



# The Squirrel Squire

Volume 14, Issue 2      Spring 2023



## Northeast Regional Honors Council Conference



### *Experience at NRHC Conference 2023*

This year's Northeast Regional Honors Council (NRHC) Conference was certainly an experience to remember. Alongside Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor, Honors Program Area Chair, eight Westfield State Honors Program students traveled to Pittsburgh, PA to present their research and take part in the activities that the NRHC Conference Committee and Student Reps planned for us. Upon our arrival, we checked into the hotel and got our conference name badges. Hungry from our travels, we wasted no time venturing into the city to find a restaurant for

dinner. Our waitress could clearly tell that we were not from Pittsburgh after seeing our shocked expressions when our burgers came out with french fries and coleslaw in it. We then rushed across the oldest steel bridge in the United States back to our hotel, because our Student Reps had planned a Jeopardy Trivia Night for us. It was much more competitive than we expected, but we were there for a good time and for the delicious cookies! They were so good, some of us may have smuggled a few home on the plane... Morning came quickly, and the

conference began in full swing. At breakfast we listened to the City as Text Opening Address given by Dr. Tom Morton, an art and architectural historian in the University of Pennsylvania's Department of the History of Art. He told us that in September of 2021, the governing body of the East Liberty Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh voted to remove the image of Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, prominent Confederate general, from a large stained glass window in the church. Dr. Morton prefaced his address by telling us that, "as co-chair of the church's

task force, I will present an overview of the evidence for the inclusion of Jackson in the window, reasons for its removal, and a path forward for this progressive, inclusive, and diverse church." Perhaps the most important takeaway from his talk is that **SYMBOLS MATTER**. Having this image in a church that stands for inclusivity and diversity is counterproductive, and it is important to not turn a blind eye. Approximately three weeks before Dr. Morton spoke to us, the image of General Jackson was covered by solid blue glass (intentionally blank) to

*NRHC cont. from page 1*

simultaneously acknowledge our history and to align with the church's progressive values. Dr. Morton's address was equally engaging and inspiring.

One of the conference highlights was our City as Text experience, an opportunity to explore the city while contextualizing what we were learning. The majority of Westfield Honors students chose to visit the Andy Warhol Museum. For Honors student Caitlyn Pellerin, this was a highlight: "Exploring the city with my friends and Dr. Sackett-Taylor was so much fun, especially enjoying art at the Andy Warhol Museum. Despite the rainy weather we made the best of our time in Pittsburgh." It was an incredible afternoon learning Warhol's story and legacy on the art and film communities, as well as the LGBTQIA+ community. Honors student Daniel Currier echoed Pellerin's sentiments about the day: "My favorite experience was exploring the city of Pittsburgh as part of the City as Text segment. I

was able to connect with the city that hosted us and enjoy some delicious food in the process."

Next, we enjoyed lunch and stopped for a few souvenirs on the way back to our hotel. We had a brief time to recharge and regroup before attending the banquet and hearing the keynote address given by journalist Tony Norman. We also attended the student art show and were amazed by all of the talent in the room. At the end of the evening, we got together to debrief about our day and then headed to bed early in preparation for the student presentations in the morning.

Presenting our research was definitely a favorite aspect of the trip among our group! Honors student Haley Kane spoke to this when she said that "NRHC was awesome! I loved being able to discuss my service internship and hear about how other Honors Programs are incorporating service work! I was inspired and have a lot of new ideas to share!" Honors student Brianna Toomey also enjoyed this portion of the

conference: "I am so appreciative of the Honors Program for providing this opportunity to travel to Pittsburgh to present our research. After working on this project for so long, I was grateful to present and share about my topic. The NRHC Conference was the perfect place to discuss and have conversations about my research with other students and Honors mentors. I got to ask and learn so much about their projects as well." The presenters were given the option of four different formats to share their information, including a poster, a presentation, an idea exchange, and a roundtable discussion. Westfield State students had at least one presentation in each of these formats. After cheering on our classmates, it was also impactful to attend the presentations of other Honors students from across the Northeast! I was so impressed to see the caliber of research that was done on such unique and often interdisciplinary topics.

There was a break between the morning and afternoon sessions for the Presidential

Luncheon during which we were able to discuss favorite presentations that we had attended thus far. We were then offered to have a professional headshot taken to be used for our LinkedIn profiles and other professional development platforms.

After attending the rest of the Saturday presentations, our Honors Program celebrated our successes by taking us to dinner at the Hard Rock Café where we enjoyed live music, rock band memorabilia, good food and good company. It was a lovely way to debrief the day, and to celebrate Abdullah Arshad's 21st birthday! We celebrated with the biggest ice cream sundaes that we have ever seen, and a restaurant-wide song.

Finally, we rushed back to the hotel for our final event of the day, the Student Gala! We all got dressed up and went to the hotel ballroom, which our Student Reps had decorated in a red carpet theme. We had such a fun night dancing, talking with other Honors students, and taking photos.

*NRHC cont. on page 3*

NRHC cont. from page 2

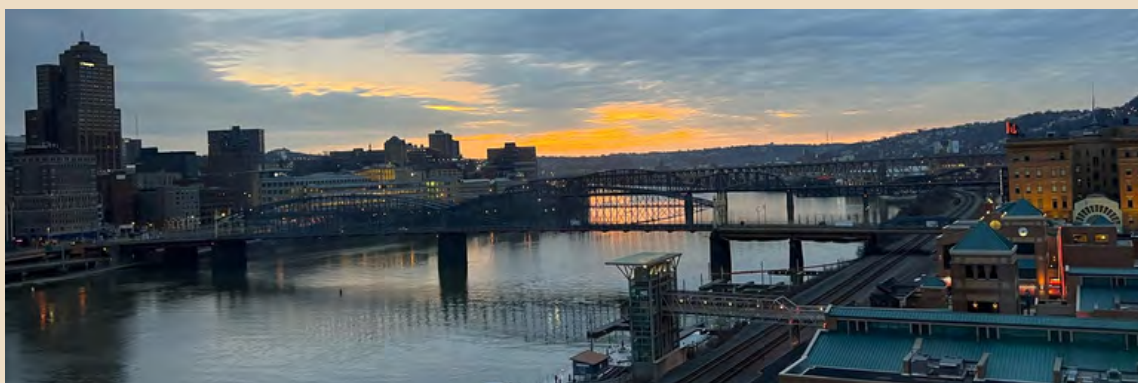
On our last day in Pittsburgh, we woke up early to enjoy a quick breakfast and more poster presentations. The second day of research was as high quality as the first, and we all found ourselves engaged in meaningful conversations with the presenters. The passion in the room was evident, making it a very special experience. After the awards and closing ceremony, we reluctantly packed our bags and hopped in an Uber to the airport, watching the city disappear out the car windows.

I know that I speak for everyone when I say that this experience is one that we will never forget. Honors student Khi Bowen summarized his experience by saying, "I enjoyed interacting with members from neighboring Honors Programs while learning about their research. This was a great opportunity to decompress from school while staying connected with my academic studies."

Interested in presenting at next year's conference?

Keep an eye on your WSU email for more information about the application process.

