

# THE SQUIRREL SQUIRE

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 2      SPRING 2022

## NORTHEAST REGIONAL HONORS COUNCIL CONFERENCE - PHILADELPHIA, PA

LINDSEY GENATOSSIO



Eleven Honors Program students and Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor attended the 2022 Northeast Regional Honors Council Conference in Philadelphia, PA.

The annual Northeast Regional Honors Council (NRHC) Conference is a four-day adventure where students present their projects and ideas in multiple formats from posters, idea exchanges, PowerPoints, to round table discussions. WSU students presented their research on a wide variety of topics. I interviewed students to get their perspective on the conference. Read on to hear what they have to say.

“Attending the NRHC Conference with my peers from the Westfield State Honors Program was a fantastic experience and I would to do it again in a heartbeat. It not only gave me the opportunity to engage with new ideas and conversations, but also to develop a deeper appreciation and love for Westfield State and the incredible work that takes place at our university.” Samantha Falcone said.

This conference is not your average conference. On Friday morning, students got up, had a buffet breakfast and went off

to explore the city of Philadelphia. All of the WSU students and Professor Sackett-Taylor chose to walk the Mural Mile. There were a variety of murals including ones about the art and music of Philadelphia and others about the evolution of womanhood. Many of the students’ favorites were those that used recycled materials.

“The NRHC Conference was a great chance to explore Philadelphia and create bonds with my fellow Honors peers.

From mural tours to presenting to students from different states to the student gala and more” Gwyneth Smith said. In between taking in the murals,



Students dressed up for the celebratory banquet with their Honors Program peers and administrators from across the Northeast.

students visited Sweet Box Bakeshop, got lunch at High Street Philly and ate in Washington Park. Before the day was over, everyone went to the Liberty Bell and enjoyed learning about its history.

On Friday night, we attended a banquet and listened to the keynote address given by Dr. Marybeth Gasman, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Endowed Chair in Education at Rutgers University. Dr. Gasman is an author and editor of thirty books, has written over 250 peer-reviewed articles, scholarly essays, and book chapters. She spoke about her forthcoming publication *Doing the Right*

*Thing: How to End Systemic Racism in Faculty Hiring* and went into depth about a call to action on this issue.

“The NRHC Conference was easily one of the best experiences of my four years at Westfield State. Every aspect of the adventure was special – taking the train to Philadelphia, exploring the city, presenting our projects, and celebrating Lindsey’s award for her work on *The Squirrel Squire!* Attending the conference and connecting with Honors students from around the region really made me feel as though I’m a part of something much bigger than myself.” Tom Mespelli said.

“I was able to present MY research to people from all around the Northeast, meet incredible people, and learn more about the people from my own campus community.” “It was an incredibly enriching academic experience that will stick with me my entire life.” Emily Frost said.

(NRHC Conference, continued on p. 3)

## DR. VANESSA HOLFORD DIANA

### HONORING HER HONORS PROGRAM LEGACY

DR. HILLARY SACKETT-TAYLOR



Dr. Vanessa Holford Diana, Professor of English, served as Honors Program Director from the Fall 2019 thru the Fall 2021 semester. Prior to becoming Director, Dr. Diana served as Honors Program Assistant Director for eight years with Director, Dr. Glen Brewster. She leaves behind a legacy of thoughtful and inspired leadership. Students will remember Dr. Diana as a kind, compassionate, and dedi-

cated faculty mentor. She spent a great deal of time in the Honors Center getting to know each and every student in the program. She pushed students to be their best, always offering a word of encouragement with her sage advice.

Not only did she place a high value on the relationship with students, Dr. Diana played an integral role in my personal career path. I met Dr. Diana during my campus interview in Spring 2012. She was so passionate about her work as an educator and the opportunities available in the Honors Program for new junior faculty. It definitely impacted my decision to take my position at WSU. In my first few years at WSU, Dr. Diana was always present at the professional development workshops I attended and I immediately

knew this was someone I needed to know better because I could learn from her. She became one of my most important mentors and closest colleagues. I looked to her often as an example of who I wanted to be and what I could accomplish at WSU. She has taught me how to keep my core values at the center of my work. She has modeled patience, professionalism, em-

pathic communication, and the importance of a work-life balance.

The Honors Program is stronger because of her leadership. Good news is we don't have to miss her too much because she will continue teaching Honors courses and being involved in our programming. I know I have huge shoes to fill as Honors Program Chair, but I am confident that as long as I continue to draw on the lessons I learned from Dr. Diana, and stay true to who I am, it will all work out. We are forever grateful for the lasting impact she has on the Honors Program at Westfield State.



Professor Sackett-Taylor and Professor Diana in New Orleans for the National Collegiate Honors Council Meeting in November 2019.

