyrum). She will send you a release form for your signature so that your thesis can be added to our MU library's digital repository of theses."



Scan this QR code to visit the Honors College thesis information page, where you can access guidelines, checklists, and other digital thesis resources.

To conclude, here are some encouraging words from Jade: "The actual defense itself wasn't stressful. After you have done so much work on your thesis, sharing what you did and talking about it will come easily. Just remember, you are the expert! This is your work and you are sharing it with others. Your committee will be interested to hear about your thesis and have a discussion about it with you. They are there to support you!" **-Jade Sambrick**

by Bronte Spidalieri

Fall break is a chance to relax, travel, and spend time with family and friends. Read below to see what some of your fellow Honors students did over their break!

"I had a fun and relaxing Fall Break with my family. We made caramel apples, attended a high school "Haunted Hayride," explored the Halloween section of Target, and watched multiple Ghostbusters movies. Prior to Fall Break, I painted a pumpkin to look like mushroom from Super Mario." **-Elias Peluso, Robotics and Control Systems major, Class of May 2023**



"Over fall break, part of my family and I drove up to Massachusetts to visit the town of Salem. We walked around, shopped, and did one of the haunted Salem tours. It was cheesy and expensive, but it was a fun time with my family." **-Neily Landman, Computer Science Major, Class of May 2026**



"I like that we have Fall break as a way to visit family, especially for those of us living too far away from home to do regular weekend visits. I enjoyed being able to visit some of my favorite places in Delaware. My family and I went out for dinner one night at a restaurant I haven't been able to visit since starting school." **-Joseph Favoroso, Applied Engineering and Safety Technologies Major, Class of May 2024**



MEET YOUR LIBRARIANS: GREG SZCZYRBAK

Greg Szczyrbak is the Learning Technologies Librarian at the McNairy Library and Learning Forum. Greg is the subject librarian for Psychology and Emergency Management. Contact him at greg.szczyrbak@millersville.edu or find him on the library website.

Q: Describe one way you have helped a student during a research appointment.

A: "I have helped students identify more effective search terms or techniques."

Q: What's your favorite book?

A: "Can't pick a favorite. But I enjoy science fiction, spy thrillers, and mysteries."

Q: Do you have any interesting hobbies? What are they?

A: "I have a race car and compete in a type of racing called rallycross."



Greg Szczyrbak

Q: Why did you become a librarian?

A: "It seemed like the thing to do. I was working in a library and was encouraged by a librarian to pursue a Masters Degree in Library Science."

Q: Current research interests?

A: "Open Educational Research and Training with game elements."

Q: Where would you like to travel?

A: "Japan, Greece, New Zealand, honestly anywhere."

Q: If you have a pet or pets, share something about them?

A: "Our cat Suki has a fabulous primordial pouch (Google it). Its white, and sways back and forth contrasting against the rest of her grey fur when she runs."

RESEARCH TOOLKIT: RESEARCHING A SUCCESSFUL THESIS WITH YOUR SUBJECT LIBRARIAN

Like many large-scale projects, it helps to start sooner rather than later with your thesis. Your subject librarian, the librarian assigned to your major, can assist with your research in a number of ways that will help you save time and write a stronger thesis. Aside from assisting you with finding more standard sources, librarians can help you track down things which are trickier to find and access.

Students frequently have a hard time selecting a topic that is the right scope for a project; librarians can provide help with topic selection, including helping you determine whether or not there is literature on your topic. Once you've done some preliminary research, a librarian can also help you revise your topic based upon what you've found and how your research question may evolve.

From there, librarians can also provide assistance with the literature review, which is a step that is also challenging to students. With a thesis, you have the added challenge of needing to synthesize many more sources and the accompanying challenge of managing your citations and accurate citation format.

Last but not least, librarians can assist with copyright questions and also serve on your committee. In that capacity as a committee member, we can continue to offer feedback about how to improve the literature review and focus your research.

HONORS BY CONTRACT & THESIS CONNECTION

by Claire DeVinney

By utilizing the Honors by Contract option, students can receive Honors credit for a non-Honors course by completing enrichment. In some cases, students use these assignments to find their thesis topic or begin thesis research. Below, hear from two students whose Honors by Contract assignments contributed to their thesis work.



Jill Bergin

Jill Bergin is a senior History major with General Anthropology and International Studies minors.

Q: What is your thesis topic?

A: "The actual title of my thesis is still in the works, but I am doing a comparative study about how the Pocahontas and Malinche are symbols of English and Spanish colonization during the 16th and 17th Centuries. My project looks at these two indigenous women as separate case studies to determine how the culture of their respective European colonizers influenced how these women were presented to the public."

Q: Which class and professor did you do Honors by contract with?

A: "I did Honors by contract for Dr. Weis' HIST 308: History of Race and Sexuality, US and Transnational Perspectives. The class was cross-listed as a 400-level senior seminar for students with minors in African-American History and Women and Gender Studies."

Q: What did you do for your Honors by Contract project?

A: "To make the class Honors by Contract, I did the same level of work as the senior seminar students rather than the 300-level students. This included having a longer end-of-semester project and additional readings."

Q: How did this project contribute to your thesis?

A: "The work from this course has turned into about half of my thesis. As mentioned previously, this is a two-part case study about how Indigenous women were represented during European conquest of the Americas. The project I did in Dr. Weis' class focused solely on Pocahontas and how she was represented through images, documentation, and fictional works from the English."

Q: What advice about Honors by contract would you give to someone who is starting the thesis process?