*Written by Kaitlyn Egan  
Class of 2024  
Majoring in Criminal Justice  
and English  
with a minor in Sociology  
Hometown: Sutton, MA*



*Abdullah Arshad, Samantha Biseinere, Mekhi Bowen, Daniel Currier, Kaitlyn Egan, Haley Kane, Caitlyn Pellerin, Brianna Toomey, and Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor, Honors Program Area Chair, traveled in early April to Pittsburgh, PA for the annual NRHC Conference. The students presented their research, explored the city, and conversed with students, faculty, and administrators as they made lifelong memories during their time at the conference.*

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## Publication Contributors

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Alumni Contributor: Rachel Finney

Faculty/Staff Contributors: Dr. Vanessa Holford Diana, Dr. Anthony Furnelli, Dr. Erica (Morin) Kelliher, Dr. Nicholas Morrison, and Dr. Robert Thornton.

## Our Beginnings

Our newsletter's name, *The Squirrel Squire*, came to be in 2010 when Kylie Bleau (now Westfield State Honors Program Alumnus) won the Honors Newsletter Title Contest. She named the newsletter after the Honors Program mascot, the black squirrel.

*"You see them everywhere on campus. If you come from another part of Massachusetts [or out of state], this may be your first encounter. It's likely that your friends from home think you are kidding when you tell them about Westfield's famous black squirrels. According to Wikipedia, 'black squirrels were introduced to Stanley Park in Westfield, Massachusetts, in 1948, having been brought from Michigan as a gift to a local businessman.' No matter their origin, black squirrels are unique inhabitants of the Westfield area and we are proud to have them as our mascot."*

*Quote from Volume I, Issue I of The Squirrel Squire Published in the Spring of 2010*

## Follow us on Social Media!



LinkedIn

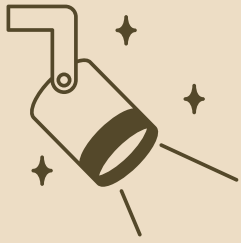


Instagram

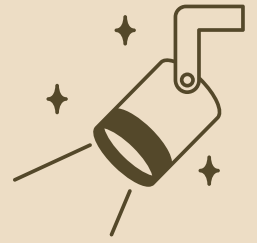


Youtube





## Honors Alumni Spotlight



### *Publishing Poetry (and other art) for Dummies*

Since graduating from Westfield State in May of 2022, I've sent in 64 submissions to literary magazines, hoping to get my poetry published. I've gotten six acceptances already across five different magazines. When *The Squirrel Squire* reached out to me about writing a piece on my submissions experience, I thought it would be fun to look back at a few of my published pieces and talk about the strategies I've learned that helped get them published so quickly. My hope is that you can take these techniques and explore how they apply to your own art and publication process (whether it's writing or something else!).

**One: Reuse and recycle.** Like every poet, I've reread my few-years-old work and cringed so hard I cramped my neck. Sometimes, I've given into that feeling and deleted the poems, but now I'm here to tell you not to destroy your

teenage villanelles about being emo.

My poem "An Intrepid Mapmaker Lost in Ancient Ruins" was originally written years ago. It was a short, underdeveloped piece which interpreted the lasting memory of a person who hurt me as them forever walking within my veins. Though it had an interesting (if melodramatic) premise and an edgy last line, the overall piece was bland.

But when I saw a submissions call for an issue themed around abandoned places, something clicked. My veins weren't just veins—they were an abandoned labyrinth. This person wasn't just a person—they were a cartographer, dedicated to exploring and mapping that maze. Suddenly, the poem had a metaphorical image to rest on and a defined tone. I sent the revised piece out to that themed issue, and it was accepted. This experience taught me

that old pieces, even cringe-worthy ones, always have room to grow. It's important to keep yourself open to that possibility and resist the urge to set fire to your Google Drive folder.

**Two: Be picky.** I know you've been told plenty of times to review submission opportunities carefully and make sure your work fits the press. But I want to reiterate this, because when searching for your first publication, you'll probably feel the urge to apply for literally every submissions call you see. I'm casting a wide net, so I'll definitely catch something, right? Well, you may want to look where you've cast that net, because half of it may just be sitting on the shore.

I wrote "A poem for mid-March" to explore seasonal depression and celebrate the way I feel at the start of springtime. When I was ready to send it out, I looked

specifically for journals with natural theming/drama prompts. The poem found its home within five submissions. Admittedly, it's not always so clear cut as finding an eco-focused journal or an issue themed after flowers. You may have to read a few previous issues of a magazine, explore their social media, and deeply analyze the color palette of their website to determine whether your work matches what they're going for. You're going to feel like this time would be better spent writing, or revising, or taking a nap. By doing that legwork upfront, though, I promise you're likely to get published faster than if you just rapid-fire applied for everything on Submittable.

**Three: Two Truths and a Lie.** A lot of poets rely on biographical experiences to inspire their work. True stories can be a great springboard for poetry, but the reality is that

*Publishing Poetry cont. on page 7*

*Publishing Poetry cont. from page 6*

they do not often fit a unified, poetic narrative. Authors that only work within the bounds of real life can sometimes find their writing isn't as strong as it could be, but they can't put a finger on why.

When I was writing "Theoretical," a poem about my relationship to my queer identity, I rested most of the piece on an experience I had in high school. But the first draft of the poem simply wasn't cohesive. After some internal wrestling with the concept of 'truth,' I decided to tweak some of the details so that they would tie into the piece more smoothly. For example, I switched the setting from math class to science class, which helped me more weave in the metaphor of my identity as "an untested hypothesis." Through changes like this, the inclusion of this life story suddenly felt meaningful to the poem rather than just relevant. Remember, folks, we differentiate the speaker from the author for a reason.

**To Conclude:** If you only listen to one suggestion from this article, it should be this: take a look at the pieces you're proudest of and really analyze why they

really analyze why they work. You may find a single underlying thread across all of them, or you may realize that each one has its own secret sauce. Either way, identifying the techniques you've used to succeed will allow you to consciously apply them to your other pieces. The three tips I've outlined have helped me immensely as I continue to write, revise, and submit. I hope you'll find use for them too, but I hope even more that you find your own strategies, unique to your art. They, along with consistency, focus, and a little bit of pixie dust, will become your recipe for success.

*If you'd like to read the pieces discussed in this article or explore Rachel's other published work, you can access links for them through the Publications tab on her website, [rachelmcfinney.wordpress.com](http://rachelmcfinney.wordpress.com). All pieces are free to read online, and some are also available for purchase in their respective issues. Consider buying a copy to support indie magazines (largely run by dedicated volunteers) and discover other up-and-coming artists and authors.*

*Written by Rachel Finney  
Class of 2022  
Westfield State University  
Commonwealth Honors Scholar*

*Rachel's Poem "A Poem for Mid-March"  
published in Tiny Seed Literary Journal:  
Nature-Inspired Poetry, Prose,  
Photography and Art*

I am like a crocus coming in—  
breaking from the dirt and  
breathing.

I don't know how crocuses sleep through  
the storms, and  
the snow, and  
every short, dark day—  
the same ones I  
can barely make it through.

I don't know if I'll ever learn their secret.  
I think every winter,  
I will have to trudge through the snow  
and wait  
and watch  
for the first hint of green  
in the mulch beds.

But the crocuses are coming in.  
The crocuses are coming in,  
and so am I.  
The crocuses are coming in,  
and I am a duck in a pond,  
or a picnic with a bento box,  
or a lemon-yellow notebook  
filled with poetry.