*Dr. Sackett-Taylor is Chair of the Westfield State University Honors Program and Chair and Professor of Economics.*

#### SHAC Officers for Fall 2021– Spring 2022

**President:** Tom Mespelli

**Co-Vice Presidents:** Haley Kane and Cait Pellerin

**Secretary:** Mackenzie Healy

**Historian:** Lindsey Genatossio

**Publicist:** Gwyneth Smith

**Commuter Rep:** Abdullah Arshad

**Peer Mentor Program Liaisons:** Alyssa Hale and Will Smith

**Commonwealth Honors Program Rep:** Mackenzie Healey

**Honors Advisory Committee Reps:** Cassidy Irzyk and Cait Pellerin

**First-Year Reps:** Kirsten Burek and Brian Huynh

#### The Squire Squad

**Student Intern - Spring 2022:** Katherine Pinney

**Student Editors and Contributors:** Margaret Ahearn, Kaitlyn Egan, Daniel Currier, Lindsey Genatossio, Carlos Lantigua Bari, Natalie Maslak, Collin O'Brien, Katherine Pinney, Katy Schlaefer, and Amber Stearns.

**Staff Editors:** Gretchen Konrad and Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor

#### Get in touch with the Honors Program:

Visit the Honors Center in Mod Hall 103.  
Call (413) 572-8086. Email at [honors@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:honors@westfield.ma.edu).  
LIKE US on FACEBOOK, INTAGRAM, and TWITTER!

## NORTHEAST REGIONAL HONORS COUNCIL CONFERENCE PHILADELPHIA, PA

### *THE SQUIRREL SQUIRE* BECOMES AN AWARD-WINNING NEWSLETTER

LINDSEY GENATOSSIO

(NRHC Conference, continued from p.1)

On Saturday, four students were up bright and early to participate in the first round of presentations. Gwyn Smith, Tom Mespelli, and Lindsey Genatossio presented an idea exchange about Honors Program finances and on the internships they did in the Fall 2021 semester. CJ Lantigua Bari then presented his poster about how the English language is not the dominant language of the United States.

"As a first-year college student, I am very thankful that I was able to attend the NRHC Conference I used my opportunity to shine a light on an issue that many multilingual and/or foreign language speaking students face on campus. The question at hand was, "¿Por qué Debo Hablar inglés?" (Why should I speak English?)" CJ said.

Lexi West, Haley Kane, Josselyn Donahue, Emily Frost, and Samantha Falcone presented their PowerPoints in separate rooms throughout the conference venue. Everyone supported one another and attended as many presentations as possible. Some students presented their Senior Honors Project research.

"Presenting my research at the NRHC Conference gave me confidence that I can do anything I set my mind to. Additionally, it proved that hard work truly pays off. I'm so grateful to our WSU Honors Program for bringing us to the conference." Haley said.



One of the many selfies taken at the conference!

"Presenting my Senior Honors Project at the NRHC Conference allowed me to connect with other student scientists. After my panel presentation, all of us on the panel discussed our research and asked each other questions about their experiments. This showed me what it is like to have an academic conversation with my peers." said Josselyn.

At the end of the day, sophomore Kaitlyn Egan and first-year Abdullah Arshad presented at round table discussions. Kaitlyn presented on the future of funding for Honors Programs and Abdullah pre-

sented on "Diversity in College: Islamophobia on Campus" and discussed the unique hardships of being a Muslim student at WSU. "The NRHC Conference in Philadelphia was an experience that will forever shape my Honors experience as well as my future research endeavors. I was so inspired by not only the Honors students across the Northeast region, but those from WSU that I traveled with as well." Kaitlyn said.

To celebrate the students' hard work and dedication to their presentations, the conference hosted a student Gala called "Shoot for the Stars."

Everyone dressed up, had photos taken, and danced the night away.

"I had such an amazing time at the NRHC Conference! I think that we had one of the best groups yet, everyone was so supportive of each other, and we had so much fun together. I am blown away by the work that my fellow WSU Honors students are doing." Lexi said.

As the last day came around, students were eagerly awaiting award announcements. *The Squirrel Squire*, the WSU Honors Program newsletter, got called as second place winner for the first-ever Northeast Regional Honors Council Conference Publication Contest. You can check out the award winning F'21 edition of *The Squirrel Squire* on the Honors Program webpage at [The Squirrel Squire, Volume 13, Issue 1, Fall 2021](#).

"The NRHC Conference was my first ever conference, and I feel like nothing in my life will ever top it. It felt extremely rewarding presenting all the hard work I put into the newsletter. The feeling of winning that award was even better, it really showed me that hard work does pay off. I grew closer to a lot of people in the Honors Program and made memories that will last a lifetime." Lindsey said.

This experience is something all of us will remember.

*Lindsey Genatossio is a Class of 2023 Communication major from Millbury, MA.*



Students goofing around after *The Squirrel Squire* was awarded second place in the NRHC's first-ever Publication Contest.

## UPPER-LEVEL INTERDISCIPLINARY HONORS SEMINAR

### THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A “SENSE OF PLACE”

COLLIN O'BRIEN

When the idea to take an upper-level interdisciplinary Honors seminar came to mind, I hesitated. I knew my classmates would be mostly upper-classmen and I was nervous about what the “seminar” course format would look like. Nevertheless, I choose to enroll in Dr. Tarin Weiss’ “Sense of Place” seminar. I soon discovered that my decision to take this course, driven by my passion for the outdoors and unwavering love for my selected place, the Connecticut River near my hometown in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, was an excellent choice.

The course readings and assignments were aimed at both exploring and learning about a natural place that is special to each individual through a systems approach. This approach draws upon the interconnectedness between the Earth’s natural, physical, and human systems. Students were able to explore their personal connectedness to a place and innovatively represent that connection through a chosen communication medium.

