



Muriel A. Howard Honors Program

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025



Table of Contents

	Executive Summary
1	About
2	Mission & Values
3	Honors Staff
4	Honors Advisory Board
5	Honors Spaces
6	Honors Student Profile
8	Persistence, Retention, and Graduation
10	Scholarships and Student Funding
13	Honors Academics
18	Honors Student Experience
23	Program Assessment
25	Community Connections
27	Appendix I – Honors Retention Report
32	Appendix II – Scholarships & Student Funding
33	Appendix III – HON111: Introduction to Honors Syllabus
37	Appendix IV – The Involvement Journal: A Signature First-Year Seminar Assignment
40	Appendix V – Honors Leaders Feedback
41	Appendix VI – HON444: Honors Senior Seminar Syllabus
44	Appendix VII – Honors Program Assessment

Executive Summary:

Muriel A. Howard Honors Program 2024-2025 Annual Report

The 2024–2025 academic year marked continued growth, innovation, and student engagement within the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program at Buffalo State University. The program enrolled nearly 600 students, supported by a dedicated staff, robust academic offerings, and vibrant co-curricular experiences rooted in the annual theme, “**Cultivating Community and Connection.**”

Key highlights include:

- **Enrollment & Diversity:** With 576 Honors students across 34 majors and all academic schools, the program represented 11% of the undergraduate population. The program continues to reflect greater diversity, with 38% of students identifying with ethnic groups other than white—up from 14% in 2016.
- **Retention & Graduation:** Honors students consistently outperformed their non-Honors peers in persistence, retention, and graduation metrics. The 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates remained above 54%, with notably higher rates for women.
- **Scholarships & Funding:** Over \$5 million in Honors scholarships have been awarded since inception, including support from multiple endowed and named scholarships. This year, 204 Honors Scholarships were provided, including 12 students who received the new Honors Plus award. The Honors Enhancement Fund supported 21 students with \$11,500 in applied learning experiences this year.
- **Curriculum & Academics:** More than 50 course sections were offered during the academic year, involving 35 faculty across 15 departments. Two new, one-credit experiential seminars were offered in Spring 2025.
- **Student Experience:** Students participated in 40 Honors events throughout the year, including education experiences, social gatherings, professional development, and cultural outings. More than half of all Honors students utilized the Honors spaces for printing, studying, and socializing. The HON111 course and Honors Leaders mentoring program were instrumental in fostering student success and belonging.
- **Program Assessment:** Surveys and course evaluations indicated strong student satisfaction, especially regarding support services, campus engagement, and preparation for post-graduation success. Students particularly valued early registration, personalized advising, small class sizes, and the supportive Honors community.
- **Community & Outreach:** The program continued its commitment to service and outreach through active participation in campus-wide initiatives, national conference involvement, and alumni engagement.

The Muriel A. Howard Honors Program remains a cornerstone of academic excellence and student development at Buffalo State, committed to fostering leadership, inclusivity, and intellectual growth.

About the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program

The Honors Program at Buffalo State University (then College) began as the Dean's Honors Course in 1983. Professor Tom Kinsey, then head of the Interdisciplinary Sciences Department, coordinated this course for the Fall 1983 semester and Professor Michael Johnson, Modern and Classical Languages, managed the Fall 1984 course. The All-College Honors Program was created in 1984 under President Bruce Johnstone. Dr. James Grunebaum served as the coordinator from 1987 to 1999 and established the Grunebaum Family Scholarship Fund to help support students in the program. In 1999 Dr. Andrea Guiati became the program coordinator and served as coordinator/director until 2017. Under Dr. Guiati's leadership, the program grew to 200 students, all supported with scholarships. The curriculum grew to include a freshmen Honors course, a senior-level Honors Colloquium, and courses in five general education areas: Humanities, Arts, Natural Science, Social Science, and Western Civilizations.

In 2013 the All-College Honors Program was renamed the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program in honor of Dr. Muriel A. Howard, who served as the seventh (and first female) President of Buffalo State College from 1996 to 2009. In 2017 Dr. Amy McMillan took over directing the program and oversaw a major expansion in the form of a new "Dean's Honors Program," which quickly added over 100 more students to the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program roster. As the program continues to evolve, new and continuing Buffalo State University students who qualify for Honors are now welcomed into the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program. In the fall of 2024, there were almost 600 students enrolled, with approximately 180 supported by Honors scholarships. The curriculum continues to expand and currently offers course in seven GE23 educational areas: The Arts, Humanities, Natural Sciences & Scientific Reasoning, Social Sciences, World History & Global Awareness, U.S. History & Civic Engagement, and Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, & Social Justice. Faculty from across the campus teach Honors sections. Students are also required to complete an applied learning experience in the form of an internship, study abroad, creative or research project, or community service activity as a member of the Honors Program.

Honors students experience several benefits by participating in the Program. The Bishop Hall renovation, completed in 2017, provides beautiful and updated housing for Honors students, including a classroom and numerous study areas. The Muriel A. Howard Honors Program offices are located in South Wing 330 with a student Academic Suite in South Wing 310 and the Honors Hub, a place for Honors activities and connections, in South Wing 320. Events, including a fall BBQ, spring recognition ceremony, leadership workshops, tickets to the BABEL Literary Series, and movie, game, and study nights, are a regular part of the Honors Program offerings.

Each academic year, a program theme is selected to promote common threads throughout various Honors classroom conversations and cocurricular activities. The 2024-2025 theme, *Cultivating Community and Connection*, explored the ways students create and engage with communities of all forms. First-year students in HON111 found opportunities to get involved and feel connection on-campus while seniors in HON444 discussed how they can strengthen their communities as active citizens post-graduation. The theme culminated at the Honoring Honors recognition event with a sustainable, community cultivation-inspired meal, a "community corner" social area, and natural decorations.