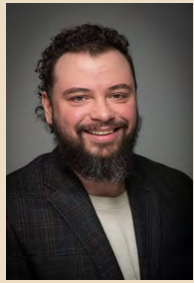
**TINY SEED LITERARY JOURNAL**  
nature-inspired poetry, prose, photography and art



# Celebrating HAC Professionals



*The Honors Advisory Committee (HAC), established by the All-College Committee, is the steering committee for the Honors Program. The membership consists of the Honors Program Area Chair and Administrative Assistant, MSCA union faculty and librarians, an administrator, an ex-officio administrator, and students from the Student Honors Association E-board. The committee meets monthly during the fall and spring semesters to discuss and vote on a wide range of issues including course approvals, curriculum updates, policies, recruitment, and events. HAC members also volunteer to serve as Third Readers on Senior Honors Project (SHP) committees. Below, members explain what motivates them to participate in HAC:*



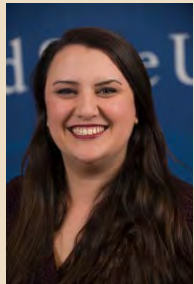
Dr. Robert Thornton

Director of the Office of Academic Advising and Transfer Transition

Joined HAC in 2020

*"My duties on HAC include serving on the Curriculum and Advising subcommittee and the Honors Admissions review team for the Class of 2027 Honors Cohort."*

*"HAC is important to me because I appreciate the privilege of advocating for student success and engagement."*



Dr. Erica (Morin) Kelliher

Associate Professor of History

Joined HAC in 2014

*"I teach a variety of US History courses each semester and I have taught a few upper-level interdisciplinary Honors seminars in the past. I actually have an upcoming course on the History of Names in Spring 2024. I also get to advise most of the history majors that are in the Honors Program. I absolutely love serving on HAC. I am currently helping with revisions to the Honors curriculum for future students. I also helped review applications for incoming students. I love working with the Honors Program and I can't wait for my new course offering."*



Dr. Anthony Furnelli

Assistant Professor in Management and Marketing

Joined HAC in 2022

*"I teach courses in marketing, sales, event planning, and digital/social media. In the fall of 2023, I will be offering an upper-level interdisciplinary Honors seminar called Social Media: Problem or Progress? Students in this course will debate both sides of the question and consider topics related to privacy, technology, health/wellness, culture, and war/peace. I also support Honors as a member of HAC. In this committee, I am a member of the working group responsible for PLATO, the Honors SHP Manual, and the Project Archive."*

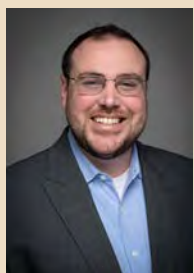


Dr. Vanessa Holford Diana

Professor of English

Joined HAC in 2011

*"This year, I'm working on the Honors Program mission and vision and the policies handbook. Serving on HAC is important to me because I want to help support the ongoing development and stewardship of the Honors Program to maximize Honors Program students' opportunities for growth and success."*



Dr. Nick Morrison

Assistant Professor of Psychology

Joined HAC in 2022

*"I've enjoyed working with the team to develop a strategic plan for the Westfield State Honors Program. I recognize how valuable my own honors education was as an undergraduate student (especially the opportunity to conduct a thesis) and want to be sure the next generation of students reap the same benefits of an honors education at Westfield State."*





# Social Justice Peer Educators Project



## *Experience of a Social Justice Peer Educator Intern*

The school I attended for my early education was a very small, private, Christian school where individuals of color were truly in the minority. It was not until 2020 after the publicized police brutality-based murders that I began to recognize my place within society. I began to recognize my blackness and what that meant for myself and those who are like me. From then on, I began working as a changing force within my school and was met with

immense pushback and resistance. Authority figures would use my age, and lack of information on the history of topics such as slavery, racism in the US, and sexism as a way to silence me into subservience. Of course, that did not work and I began to feel myself outgrowing my school. Coming to Westfield State to pursue a career in Social Work, I was very interested in joining something where I could make a change. When I was approached about

becoming a student mentor for the Social Justice Peer Education Project (SJPEP), I was a little intimidated – but also really excited. This school year, I learned more history regarding marginalized communities than I have in my entire life. Having access to history and current information has been amazing. I cannot wait to use my knowledge to fight against social injustices on campus and within the community - which in essence is what this SJPEP is all about.

We have a duty as a generation to be informed about our history, and current issues, and to change what we do not like. Social change is not something of the past. It did not die with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Susan B. Anthony, Chiune Sugihara, or Selena Quintanilla (to name a few). As long as we are breathing, we can all make a change.

*Written by Makaylah Williams  
Class of 2026  
Majoring in Social Work  
with a minor in Women and  
Gender Studies  
Hometown: Fitchburg, MA*



**Social Justice Peer Educators Project (SJPEP)**

**The Social Justice Peer Educator Project is a new endeavor on campus! We are a small cadre of students who work as anti-oppression trainers we are a campus resource for social justice.**

**It is a great opportunity to impact the campus community, gain important life and work skills, as well as help make a change.**

**Talk to an SJPEP intern for more information!**

**Email: [hcaldwell@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:hcaldwell@westfield.ma.edu)**

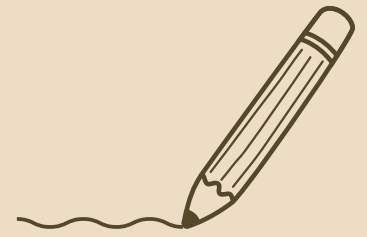


*Photos of Social Justice Peer Educator interns participating in Westfield State's Fresh Check Day in April. The SJPEP is run by Dr. Catherine Savini and Dr. H. Zahra Caldwell of the Anti-Oppression Committee.*



# Special Topics Course

## Graphic Narrative



The Special Topics: Graphic Narrative course was introduced and taught by English professor Dr. Brian Chen in the Fall 2022 semester. This was a rigorous course that focused on the validity and variability of graphic novels. During the semester, our class read eight graphic narratives. These works varied in subject matter; some were fictional while others were memoirs. Among the graphic novels that we read were: *The Best We Could Do* by Thi Bui, a memoir about the author and her family's Vietnamese background and *Aya* by Marguerite Aboutet and Clément Oubrierie, a fiction graphic novel about life on Ivory Coast, and *Mom's Cancer* by Brian Fias, about his family's experience dealing with his mother's stage 4 cancer. On top of the numerous graphic narratives we explored, we also read two textbooks about understanding the conventions of the

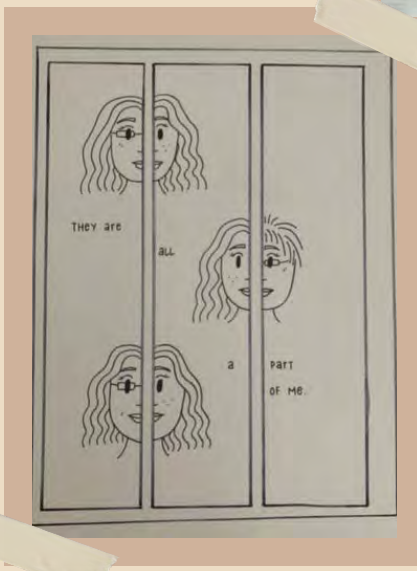
genre, such as panel to panel transitions and the use of icons. Throughout the semester, we worked individually on our own graphic novels. Creating our own graphic novel allowed us to try out the techniques that we saw in the works that we read. We each created a fiction or nonfiction graphic novel that best fit our writing preferences. In order to not get overwhelmed, we worked on drafting our graphic novels throughout the entire semester. Even those of us who did not consider ourselves artists were able to creatively express ourselves during this project. Personally, I never enjoyed drawing, but Professor Chen emphasized that our graphic novels did not need to be perfectly drawn, but rather we could use texts in combination with images, along with colors, in order to create a cohesive piece. At the end of the

semester, we presented our ideas and parts of our work to the class. This was a great opportunity to see what we all had been individually working on throughout the semester! Overall, the class expanded our knowledge of the range of the graphic novel genre and taught us about the value of storytelling through this medium.