Since childhood, I was raised to respect nature and the gifts it bestows upon mankind. The O’Brien family tradition and infatuation is and always has been fishing. I grew up along the vast banks of the Connecticut River and feel at home within the confines of its waters. However, I knew there was more to learn about my home away from home and yearned to uncover its deepest secrets. The “Sense of Place” seminar has allowed me to do just that. I am not only learning about my place through the lens of the present but also from its past. By examining the past and present, I am able to predict future changes to its environment and also understand the complex history of one’s selected place.

The most interesting project has been the comprehensive essay. As a class participant, you are expected to research and write a paper about a number of topics regarding your chosen place. Topics covered include geology, biology, geography, climate, and much more.



On a sunny day in early March, Dr. Parshall showed up at South Lot with snowshoes for each student in Dr. Weiss’ “Sense of Place” seminar. The students and professors then explored the lovely snowy woods between South Lot and the Little River. “Dr. Weiss commented, “It was so cool to see our students try out the snowshoes and think reflectively about forests, tree types, and ecosystem health with a forestry expert.”

My favorite topic has been soil, the different types, and how they form. It was very rewarding to see the history, composition, and progression of the Connecticut River near my hometown through the lens of this course. This knowledge has allowed me to

better respect and cherish my selected place and also to realize the impact place has upon one’s self. After all, in the words of American writer, farmer, and environmentalist Wendell Berry “if you don’t know where you are you don’t know who you are.” “A Sense of Place” makes such information apparent by allowing you to discover hidden parts of your identity. Parts of yourself that you had no clue reside within your selected place. It is through taking this class and investing myself within its work that I discovered my true relationship to place and my full identity was being revealed to me. My time spent in the the “Sense of Place” course has been truly amazing. I strongly recommend taking this upper-level interdisciplinary Honors seminar with Dr. Weiss. If you do, I believe that you truly will discover interesting things about both yourself and the places that you call home.

*Collin is a Class of 2024 Criminal Justice major from Windsor Locks, CT.*

### A “SENSE OF PLACE” AND A TREE IN STANLEY PARK

AMBER STEARNS

My experiences in the HNRS0301: “Sense of Place” upper-level interdisciplinary seminar fostered a deepened connection to nature within me. There is a sycamore tree in the center of the green in Stanley Park that is perfect for climbing. It stands close to 40 feet tall, surrounded on all



Amber’s beloved sycamore tree in Stanley Park.

sides by lush green grass in the spring and summer, discarded spikey fruit in the fall, and slick ice in the winter. Sycamore leaves are palmate in structure, meaning they spread out from a center point much like the fingers from the palm of your hand, but these leaves can grow much larger than

that. The bark is strange; it is scaly and dark at the base of the tree and as it extends upwards it flakes off, revealing paler and paler bark beneath until the crisp white skin is revealed at the highest reaching arms of the tree.

*(A “Sense of Place,” continued on p. 6)*

## SPRING 2022 SPECIAL TOPICS COURSE

### SEXISM, RACISM, AND KNOWLEDGE

NATALIE MASLAK AND KATHERINE PINNEY

What is knowledge, really? We like to think that you either have it, or you don't. But what counts as knowledge, and who counts as someone with knowledge? A farmer knows every detail necessary to survive off the land, a student knows how to engage with text and apply knowledge to the real world, a child knows how to tie their shoes, and a philosopher knows theory. Each of these people possess knowledge, but as a society we have discredited certain types of knowledge, and often discredit knowledge based solely on the knower's identity.

In Racism, Sexism, and Knowledge, a Spring 2022 Honors Introduction to Ethics course taught for the first-time



ever by Philosophy professor Dr. Rachel Katler, we examined the ways in which people's knowledge is ignored and undermined because of their race, sexuality, and/or gender identity. We also discussed ignorance, how it isn't simply a lack of knowledge, but instead is often an intentional tool of oppression of minority groups.

Our class was comprised of 10 students which allowed us

to develop relationships beyond what is possible in larger classes. We grew to trust and learn from each other.

Students in the course chose a reading they were interested in, temporarily adopted the role of professor, and facilitated a class discussion. Dr. Katler skillfully introduced each text within the context of our own place as members of society. Our own education and upbringing were placed under

microscopes. What information did we learn, and how did we learn it? We found time and again that the American education system failed to include cultural sensitivity and relevancy, balance our personal lived experiences with our mind and soul, and many more aspects. We couldn't help but wonder why our science education wasn't centered around ideas like "how to increase the quality of life without having to dominate earth and destroy her at the same time."

*Natalie is a Class of 2022 Political Science major from Granby, MA and Katherine is a Class of 2022 Economics and Political Science dual major from Bedford, MA.*

### A "SENSE OF PLACE" AND A TREE IN STANLEY PARK

AMBER STEARNS

(A "Sense of Place," continued from p. 5)

I don't think anything in particular drew me to this tree at first. I found it my freshman year at WSU when I was wandering about Stanley Park. I don't remember if I was alone or with friends when I first came across it, but I was instinctually led to climb it once I realized how within reach the lower branches were. I settled in and enjoyed the feeling of being above the world, if only by a few feet. Of course, I returned again and again to this tree.