A: "To all Juniors - I recommend starting your thesis process during the spring of your Junior year and finishing up in the fall semester. This gives you time to work on your project throughout the summer, when you don't have all your other course load to worry about. There is also the chance for your project to spill over a little into the spring of your Senior year in case you don't quite finish in the fall. Overall, it just gives a lot more time for quality work rather than the anxiety of a hard deadline. I believe doing an Honors by contract course to get the ball rolling on my project was critical. It gave me the chance to have a little more structure in my research, writing, and planning process while having support from more than just my advisor."

Noelle Htwar is a senior Early Childhood Educ. major with a STEM integration minor.

Q: What is your thesis topic?

A: "I'm planning on focusing on diversity in the classroom by writing a children's book. It's going to be called *Why Are We Different?*. It's about a little girl in kindergarten, and it's family day, and obviously there are a lot of different types of families. She goes home and asks her mom, "why are we all different?"

HONORS BY CONTRACT & THESIS CONNECTION CONT.

Its basically a child-friendly way of highlighting all the different types of families—gay parents, parents with disabilities, biracial parents. I have biracial parents and I grew up in a predominantly white community, and I felt like I was never really represented in literature, so I am writing a research paper that goes along with my book on why representation, or diversity, is important in children's literature, for child development."

Q: Which class and professor did you do Honors by contract with?

A: "I did Family and Diversity with Dr. Hossein. I just met with him at the beginning of the semester and told him what I was interested in, and he wanted me to write up what my plan was so he could look it over and sign off.

Q: How did your Honors by Contract project contribute to your thesis?

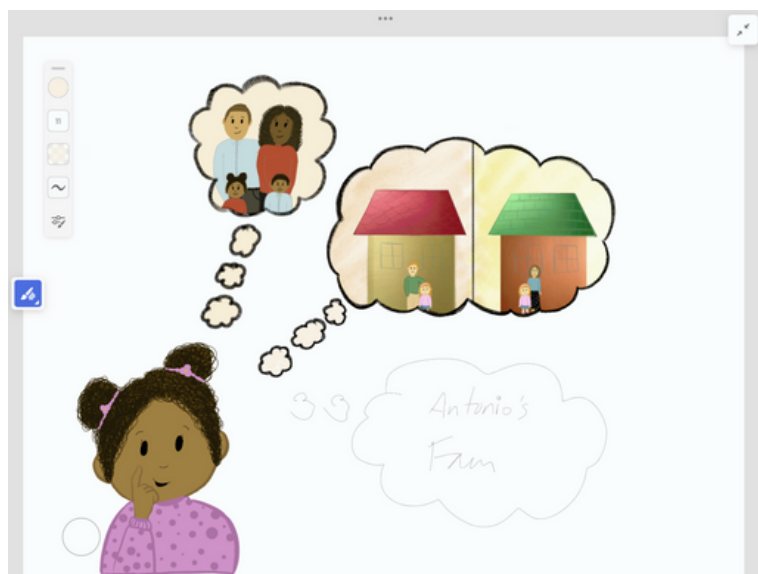
A: "All I had to do was write a research paper, which I made sure went along with my thesis. Since the class is about diversity, especially about including it in your classroom, I decided to focus on the literature aspects, since I was writing a children's book. Most of my paper focused on why diversity and representation is important in the classroom, and there was a sub-part of my paper that mainly focused on literature, all of which I can use in my thesis."



Noelle Htwar

Q: What advice about Honors by contract would you give to someone who is starting the thesis process?

A: "When you're picking a thesis, I think it's best to choose something that you're interested in, but also something that goes with your major, or at least a minor. That way, your classes fit in more and you're not adding more workload. All professors here are really understanding, at least in my personal experience. They want what's best for you as long as you're willing to put in the work, whether it's doing a presentation at the end of the semester or just meeting once a week. My professor, Dr. Hossein, only needed me to write a paper by the end of the semester, so it didn't really add that much to my workload, and it helped contribute to my thesis in the future. In regards to the thesis, when I first joined the Honors College, I was really overwhelmed, and I didn't think I was going to be able to do it, but it's manageable. There's no page requirement, or anything like that—you just have to be able to present your idea clearly, and your thesis advisors work with you. In the process right now, I feel like it's really doable."



A sneak peek of Noelle's children's book, *Why Are We Different?*, which she is currently in the process of writing and illustrating

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: LAUREL BLANCHARD

Laurel Blanchard graduated from the Honors College in the spring of 2022. She majored in Meteorology with a concentration in Broadcast and minors in Mathematics and Emergency Management. During her time at Millersville, Laurel was part of the Honors College Student Association, Intramural sports, and Omicron Delta Kappa. She was involved in the American Meteorological Society Student Chapter at Millersville and served as its president. The summer before her senior year, Laurel was an intern at the Heart of Illinois ABC station where she worked under Chief Meteorologist Brian Walder. Below, see Laurel's reflections on the most memorable parts of the Honors College, as well as an update on her current career!

Reflections on the Honors college:

"I look back fondly on my time at the Honors College especially because the friends I made early on are still my close friends today! The Honors College challenged me to think differently and enhance all of my skills instead of just the skills I would use in my major. The support system specifically is something that I will always remember from the Honors College. Dr. Thyrum, Beth, all students and mentors involved were there for any questions or doubts I had during my college career, and I am forever grateful for that. When writing my thesis, the support and guidance from everyone allowed me to complete my thesis and (soon to be....surprise!) further published in professional journals."

Current status:

Since graduating from Millersville, I am currently employed at CBS and ABC affiliate station WJHL in Johnson City, TN, where I am an on air meteorologist forecasting local weather on weekend and weekday evenings.



Above: Laurel in front of the WJHL station building where she works as an on air meteorologist.

Left: Laurel speaking at the Honors College Recognition prior to her graduation in the spring of 2022.



Thanks to Laurel for representing MU and the Honors College in such outstanding ways!

*****We hope everyone has a Happy Thanksgiving!*****