*Written by Sadie Petta  
Class of 2023  
Majoring in English Education  
Hometown: Chicopee, MA*



*Pictured to the right is the last page from Spencer Van Tassel's graphic novel titled Camouflage.*



*Pictured to the left is a page from Ashley Bloem's graphic novel titled Mother-full.*



# Day of Dialogue



## *Experience of the Day of Dialogue Intern*

Throughout this Spring semester, I was fortunate to serve as the Honors Program Day of Dialogue intern. On Wednesday, March 8, with assistance from Professor Hillary Sackett-Taylor, Honors Program Area Chair, and others, I facilitated a discussion-based lunch as a part of the campus-wide Day of Dialogue event. The turnout was terrific. Students engaged in small group discussions while enjoying pizza and refreshments.

Conversations began by exploring one another's identities. Students shared a handful or all eight of the following identity constructs: (1) Ability, (2) Age, (3) Ethnicity, (4) Gender, (5) Race, (6) Religion, (7) Sexual Orientation, and (8) Social Class.

The group discussions then shifted focus to polarizing political and social conflicts that impact the Westfield State community, local cities, and towns, our

country, and the world. Topics included the anti-Drag Bill, reproductive rights, and the impacts of social media. Students shared their opinions, knowledge, and contributed to Venn Diagram posters. The information displayed on the posters either analyzed the pros and cons of a topic or separated out the viewpoints of Democrats and Republicans on a specific issue. Finally, students were tasked with analyzing how their own identities could perhaps influence their viewpoints on the controversial topics at hand. They documented their findings by writing a letter to themselves which will be mailed to them in two months.

Overall, the Day of Dialogue event that I co-facilitated with Dr. Sackett-Taylor was very successful as conversations were informative and, most importantly, respectful.



*Photos from the Honors portion of the Day of Dialogue*



*Written by Christopher Schoen  
Class of 2023  
Majoring in Criminal Justice and  
Political Science  
Hometown: Worcester, MA*





# Introducing Peer Mentors



Makaylah Williams

Class of 2026

Majoring in Social Work with a minor in Women and Gender Studies

Hometown: Fitchburg, MA

*"When I went through the Honors Discovery Seminar last semester, I did not feel a strong connection with those around me because my friend and I were the only people of color in the class. I want to be a sense of comfort for any new Honors student that identifies as a minority and show them that it is possible for them to achieve great things even when they may not see themselves a lot on campus."*



Joseph Bonilla

Class of 2026

Majoring in Psychology with a minor in Gerontology  
Hometown: Springfield, MA

*"For me, being a peer mentor was not only an opportunity for personal and professional growth but also an opportunity to be a representative for the communities I am from and the identities that come with them."*



Dianyeliz Ozuna-Sandoval

Class of 2026

Majoring in Social Work and Spanish

Hometown: Springfield, MA

*"What inspired me to be a peer mentor was my passion for helping others, and I hope that I can be that help and support that students look for when they need it."*



Abbey Bernier

Class of 2024

Majoring in Elementary Education with a concentration in Psychology  
Hometown: Chelmsford, MA

*"I am most looking forward to meeting all the new first-years and helping them through their first year of college!"*

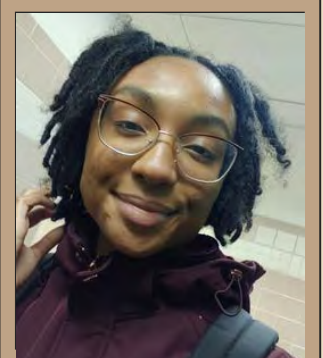


Jenna Alicea

Class of 2026

Majoring in Psychology  
Hometown: Agawam, MA

*"I wanted to take on this position because I really appreciated how the peer mentors for my class session acted as guides to any questions and concerns I had about navigating college life as well as providing support during the transition from high school to college. Additionally, I would like to offer my own help and guidance to the incoming freshmen because I was once in their shoes, as well as offer my assistance to the Honors Program in any way I can!"*

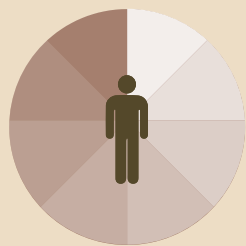


Anandi Breen

Class of 2025

Majoring in Psychology with a minor in Biology  
Hometown: Springfield/East Longmeadow, MA

*"Since I want to become a Neuropsychologist one day, I want to help guide people as best I can towards success by helping them understand themselves. What I'm most looking forward to is seeing new people of color and sharing my own experience with them to help them have a voice in a PWI (Predominantly White Institution)."*



## Upper-level Interdisciplinary Honors Seminars



### *Multicultural Views on Death and Dying*

The idea of death is something that, in American culture, seems to have such a negative connotation. For many, the end of life creates feelings of discomfort and even fear of the unknown, of what is to come next. However, death in many other cultures is perceived in different ways. This was the focus of our studies in Dr. Joan Kuhnly's *Death and Dying* upper-level interdisciplinary Honors seminar. We learned about death in other cultures through listening to guest speakers, reading, and delving into our research projects.

From the first day of class, I came in with my own perspective of death, one that was a combination of worry and fear. This idea of the unknown came from not understanding what the multifaceted process and steps are that it takes to prepare for death. Even after our first class, I began to reflect on some of the multicultural

points of view on death and dying that we were learning about.

We were fortunate to talk with many professionals who ranged from ICU nurses, organ donors, legal attorneys, to funeral home directors. One of these speakers that had great impact on our class was Andrew Jones, who was a recipient of a heart donation that saved his life after he was diagnosed with a myocardial infection. With organ donation, there are many obstacles one has to overcome, such as blood work, making sure the body doesn't reject the organ, lots of medications and hospital visits. Mr. Jones' story was inspiring to hear. We learned of the hardship that he went through to get to the top of that organ donation list and how this transplant changed his life for the better. Organ donation also creates a personal connection between the organ transplant

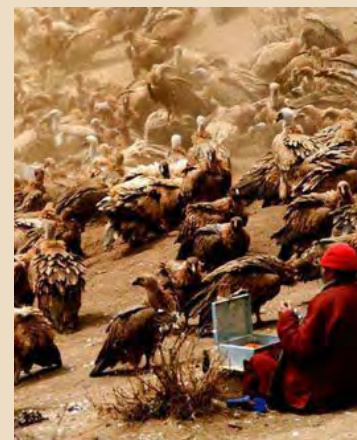
recipient and the organ donor's family because a part of their loved one is now a part of another individual. Having conversations about organ donation, body preparation, and end-of-life plans can all be difficult matters for families and physicians to discuss. Especially when family is involved, it is necessary for healthcare staff to take into account culture, religion, and varying beliefs when it comes to end-of-life decisions.

During the second half of the course, we were able to take an even deeper dive into the multicultural points of view of death by researching end-of-life beliefs in various cultures.

My research in this course focused on the burial rituals of Tibetan Buddhism, a form of the Buddhist religion practiced in Tibet and Nepal. Buddhists believe in rebirth and reincarnation in the afterlife. They spend their lifetime in deep

meditation, prayer, and acts of volunteerism to cleanse their soul. With rebirth, the burial practices of Tibet involve releasing the soul into nature so that it can be released without obstacles. Burial practices include the sky, or body consumption by vultures, water and ascending to the rivers of life, fire, and trees. Researching a different cultural group, such as Tibetan Buddhists, allowed me to make connections between my practices and other beliefs around death and dying.