I have a deep love for all trees. I don't know why, exactly, just that I do. Perhaps it



Amber collecting samples from the river during a class field trip.

is because of the broad Japanese maple in my front yard at home; it has low slung branches and six trunks that weave outwards from the same base, and it made for perfect climbing when I was a kid. I would hang upside down from my

knees on the lowest branches, shimmy up as high as I could while still feeling safe, fiddle with the brilliant red leaves while watching the occasional car drive down my street.

Or perhaps I love trees for other reasons. My family went to Maine when I was young and we would stay in a rickety old cabin surrounded by gorgeous pine trees on a beautiful lake. The peace I felt there was immense; long days swimming in the sun, exploring the woods, reading, and playing games with my cousins. Some of my fondest memories are from those vacations and I suspect the time spent outdoors instilled a deep apprecia-

tion for nature within me.

Trees are exceedingly old. They grow slowly, steadily upwards, reaching towards whatever sunlight they can. They communicate with each other, provide homes for any number of creatures, and they breathe out the oxygen we rely on. My sycamore is probably much older than me, yet it still has so much life left to live. I imagine it will still be in its same spot 60 years from now and maybe I'll visit it and be unable to wrap my arms around its widened trunk.

*Amber is a Class of 2022 Environmental Science and Regional Planning dual major from Milford, MA.*

## HONORS STUDENTS GO GLOBAL

### A TASTE OF FLORENCE: MY ITALIAN STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE

KAITLYN EGAN



Kaitlyn enjoying a glass of locally sourced wine which is customary to have with meals.

From January 2nd to January 15th, 2022, I was fortunate to travel to Florence, Italy alongside seven other students and Professors Max and Loran Saito as an extension of our Inspiration of Place: Food, Symbols, and Saints course. In preparation for our travels, we studied Italian culture extensively, emphasizing the Renaissance and its roots in Italy, the process of canonization and Italy's most influential Saints, and the Italian Slow Food Movement characterized by celebrating food that is locally grown and eaten seasonally, as well as eating slowly and really enjoying a meal that was prepared with intention.

Our learning materialized through daily cooking courses where we prepared traditional Italian dishes under a seasoned chef at Florence Institute of the Arts, participating in multiple wine tastings facilitated by wine experts on a family-owned vineyard in the neigh-

boring town of Modena, visiting multiple art galleries including the one in which Michelangelo's David is displayed, and interacting with the locals on nights designated to exploring the city. Despite all of the fascinating things we learned in the classroom, the casual interactions are where I learned the most about Italian culture: no one was ever in a rush and really took the time to socialize with friends and strangers, and people patiently waited in lines without complaint or anxiety. It was so



Kaitlyn and other students on the trip enjoying dinner in Piazza della Signoria, an exquisite, lively square located in the historical center of Florence.

refreshing to interact with people who enjoyed every aspect of life instead of rushing through it, relentlessly trying to accomplish every item on a to-do list. We also learned about different cultural norms, like altering items on a restaurant menu in any way is disrespectful, tipping is seen as unnecessary, and, from our friend Sergio at the coffee shop across from our apartment,

that it is customary to sit down and drink your coffee instead of using the drive-thru and drinking it in transit to work which is routine in America.

As the days went on, we attempted to use more Italian phrases such as "buongiorno" and "grazie" as frequently as possible. We noticed during the vast majority of our interactions with locals that they knew at least a little bit of English, so we attempted to extend the same courtesies to them in Italian.

Florence had so much to offer

in terms of sightseeing and ancient architecture. The preservation of the city's original buildings and cobblestone streets made the experience almost dream-like. One of my favorite experiences while in Florence was climbing to the top of the Duomo Cathedral, one of the city's most notable landmarks. We climbed all four-hundred and sixty-three stairs to see quite possibly the most beautiful view I will ever be lucky enough to experience. However, we did not need to tour all of the gorgeous cathedrals and museums to experience said beauty: it was wherever we looked.

To say traveling to Florence, Italy was life-altering is an immense understatement. I met the most amazing humans, experienced an entirely new way of life, and brought home with me an enriched worldview and a delicious biscotti recipe too!

*Kaitlyn is a Class of 2024 Criminal Justice and English dual major from Sutton, MA.*



The view from the top of the Duomo Cathedral in Florence.

## HONORS STUDENTS GO GLOBAL

### MY COVID EXPERIENCE DURING STUDY ABROAD

MARGARET AHEARN



Meg exploring the streets in Florence, Italy which were decorated for Epiphany, or Three Kings Day. Meg had a wonderful experience before COVID struck.

I turned 21 while in Italy. This was not supposed to be the case - I had planned to be back home in Massachusetts for my birthday. I caught COVID a few days before the end of my study abroad trip to Italy, and had to stay behind.

I was, however, not the only one who got COVID on the trip; three other students got it too, but they were able to fly home because they were asymptomatic. I was symptomatic so I spent ten days in quarantine.

Naturally, I was thoroughly upset; I broke down crying when I got my two positive results and was the most

stressed I have ever been. I was concerned about spreading COVID to others. I had to follow the rules of the pharmacy where I tested and of the school where we stayed.

I was relieved to hear that



As this photo illustrates, Meg was able to enjoy some delicious Italian food on our trip.

WSU classes would be held online for the first two weeks of the Spring 2022 semester. This made it easier to access my classes, even with the six-hour time difference. The time difference made it so that my classes were in the evening, which was a bit weird.