*Death and Dying cont. on page 14*



*Sky Burial Ritual in Tibet  
with the Vultures*

Death and Dying cont. from page 13

This seminar has allowed me to start to think about the process of the end of life. I now have a new perspective on how to perceive death.

So many individuals: doctors, nurses, legal aids, and social workers are involved in this process to aid both the individual and their family. I have learned through this course to adopt a more widely believed notion that the end of life is a time of reflection. We should allow time for grief,

and also allow for the celebration of life.

I want to approach death as seeing all of the good that those individuals had in their lifetime. Reflecting on their legacy and embracing the approach that each life matters and their journey through life mattered and had an impact on everyone around them. Death is something that is not talked about in many cultures, but if we start to bring it into conversation, these novel ideas can be

addressed and help to calm the fears of the end of life.

So, the end of the life. An individual or team effort of support? A time of solemnity, or a time of appreciation for the life that people have lived and their experiences that touched the lives of others? You can make that decision - but by talking and learning about the practices of cultures besides your own, you can begin to see death from a new perspective.

Written by Brianna Toomey  
Class of 2024  
Majoring in Biology and  
Chemistry  
Hometown: Weymouth, MA



Andrew Jones, Guest Speaker  
and Heart Donation Recipient

## How Social Class Shapes Us

The upper-level interdisciplinary Honors seminar that I enrolled in was easily one of my favorite courses this semester. Honors 301: *How Social Class Shapes Us*, gave me a new lens from which to view people in who are seen as being from a different social classes than I am. The seminar also provided me with a better understanding of how we understand social class as a society.

Throughout the course we read a variety of academic articles regarding social class in the classroom and in

society as a whole, as well as reading three novels that dealt with common themes of social class differences.

My key takeaways from this course included having a better understanding of the different social classes, working-, middle-, and upper-class, and how people may try to act as if they are in a higher social class because societal standards tell them they will be more successful. We looked at several articles that described being part of the working class and the effect that it may have

on your education as well as on your long-term career and life goals.

Overall, I believe that this course taught me that there are certain stereotypes regarding ones' class that need to be broken in order for class differences to be set aside. I have also gained a new lens from which I can now see that things I have or words that I have said could be offensive to someone of a lower class, and that we should not assume that just because we are all attending the same university that we are

are from the same social class. I believe that this Honors seminar has not only given me new and necessary preparation that I believe many teachers do not have going into a classroom as an education major, but what I have learned has also made me more aware of how words affect others through a social class lens.

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



# SHA Events/ Executive Board



## Student Honors Association Leadership

*Thank you to our outgoing  
E-Board members for your service*

President: Cait Pellerin  
Vice President: Mackenzie Healey  
Secretary: Brianna Toomey  
Treasurer: Will Smith  
Historian and Intern for *The Squirrel Squire*: Katie Egan  
Publicity and Social Media Intern: Gwyn Smith  
Student Service Coordinator Intern: Haley Kane  
Commuter Rep: Abdullah Arshad  
HAC Reps: Mekhi Bowen, Brian Hyunh, Amanda Jefferson, Abigail Mathieu, and Cait Pellerin  
CHP Reps: Cait Pellerin and Gwyn Smith

*Welcome to our incoming  
E-Board members*

President: Cait Pellerin  
Vice President: Mackenzie Healey  
Secretary: Brianna Toomey  
Historian: Fatimah Naser  
Publicity and Social Media Intern: Abdullah Arshad  
Intern for *The Squirrel Squire*: Austin Sullivan  
Class of 2024 Reps: Haley Kane and Kylie Jones  
Class of 2025, 2026, and 2027 Reps: Open  
Commuter Rep: Open  
HAC Reps: Open  
CHP Reps: Open

As your new SHA E-Board, we are looking forward to welcoming you to the Honors Program and Westfield State and to planning fun and informative events together with you!

The Student Honors Association (SHA) serves to foster community among students in the Honors Program and to provide information and resources to students interested in applying to the Honors Program. We host social events, academic workshops, and peer advising sessions for our members, as well as facilitate opportunities for Honors students to engage in local community service, encourage student participation in the Northeast Regional Honors Conference, and build connections with Honors students at other state institutions through the Commonwealth Honors Council. All Westfield State Honors students are automatically members of SHA.



*Photos from SHA Events this Semester: Spilling the Tea, PJ's and Wii Party, and End-of-Year Ice Cream Social*



# Honors Students in Athletics



## *Honors Student-Athlete Profiles*



*Jennifer Diamond*

I have been playing soccer since I was 5 years old and over the last 17 years, I have learned so much more than I thought was possible. Soccer has taught me so many important life lessons about patience, teamwork, leadership, and many more. Being captain of my high school team as well as my club team allowed me to step up and find my voice on and off the field while also learning what makes a good leader. I was very nervous as a freshman about trying to balance school and soccer, but I soon learned that being organized and keeping a routine were the keys to my success as a student athlete. I am forever grateful for having had the opportunity to continue my soccer career at Westfield State and for the friendships and experiences the team has given me.

*Written by Jennifer Diamond  
Class of 2023*

*Majoring in Mathematics and Economics  
Hometown: Millbury, MA*



*Collin O'Brien*

I remember being in high school and knowing that I wanted to continue to pursue my athletic career after graduation. I reached out to Coach Evans at Westfield State and soon I was lacing my boots up again to play the sport that I love...soccer. Fast forward two years and I am a junior goalie on the Westfield State Men's Soccer team. Being able to still play soccer at a competitive level is such a privilege. I love the competition, hard work required to succeed, and the structure it provides to my schedule. I have been playing soccer since I was 4 years old and the sport means a lot to me. To me soccer means dedication, fighting to represent our school well, and to defend my teammates like they are my own family. While playing at Westfield State my leadership skills have grown as well. I learned how to cooperate with my teammates to strategically win games, communicate effectively with coaches, and properly take criticism from my team in order to better my game. Make no mistake, playing soccer takes a team effort and I am beyond blessed to be able to have such an amazing team by my side! Roll State!

*Written by Collin O'Brien  
Class of 2024*

*Majoring in Criminal Justice  
with a minor in Sociology  
Hometown: Windsor Locks, CT*



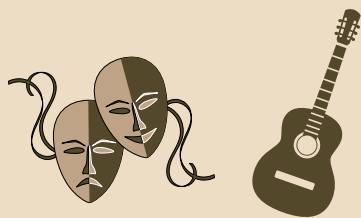
*Christopher Schoen*

I have played baseball my entire life, and playing at Westfield State has been an incredible experience. During my college career, baseball has served as an outlet from schoolwork and other stresses, taught me valuable lessons, and created a lifetime of friendships. However, it can be a struggle at times, especially the commitment to both physical and mental grinds. Balancing classes and studying around a baseball schedule presents another challenge, but the time management and organization skills I have learned the past four years will serve me exponentially in the future. Most importantly, baseball has expanded my leadership skills. Similar to the Honors Program, baseball has guided me through dedication, passion, and team work to meet goals which I have set forth. The process in achieving these goals has boosted my confidence and enhanced my abilities as a leader.

*Written by Christopher Schoen  
Class of 2023*

*Majoring in Criminal Justice and  
Political Science  
Hometown: Worcester, MA*





# Honors in the Arts



## Student-Artist Profile



*Jenna Van Hying*

My name is Jenna Van Hying and I'm a junior music therapy major with minors in Spanish and Psychology. I'll be "graduating" in the Spring of 2024 but will only get my degree after my 6-month internship has concluded. I've been playing guitar since I was 7 years old and singing as long as I can remember. Playing and listening to music always gives me so much joy; I love performing with and for people and seeing how music can create connections. I loved being in musical ensembles like chorus, which is where I made some of my longest

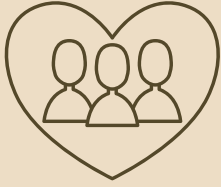
lasting friendships. In high school, I became involved in the music program and with music extracurriculars. Simultaneously, I became very involved in various types of community service and volunteering, and thus my love of working with people was really solidified. I hadn't thought of trying to combine these passions until my high school chorus teacher suggested music therapy. I did some research and observed sessions in an elementary special education classroom and became interested in learning more. Music therapy is

(generally) the use of music as the main tool in a therapeutic relationship between a client and a credentialed music therapist. It's a profession that can provide services to a wide range of clients, which includes all age ranges from premature infants to older adults in hospice. There are music therapists that work in psychiatric, medical, educational, and rehabilitation settings, and more. It's a growing profession and the demand for music therapists is larger than the current body of professionals. Settings that I am personally very interested in working in are schools

and homes, with children with and without disabilities, pediatric palliative and medical care, and NICU (neonatal ICU). Music is a powerful expressive and communicative tool and it's amazing to see how it can bridge the gap between people, and what is felt versus what is verbally expressed.

*Written by Jenna Van Hying  
Class of 2024  
Majoring in Music Therapy,  
with minors in Psychology and  
Spanish  
Hometown: Franklin, MA*





## Community Service Coordinator



### *Experience as the Community Service Coordinator Intern*

My name is Haley Kane and this semester I was the Honors Program Student Service Coordinator Intern. I also held this internship position last semester, and I was excited to continue my work of incorporating service into the Honors Program. This semester the biggest project was connecting with service partners. I was able to connect with Kate Chicorka, the director of the Westfield Soup Kitchen. We met a few times to discuss ways that Honors students could volunteer there. The Westfield Soup Kitchen has been serving meals to the residents of Westfield for over thirty years! All residents are welcomed, no judgment and no questions asked. The soup kitchen simply wants to help those who are in need of a meal. They would love volunteers to help with grocery shopping, serving meals, and cleaning up after meals. I'm hoping to start

volunteering at the Westfield Soup Kitchen soon as a lot of my service work is around hunger, an issue that I am passionate about.

I also connected with Victoria Connor, the managing director at Stanley Park which is right near campus! Stanley Park would love more volunteers to help with office work such as filing info sheets for handouts and packages, organizing tickets, and folding park maps. Victoria is hoping to create a specific volunteer program at Stanley Park in the near future and would love Westfield State students to be involved. I am would interested in volunteering at Stanley Park as I feel it is a huge part of our Westfield State community.

Westfield Soup Kitchen and Stanley Park are the two service partners I have secured for now, but as our Honors service program expands, we would love to work with more organizations. Additionally, I worked

on a service certificate initiative. When Honors students complete at least six hours of service with one of our partners, they are awarded an Honors Program Certificate of Service; a great resume line.

This semester I attended the Northeast Regional Honors Council (NRHC) Conference in Pittsburgh, PA, where I presented about my service coordinator internship and the work I have done thus far. This was an amazing opportunity as I got to have discussions with Honors students and directors from across the Northeast. I heard about the many ways that Honors Programs incorporate service and I felt so inspired. The service ideas I learned about included hosting a Veterans Day breakfast, participating in service work at local partnerships in both fall and spring semesters, and participating in service work regarding Earth Day.

I also learned that some Honors Programs have service committees that run projects based on their interests such as hunger, animal shelters, and youth. These are all excellent ideas, and I hope that we can continue to expand our service opportunity offerings for Westfield State Honors students!

I am very grateful to have served as the Service Coordinator Intern and to be helping to establish a service program for Honors students at Westfield State!



*Haley presenting on her Honors Program Service Coordinator internship at the NRHC Conference*

*Written by Haley Kane  
Class of 2024  
Majoring in Elementary Education and Psychology with a minor in Spanish  
Hometown: Franklin, MA*



# Circle K 50th Anniversary



## *WSU Circle K International Celebrates 50 Years*

This year I served as the President of our Westfield State Circle K club. Circle K International is a college-level organization that focuses on service, leadership, and fellowship. We are involved with the Kiwanis family. Kiwanis International is the adult group; Circle K clubs work closely with Kiwanis clubs. I loved being club president and am so proud of all the work that we accomplished! Our proudest accomplishment is hosting our fiftieth anniversary celebration here at Westfield State. The event took place on Saturday, April 8, 2023 in Scanlon Banquet Hall. Among those in attendance were Dr. Linda Thompson, President of Westfield State, and Michael Freeman, the president's Chief of Staff. We also had past and current Westfield State Circle K members, Westfield State alumni, Westfield Kiwanians,

and Circle K members and Kiwanians from throughout the district. Our family and friends were also at the event to celebrate with us. During welcoming remarks, I spoke about my experience as a member of Circle K. Gwyn Smith, Vice President of Circle K, also spoke about her experience in the club. President Thompson spoke about the importance of volunteer work, especially for college students. Our Westfield Kiwanis President Lesley Lambert talked about the connection between Westfield Circle K and Westfield Kiwanis. The incoming Westfield State Circle K president, Amber Tucker, spoke about Circle K and her goals for the upcoming year. We watched the video that the Circle K International president Tyler Kearns made in recognition of our achievement, followed by a slideshow of photos from throughout the years.

Plus, our Kiwanis advisor Ken Magarian shared numerous flyers, posters, and pictures from past years. We also displayed photos submitted by invitees as well as their quotes about their experiences in Circle K.

A movie basket raffle served as our fundraiser for Camp Sunshine, one of our district projects. Camp Sunshine, located in Maine, is a non-profit organization that provides a place for families with children who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness. Founded in 1984, retreats are offered year round at no cost to the families, thanks to donors and volunteers. At our event, we raised \$180. I thank everyone who supported our raffle fundraiser.

It was special to be with everyone and especially wonderful to hear many Circle K alumni reflect on their involvement in Circle K while at Westfield State.

It was an amazing event and I'm so proud of how it turned out.

Here's to another wonderful fifty years of service, leadership, and fellowship!

*Written by Haley Kane  
Class of 2024*

*Majoring in Elementary  
Education and Psychology,  
with a minor in Spanish  
Hometown: Franklin, MA*



*Haley with Dr. Thompson,  
President of Westfield State*



*Haley with George and Geana  
Delisle, Westfield Kiwanians*



# Honors Program Research Symposium and Alumni Event



On Saturday, April 22 the Honors Program held their inaugural Honors Research Symposium. This event was a combination of Honors events that are typically held each academic year. The day consisted of Senior Honors Project presentations and the Awards Ceremony where graduating Commonwealth and University Honors Scholars were presented a cord and pin to wear at commencement in recognition of their academic achievement. After the Awards Ceremony, we hosted an Alumni Networking Event at Great Awakening Brewery in Westfield.

This was a special day for families, friends, and champions of our seniors to come together to celebrate their accomplishments.