Overall, I was overjoyed to test negative a week later (and the day after my 21st birthday). I drank a glass of wine on the plane to celebrate - not just my birthday, but also my voyage home.

*Margaret (Meg) is a Class of 2023 Communication major from Foxborough, MA.*

### BON VOYAGE, KATY!

KATY SCHLAEFER



Katy snuggling a baby goat when the farm animals came to WSU campus.

I am excited to announce that I will be participating in the National Student Exchange (NSE) Program for the Fall 2022 semester. This program allows students to spend up to two semesters at any participating state school.

I learned about the NSE Program from my mom, who participated in the same program when she was in college. She spent a semester at Sono-



Katy's mom (front of raft) rafting during her NSE experience at Sonoma State University.

ma State University where she met my dad. Growing up, I heard how amazing her experience in California was and about all the amazing friends

she made during her NSE semester. Knowing that this opportunity existed, I was determined to participate myself. After looking at the list of schools, I landed on the University of Hawaii, but was torn between Hilo and Manoa. I wanted to push myself beyond my comfort zone, so I applied and was accepted to University of Hawaii Manoa, where I will be starting in August! While in Hawaii I plan to take courses in Ethnic and Gender Studies, English, and Science.

*Katy is a Class of 2024 English major from Lee, Massachusetts. She is studying to be a High School teacher.*

## HONORS STUDENTS IN CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT

### LATINO ASSOCIATION FOR EMPOWERMENT (L.A.F.E)

CARLOS J. LANTIGUA BARI



Carlos and members of L.A.f.E. having fun during one of their meetings.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."  
- Martin Luther King Jr.

Last semester, I joined the Latino Association for Empowerment (L.A.f.E). Through this association, I have been given the opportunity to meet other Latin (o/e) students on the Westfield State campus and to build relationships with individuals in L.A.f.E, the Black Student Union, and S.A.I.L.

(Office of Student Activities, Involvement, and Leadership). I didn't think I would ever be a part of a club, much less a member of its Executive Board. Like most college students, I struggle with time management skills which is why it takes me by surprise (although I do it all the time) that I agree to commitments like being a part of an Executive Board. Getting involved with L.A.f.E. was and continues to be one of the best deci-

sions I've made. If you aren't a part of a club, sport, or something else that Westfield State has to offer, I urge you (if you have the time) to reach out and get involved.

What is L.A.f.E. and what is my role in this club? L.A.f.E works in "creating awareness of multicultural issues, celebrating diversity, and creating a healthy, safe, and welcoming environment for everyone," because, believe it or not, there is a misconception that our Latinidad is supposed to look and sound a specific way. This misconception doesn't just exist outside of Latino America, but also within the very culture itself. Some will say, "but Latin(o/e) isn't a race" and to that, I say you are one hundred percent correct, it isn't a race, it's an ethnicity, but that hasn't stopped the world from meeting us with hate, and it sure hasn't stopped others from discriminating against our people. Latinidad is a spectrum, one that is represented by our Indigenous, Af-

rican, and European roots and the mixing of cultures and languages.

As an Executive Board member, my role includes running our social media accounts and documenting all that we do, which have given me the chance to grow my skills in photography and editing as shown below. Photography is an awesome way of capturing things. Through this art form we are able to capture a special moment in our life and keep it forever.

As complex and resistant to change as this world may seem, our actions directly impact the people around us. The act of joining a group such as L.A.f.E., supporting the students within, and/or attending events, can create a culture of diversity at Westfield State that is much bigger than one person.

*Carlos is a Class of 2025 Mathematics major from Springfield, MA.*



Pictured above from left to right are members of L.A.f.E.: Blasmiry Villalona ('24), Aryan Mankins ('24), Alexander Jarrett ('24), Lisha Lopez ('23), Angel Santiago ('24), Arlene Ramos ('22), Jankaleishka Burgos Cruz ('23), Anthony Negron Vargas ('23), and Arlene Ramos ('22).



## HONORS STUDENTS IN CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT

### NECHE – A TIME TO PAUSE AND REFLECT

DANIEL CURRIER



Daniel Currier enthusiastically serves as a student rep on NECHE.

The 2021-2022 academic year at Westfield State has been marked by the decennial process of evaluation and accreditation of our institution through the New England Commission of Higher Education – NECHE. President of Westfield State University Dr. Linda Thompson has charged a committee comprised of representatives from all campus unions (MSCA, APA, AF-SCME), select non-union pro-

professionals, various college trustees, and a few students to craft a self-study of our institution. The self-study will detail how we have grown over the past ten years and where we need improvement.

As a dual major in Accounting and Finance, I began serving on a subcommittee tasked with overseeing responses to substandards dealing with institutional resources, including short-term and long-term budget planning – perfect for applying my current skills and learning more about what I might be dealing with upon receiving my bachelor’s degree and entering the workforce. As part of this subcommittee, I reviewed financial statements and collective bargaining agreements while participating in regular meetings via Zoom to discuss key findings and determine how best to write

our report. The report, slated to be fully developed prior to the start of the Fall 2022 semester, will allow us to measure our progress as an institution and determine where we need to grow, particularly as we face a massive deficit brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and declining enrollment at post-secondary institutions nationwide.

In addition to my subcommittee responsibilities, I have reported on the work of the entire NECHE Self-Study Committee to the Student Government Association (SGA), to keep students regularly updated on this critical process of ensuring that Westfield State continues to offer quality education and extracurricular experience for years to come. It has been an honor to stand at the podium before the SGA and provide important details

on the work conducted by the committee.

Westfield State has given me the opportunity to apply what I learn in the classroom to real-world issues in my first year as an undergraduate student for which I am extremely grateful. I look forward to participating in internships, taking advanced coursework, and completing a Senior Honors Project in the future.

Stay tuned for more information regarding the accreditation process and opportunities for student engagement as we seek feedback from the entire campus community!

*Daniel is a Class of 2025 Accounting and Finance dual major from Foxborough, MA.*



### IN AND OUT OF THE HONORS CENTER



Abby Bernier and Tom Mespelli display their egg-dyeing skills. Brianna Toomey created an under-the-sea themed illustration on the Honors Center whiteboard. Will Smith and Makenzie Healey enjoy chips & dip at the Ukrainian flag making event. Students, faculty, and staff gather to toast (with sparkling juice) the graduating cohort and outgoing Honors Program Director Dr. Diana. Abdullah Arshad presents his NRHC Conference research at CURCA Celebration.

## COMMONWEALTH HONORS SCHOLARS

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.

**Eve Boyd:** Elementary Education and Liberal Arts, *Implementing Climate Change Topics into 3rd Grade Science Classrooms*, Dr. Tarin Weiss.

**Morgan Briggs:** Communication and English, *The Marriage of Reason and Romance: An Evolution of Feminist Issues in Jane Austen's Novels*, Dr. Glen Brewster.

**Fiona Cioch:** Nursing, *Do You Feel Safe at Home? Assessing Nursing Students' Ability to Care for Patients Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence*, Dr. Joan Kuhnly.

**Shealynn Conway:** Biology and Chemistry, *Using Dihydrofolate Reductase (DHFR) as a Model Enzyme to Study Protein Engineering*, Dr. Roderico Acevedo.

**Kaylea Cornwell:** Criminal Justice and Psychology, *Exploring the Alternatives to Incarceration for Drug Offenders*, Dr. Michael George (S'22), Dr. Kimberly Tobin (F'21).

**Sabrina Dawicki:** Psychology, *Sex Education Analysis: The Experiences and Perceptions of Sex Education Among College Students*, Dr. Claudia Ciano-Boyce.

**Carley Devlin:** Nursing, *Bariatric Sensitivity Modules to Improve Nursing Students Attitudes Towards the Bariatric Population*, Dr. Jennifer Pappas.

**Christopher DiCarlo:** Biology and Health Sciences, *Assessing Behavioral and Neurological Differences in Drosophila melanogaster with Huntington's Disease on Ketogenic Diets*, Dr. Robin White.

**Josselyn Donahue:** Biology, *Exploring the Association Between TP53 Mutational Patterns and Four Cancers - Breast, Ovarian, Cervical, and Lung Cancers*, Dr. Mao-Lun Weng.

**Samantha Falcone:** Biology, *Functional Morphology of the Feeding Apparatus in Chain Pickerel, Esox niger: Adaptations for Manipulation and Consumption of Large Live Prey*, Dr. Jason Ramsay.

**Rachel Finney:** English, *"Frayed Ends: The Women of Camelot,"* Dr. Sabine Klein.

**Emily Frost:** History and Political Science, *Types, Tropes, and Tokens: Searching for Positive Feminist Examples in Mainstream Superheroine Roles*, Dr. Brooke Orr (F'21), Dr. Erica Morin (S'21).

**Madison Gage:** Nursing, *Nursing Precicensure Employment and its Impact on Transition to Practice*, Dr. Susan Scott.

**Cassidy Irzyk:** English, *Outgrowing the Clothes We Used to Steal from Each Other: Sisterhood in Conversation with Little Women*, Dr. Elizabeth Starr.

**Cameron Kelleher:** Psychology, *Future Proofing a Workforce: The Importance of Selection and Training for Creative Problem Solving in Remote Employees*, Dr. Kimberly Sherman.

**Lytic Lamagdelaine:** Criminal Justice and Political Science, *Application of Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory to Youth Crime and Deviance*, Dr. Byung Jun Cho.

**Sara Liptak:** Criminal Justice and Psychology, *Child Maltreatment: Reviewing Effective Legal Practices to Psychological Well-Being*, Dr. Hui Zhang.

**Bridget Madden:** Criminal Justice and Psychology, *Police Officer – Crisis Clinician Co-Response on Mental Health Calls*, Dr. Michael George (S'22), Dr. Kimberly Tobin (F'21).

**Natalie Maslak:** Political Science, *Under the Broken Umbrella: Massachusetts State Truancy Laws and Impacts on Students With Mental Health Concerns*, Dr. Charles DiStefano.

**Marissa Mayhew:** Health Sciences, *The Effects of Meditation on Chronic Pain*, Dr. Beverly St. Pierre.

**Tess McDonald:** Psychology, *Assessing Westfield State University's Sexual Violence Prevention Program*, Dr. Lynn Shelley (S'22) and Dr. Joseph Camilleri (F'21).