Westfield State guests of honor included President Linda Thompson, Provost Juline Mills, and Associate Provost Brian Jennings, who



*Jankaleishka Burgos Cruz presenting her Art Exhibit*

welcomed our guests, attested to the rewards of participating in the Honors Program, and congratulated our graduates.

Sixteen seniors presented their projects on a wide range of topics. There was also a beautiful art exhibit created by Jankaleishka Burgos Cruz as a part of her Senior Honors Project. As a rising senior, I found it to be a rewarding experience to witness the hard work that my fellow Honors students put into their projects and to be able to see the various forms that a Senior Honors Project can take.

Carly Thibodeau was the keynote speaker at our luncheon. Carly, a Class of 2020 Westfield State Commonwealth Honors Scholar, is now

the Associate Director of Sustainability at Endicott College in Beverly, MA. During her keynote, Carly shared experiences from completing her Senior Honors Project. It was inspiring to hear a recent alumnus talk about her experiences after leaving the nest and how her Senior Honors Project had an impact on the career she holds today.

The final event of the day was held off campus at the Great Awakening Brewery in Westfield. This was a great opportunity for current students and alumni to connect. We had over 20 alumni attend, as well as past Honors Program chairs Dr. Ricki Kantrowitz, Dr. Glen Brewster, and Dr. Vanessa Diana, current chair Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor, and Westfield State President Dr. Linda Thompson. Everybody was able to enjoy great food and great company.

Overall the research symposium was a great day and I'm so happy that I was able to attend.

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





*Photos from the Honors Research Symposium and Awards Ceremony in University Hall and the Alumni Event at Great Awakening Brewery*



# Honors Graduating Seniors



## *Commonwealth Honors Scholars*

*Rhenna Barry*  
Nursing

*Samantha Biseinere*  
Health Sciences, Biology

*Madeline Borowski*  
English

*Jankaleishka Burgos Cruz*  
Psychology

*Madeleine Carey*  
Psychology, Criminal Justice

*Annalise Cramer*  
Biology, Mathematics

*Irene Dimitroglou*  
Nursing

*Rodney Duteau*  
Political Science, Communication

*Rawan Ebrahim*  
Nursing, Spanish

*Nicole Erikson*  
Elementary Education, Liberal Arts

*Emily Fluet*  
Political Science, Communication

*Cameron Ganong*  
Criminal Justice, Political Science

*Lauren Gray*  
Psychology, Criminal Justice

*Ziyah Johnston*  
English

*Hunter Jordan*  
Communication

*Aaron Lessing*  
Political Science, Criminal Justice

*Bryan Miranda*  
Criminal Justice

*Holden Nelson*  
Chemistry, Mathematics

*Sadie Petta*  
English

*Hannah Robins*  
Elementary Education, Liberal Arts

*Nathan Solitario*  
Psychology

*Autumn Tomao*  
Criminal Justice, Psychology

### *What is a Commonwealth Honors Scholar?*

*The designation of Commonwealth Honors Scholar is awarded to students who complete a minimum of four Honors courses (at least one upper-level interdisciplinary 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).*



# Honors Graduating Seniors



## University Honors Scholars

*Nicholas Abbott*  
Movement Science

*Margaret Ahern*  
Communication

*Erik Backman*  
Criminal Justice

*Riley Bourgoin*  
Psychology

*Amelia Brown*  
Early Childhood Education,  
Liberal Arts

*Hannah Burns*  
Nursing

*Michaella Cesarini*  
Elementary Education, Liberal Arts

*Laurel Colabella*  
Psychology

*Nina Cushinsky*  
Management

*Joshua Dangora*  
Business Management

*Valerie De Jesus*  
Biology

*Vincent De la Cruz*  
Movement Science

*Marion Devoti*  
Elementary Education, Liberal Arts

*Levi Ekstrom*  
Criminal Justice,  
Ethnic and Gender Studies

*Emily Geddes*  
Biology

*Lindsey Genatossio*  
Communication

*Cindy Gonzalez Paulino*  
Business Management

*Cassidy Harvey*  
Psychology

*Britney Jackson*  
Mathematics

*Marissa Jacob*  
Movement Science

*Griffin Kennedy*  
Economics

*Rachel Lagasse*  
Psychology

*Lisha Lopez*  
Early Childhood Education, Spanish

*Rachel Manning*  
Criminal Justice, Psychology

*Julia Maryanski*  
Health Sciences

*Allysha Miolla*  
Elementary Education, Liberal Arts

*Elizabeth Naff*  
Movement Science

*Christopher North*  
Regional Planning

*Julia Radziewicz*  
Marketing

*Evan Rankin*  
Business Management

*Julia Roe*  
Nursing

*Kathleen Ryan*  
Nursing

*Christopher Schoen*  
Criminal Justice, Political Science

*Abigail Steinman*  
Nursing

*Sarah Tanner*  
Nursing

*Spencer Van Tassel*  
English

*Kelsie Warner*  
Health Sciences

*Lauren Ziino*  
Elementary Education, Liberal Arts

### What is a University Honors Scholar?

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

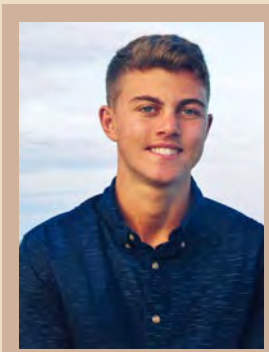


*Commonwealth and University Honors Scholars and Dr. Sackett-Taylor at the Honors Research Symposium and Awards Ceremony*





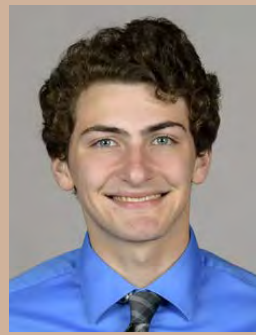
# Congratulations Class of 2023!