**Gregory O'Connor:** Music, *Studying Jazz through Transcription*, Dr. Edward Orgill.

**Nora Olsen:** Psychology, *Better Together: Examining the Impact of Gender and Competition on Cooperation*, Dr. Princy Mennella.

**Amy O'Sullivan:** Economics and Mathematics, *Mathematics of Pricing Models*, Dr. Jesse Johnson.

**Brittany Phillip:** Business Management and Regional Planning, *Sustainability in the Fashion Industry*, Dr. Carsten Braun.

**Chase Rogers:** Athletic Training, *Does the Cutting Movement Assessment Score (CMAS) Predict Ground Reaction Forces?*, Dr. Paul Cacolice.

(Commonwealth Honors Scholars, continued on p. 11)

## 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).

**Odette Benes:** Communication

**Morgan Benoit:** Movement Science

**Paige Campano:** Criminal Justice and Ethnic and Gender Studies

**Jack Duncan:** Environmental Science and Regional Planning

**Nathan Ell:** Criminal Justice

**Travis Enders:** Criminal Justice and Psychology

**Alicia Fedele:** Criminal Justice

**Shannon George:** Criminal Justice and Social Work

**Bradley Harvey:** Elementary Education and Liberal Arts

**Kyle Hobson:** History

**Emily Knight:** Criminal Justice and Spanish

**Nicholas Lamari:** Economics and Mathematics

**Amanda Latini:** Elementary Education and Liberal Arts

**Laura Masucci:** Criminal Justice

**Lindsay McNulty:** Environmental Science

**Thomas Mespelli:** Communication

**Renee Michaud:** Health Sciences

**Katherine Pinney:** Economics and Political Science

**Johnathan Poirier:** Criminal Justice and Political Science

**Jennifer Rennich:** Movement Science

**Erin St. Germain:** Economics and Mathematics

**Hannah Swanick:** Nursing



A special Academic Excellence Award Ceremony was held in April to celebrate the 54 Honors Program scholars from the Class of 2022. Students proudly display their certificates of achievement presented by President Linda Thompson.

(Commonwealth Honors Scholars, continued from p. 10)

**Elizabeth Sears:** Communication and English, *"After the Fire,"* Beverly Army Williams, M.A., M.F.A.

**Maninder Singh:** Environmental Science and Regional Planning, *Effects of Removing Asian Bittersweet on Tree Growth,* Dr. Timothy Parshall.

**Amber Stearns:** Environmental Science and Geography, Planning and Sustainability, *Manual Removal of Winged Burning Bush (Euonymus alatus) Results in Increased Species Richness in Eastern Floodplain Forest, USA,* Dr. Lauren DiCarlo.

**Sarah Tormey:** Business Management and Economics, *How the Barriers of the Coronavirus Pandemic Show a Pressing Need for an Athletic Counselor,* Dr. Robert Chatt.

**Matthew Wandishion:** Biology, *Comparing the Gut Microbiome in Golden Retrievers Using Nanopore Sequencing,* Dr. Mao-Lun Weng.

**Alexandra West:** Health Science, *The Satisfaction of Contraception in Today's Female University Students,* Dr. Karen Sladyk.

## SPRING 2022 SENIOR HONORS PROJECT PRESENTATIONS



The Honors Program celebrated the accomplishments of a record number of Commonwealth Honors Scholars during the first week of May 2022! Students presented their Senior Honors Projects to an audience of administrators, faculty, staff, champions, and student supporters, including their committees, (pictured below and on page 13). Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor, Honors Program Chair, Dr. Ziblim Abukari, Associate Dean of the School of Health, Natural Sciences, and Human Services, and Dr. Brian Jennings, Dean of Assessment and Accreditation (pictured above from left to right) provided opening remarks to the students and audiences during the two days of presentations. Congratulations to this fantastic group of Commonwealth Honors Scholars!



# SPRING 2022 SENIOR HONORS PROJECT PRESENTATIONS



### CONGRATULATIONS, 2022 HONORS PROGRAM GRADUATES!



Odette Benes



Morgan Benoit



Eve Boyd



Morgan Briggs



Paige Campano



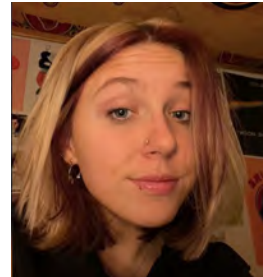
Fiona Cioch



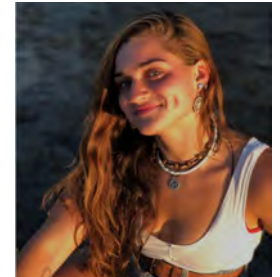
Shealynn Conway



Kaylea Cornwell



Sabrina Dawicki



Carley Devlin



Christopher DiCarlo



Josselyn Donahue



Jack Duncan



Nathan Ell



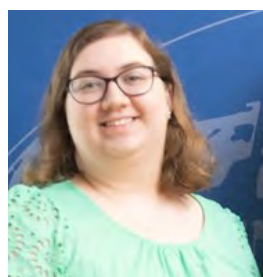
Travis Enders



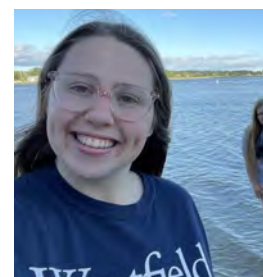
Samantha Falcone



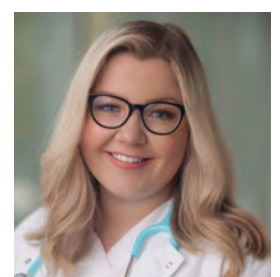
Alicia Fedele



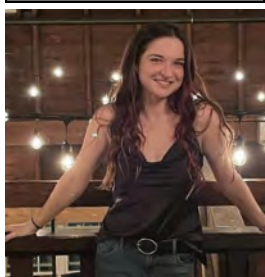
Rachel Finney



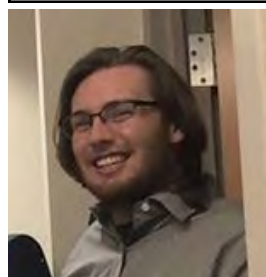
Emily Frost



Madison Gage



Shannon George



Bradley Harvey



Kyle Hobson



Cassidy Irzyk



Cameron Kelleher

### CONGRATULATIONS, 2022 HONORS PROGRAM GRADUATES!



Emily Knight



Lyric Lamagdelaine



Nicholas Lamari



Amanda Latini



Sara Liptak



Bridget Madden



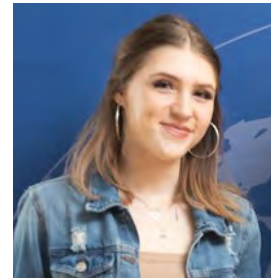
Natalie Maslak



Laura Masucci



Marissa Mayhew



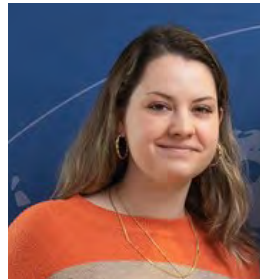
Tess McDonald



Lindsay McNulty



Thomas Mespelli



Renee Michaud



Gregory O'Connor



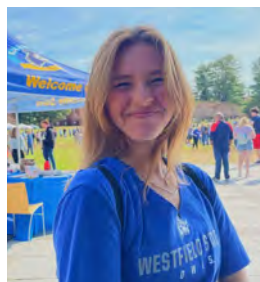
Amy O'Sullivan



Nora Olsen



Brittany Phillippo



Katherine Pinney



Jonathan Poirier



Jennifer Rennich



Chase Rogers



Elizabeth Sears



Maninder Singh



Erin St. Germain



Amber Stearns

## CONGRATULATIONS, 2022 HONORS PROGRAM GRADUATES!



Hannah Swanick



Sarah Tormey



Matthew Wandishion



Alexandra West



### WHERE TO NEXT?

#### HERE'S WHAT SOME CLASS OF 2022 HONORS SCHOLARS ARE DOING AFTER GRADUATION

##### Entering the Job Market

**Morgan Benoit** is a health and physical education teacher at Douglas High School in Douglas, MA.

**Paige Campano** is a community service officer for the Nantucket police in Nantucket, MA.

**Sabrina Dawicki** is doing farm management at Pignatere's Farm in Westfield, MA.

**Carley Devlin** is an oncology nurse at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston, MA.

**Samantha Falcone** is an extraction technician at Pace Analytical Laboratories.

**Rachel Finney** is a public relations intern at Terra-Americana.

**Emily Frost** is an office assistant at HealthDrive.

**Madison Gage, R.N.** is a labor and delivery room nurse at Trinity Health - Mercy Medical Center in Springfield, MA.

**Cameron Kelleher** is a management analyst with ICF, a global consulting technology service.

**Amanda Latini** is a waitress at 550 Tavern in Halifax, MA.

**Sara Liptak** is a waitress at Cracker Barrel. Sara plans to attend law school after taking a gap year.

**Alexandra West** is a medical assistant.

**Amy O'Sullivan** is a state and local government assistant at KPMG.

**Chase Rogers** is an athletic trainer at Essex North Shore Technical and Agricultural High School in Danvers, MA. Chase is also pursuing a Masters of Science in Exercise and Sport Science at Merrimack College in North Andover, MA.

**Elizabeth Sears, Valedictorian of the Class of 2022**, is a writer at BusinessWest Magazine in Springfield, MA.

**Hannah Swanick** is a health team nurses aide at Camp Nellie Huckins in Freedom, NH.

**Alexandra West** is a medical scribe at AIANE.

##### Starting Graduate School

**Josselyn Donahue** is enrolled in the Medical Assistant Certificate Program at Bristol Community College.

**Nathan Ell** is enrolled in the CJ 4+1 Program at Westfield State University.

**Bradley Harvey** is enrolled in the Accelerated Dual Degree Program at Westfield State University.

**Kyle Hobson** is pursuing a Masters in Education: Teaching and Curriculum at Fitchburg State University.

**Cassidy Irzyk** is pursuing a Juris Doctorate at Western New England School of Law.

**Emily Knight** is pursuing a Masters in Homeland Security with a concentration in counterterrorism at Penn State.

**Lyric Lamagdelaine** is pursuing a Masters in Political Science at Northeastern University.

**Natalie Maslak** is pursuing a Juris Doctorate at Western New England School of Law.

**Nora Olsen** is pursuing a Masters in Mental Health Counseling at Westfield State University.

##### SEND US YOUR NEWS!