*Nicholas Abbott*



*Margaret Ahearn*



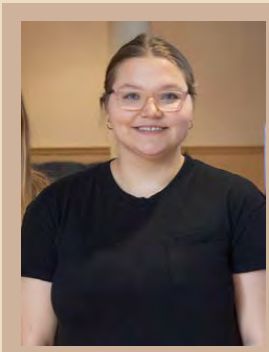
*Erik Backman*



*Rhenna Barry*



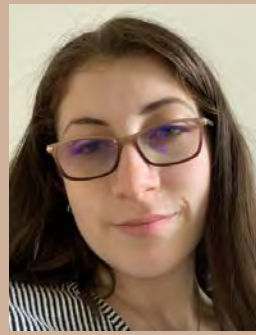
*Samantha Biseinere*



*Madeline Borowski*



*Riley Bourgojn*



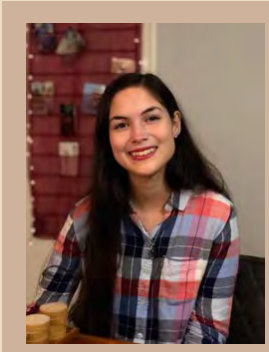
*Amelia Brown*



*Jankaleishka Burgos Cruz*



*Hannah Burns*



*Madeleine Carey*



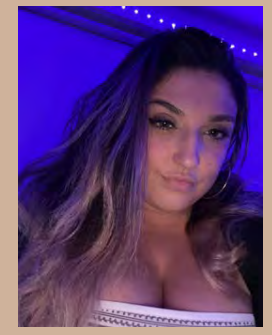
*Michaella Cesarini*



*Laurel Colabella*



*Annalise Cramer*



*Nina Cushinsky*



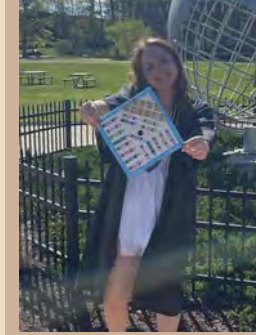
*Joshua Dangora*



*Valerie De Jesus*



*Vincent De la Cruz*



*Marion Devoti*



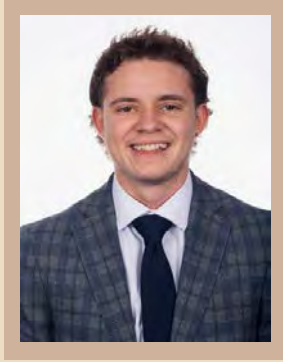
*Irene Dimitroglou*



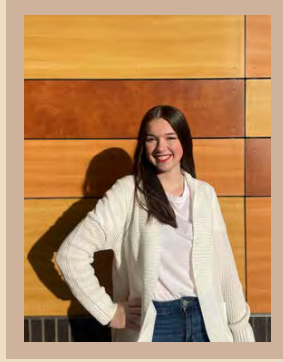
Rodney Duteau



Rawan Ebrahim



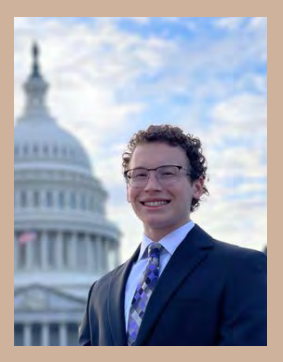
Levi Ekstrom



Nicole Erickson



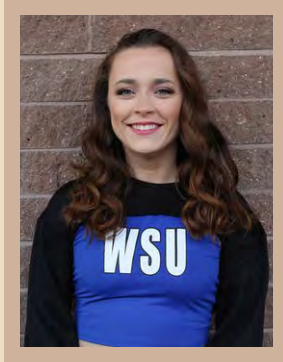
Emily Fluet



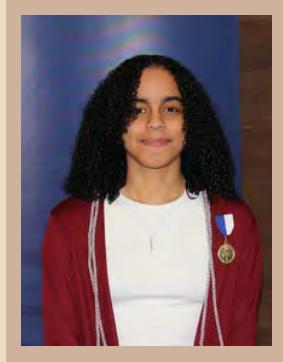
Cameron Ganong



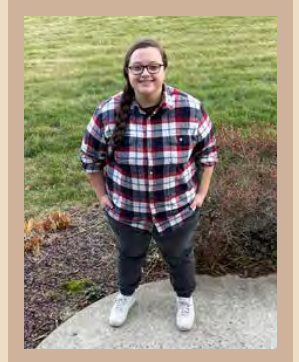
Emily Geddes



Lindsey Genatossio



Cindy Gonzalez Paulino



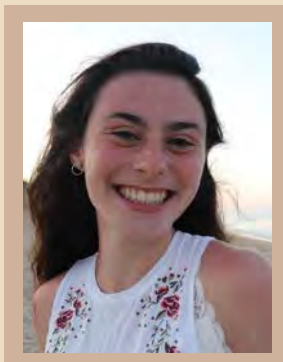
Lauren Gray



Cassidy Harvey



Britney Jackson



Marissa Jacob



Ziyah Johnston



Hunter Jordan



Griffin Kennedy



Rachel Lagasse



Aaron Lessing



Lisha Lopez



CONGRATULATIONS





*Rachel Manning*



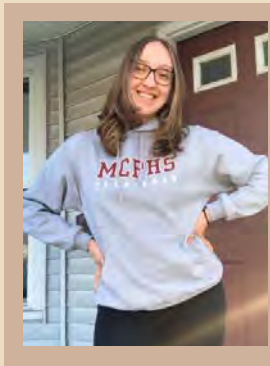
*Julia Maryanski*



*Allysha Miolla*



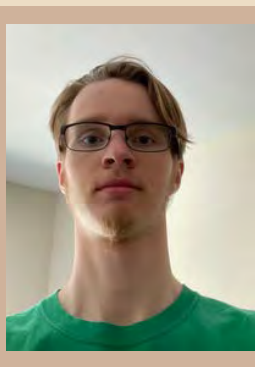
*Bryan Miranda*



*Elizabeth Naff*



*Holden Nelson*



*Christopher North*



*Sadie Petta*



*Julia Radziewicz*



*Evan Rankin*



*Hannah Robins*



*Julia Roe*



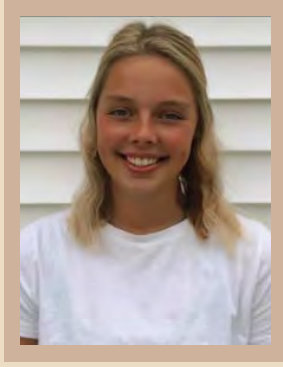
*Kathleen Ryan*



*Christopher Schoen*



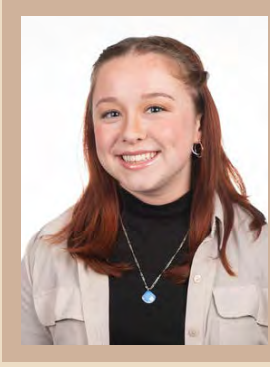
*Nathan Solitario*



*Abigail Steinman*



*Sarah Tanner*



*Autumn Tomao*



*Spencer Van Tassel*

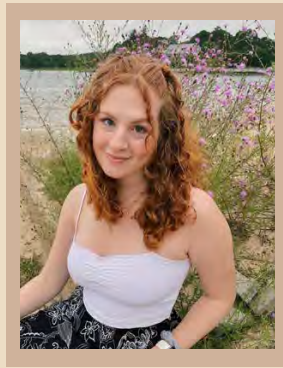


*Kelsie Warner*



CONGRATULATIONS





Lauren Ziino



## Where to Next?



Rawan Ebrahim will be working as a Registered Nurse at Baystate in the Heart and Vascular Critical Care Unit.

Holden Nelson will be pursuing a Ph.D. at Michigan State University studying environmental and forensic applications of stable isotope analysis.

Autumn Tomao is looking for a job as a Counselor in Corrections.

Kelsie Warner is working as an EMT before pursuing graduate school.

Michaella Cesarini is enrolled in the Westfield State master's program to earn a M.Ed. Moderate Disabilities.

Emily Fluet is attending graduate school at Springfield College in Student Affairs Administration.

Cameron Ganong plans to become a paralegal after graduation.

Bryan Miranda is attending graduate school.

Nathan Solitario is entering the workforce before pursuing graduate school in counseling.

Cassidy Harvey will be attending the Masters of Science in Social Work Program at The College of Saint Rose.



Nicole Erickson will be at Westfield State for one more year to complete the ADD+ program for her master's degree, which will give her dual-licensure in Elementary and Special Education.

Spencer Van Tassel is continuing graduate school at Westfield State while beginning his teaching career.

Lisha Lopez will be an Elementary School Teacher with the Springfield District.

Hannah Burns is becoming an RN.

Rhenna Barry is traveling after graduation.

Sadie Petta will begin working as a High School English Teacher.

Abigail Steinman will be working at Berkshire Medical Center as a RN.

Julia Radziewicz is a Marketing Specialist.

Lindsey Genatossio will be a Job-News Producer at WWLP 22 News.

Lauren Gray is pursuing a Master's of Social Work at Westfield State.

Levi Ekstrom will be taking a gap year to focus on advocacy work.