Honors with a Difference: The Honors Mission and Values

Mission:

The Muriel A. Howard Honors Program cultivates deep, innovative thinking and prepares our diverse population of students for a life of intellectual inquiry as active thoughtful citizens both locally and globally. Our students realize their potential through enhanced opportunities and high expectations for academic and social engagement.

Our program believes in:

Diversity – in lived experiences, socioeconomic realities, cultural backgrounds, and personal identities. We celebrate difference.

Connection – with peers, our campus community, and our vibrant city. We are involved on campus, we give back and pay forward, and we make strong connections with the workforce and the needs of our larger community. We build life-long relationships and foster a sense of belonging.

Opportunity – for all students, no matter what their background and experience. Our program provides an excellent education in our small, interactive, and unique classes. We offer leadership, mentoring, and networking opportunities and partner with campus and off-campus entities that expand those opportunities.

High Standards – academically and personally. We encourage, support, and expect superlative behavioral and ethical standards.

We do this with:

- 1) Our excellent team of faculty and staff who focus on the well-being and development of each student by providing exciting seminar-style courses, co-curricular activities, community building, and wellness programming;
- 2) Our commitment to leadership, service, and personal development;
- 3) The vibrant, urban location, which provides our students with unique opportunities for individual and professional exploration and growth;
- 4) Our emphasis on applied learning through service, research and creative projects, internships, and global engagement.



Honors Staff

The 2024-2025 Muriel A. Howard Honors Program staff included three full-time employees, a faculty liaison, and a student work-study.

Dr. Amy McMillan, Director

Dr. Amy McMillan joined Buffalo State in 2003 as a faculty member in the Biology Department. Her research focus is conservation genetics involving Common Loons and Hellbender salamanders, although she has worked with other species and in other areas as well. Dr. McMillan served as Interim Director of the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program from 2017-2019, when she took over as the Director. Dr. McMillan teaches the Senior Seminar in Honors. In 2024-25 Dr. McMillan was a member of the President's Commencement Committee, the Academic Success Collaborative, Provost Council, and on the Bengal Success Network.

Matt Baran, Assistant Director

Matt Baran joined Buffalo State in 2021. His primary focus is on student engagement and leadership within the Honors community. He instructs the HON111 First-Year Honors Seminar course to incoming Honors students each Fall. In 2022, he launched the Honors Leaders peer mentoring program to build supportive relationships across class years. In Spring 2025, he taught a new HON189 experiential course based on the 'Place As Text' pedagogy from the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC). Matt serves as an at-large university senator and serves as Vice Chair of the Student Welfare Committee.

Elizabeth Stevens, Honors Academic Adviser

Elizabeth Stevens is the assigned professional academic adviser for all first-year Muriel A. Howard Honors students. In the summer of 2023, she met all the incoming freshmen over the summer for academic advisement and then registered them for fall classes. During the academic year and summer, she advises students academically for classes and is available for guidance with academic issues and any obstacles that may hinder student success. Ms. Stevens has worked at Buffalo State for 23 years and was awarded the President's Medal for Excellence in Academic Advisement in 2022.

Dr. Leigh Duffy, Faculty Liaison

Dr. Leigh Duffy is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Faculty Liaison for Honors. Her work is primarily at the intersection of Philosophy of Mind and Epistemology, and she is particularly interested in how yoga and meditation practices can contribute to how we understand our minds and ourselves, and whether and how self-knowledge is possible. Dr. Duffy regularly teaches courses for Honors and coordinates meetings and events for faculty throughout the year.

Sofika Hudak, Student Work-Study

Sofika Hudak, first-year Fashion, Textile, and Technology major, served as the Honors Work study in 2024-25. Sofika kept the Honors student spaces in great shape and assisted with many of our events and activities.

Honors Advisory Board

The Honors Advisory Board is an informal group that helps advise the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program Director and staff on matters related to Honors policy, procedure, and courses. The Board consists of campus members who are closely tied to the Honors experience (e.g., Admissions, Financial Aid and Scholarships, Institutional Advancement, Registrar, Athletics, Library, Residential Life), representatives from each of the three Academic Schools and Dean's offices, and two Honors students. The Honors Staff members also attend Board meetings, and the Honors Director is the convener. Members of the Honors Advisory Board constitute the review committee for the Honors Enhancement Fund.

2024-25 Honors Advisory Board Members:

Matthew Baran, *Assistant Director, Muriel A. Howard Honors Program*
Clairissa Breen, *Associate Professor, Criminal Justice*
Kathryn Budin, *Clinical Supervisor, Speech-Language Pathology*
Scott Burns, *Associate Vice President for Development, Institutional Advancement*
Leigh Duffy, *Faculty Liaison, Honors and Associate Professor, Philosophy*
Xinozea Ferguson-Giscombe, *Honors Student President and Honors Leader*
Jason Grinnell, *Professor and Chair, Government, Planning, and Philosophy*
Julie Henry, *Professor, Elementary Education, Literacy, and Educational Leadership*
Colleen Long, *Scholarship Coordinator, Financial Aid*
David Loreto, *Interim Vice President of Enrollment Management*
Nigel Marriner, *Interim Assistant Vice President, Student Success and Retention*
Amanda Marzolf, *Executive Assistant to the Dean, School of Professions*
Patrick McGovern, *Associate Professor, Government, Planning and Philosophy*
Christian Ozolins, *Assistant Director and Completion Coach, Intercollegiate Athletics*
Lorna Perez, *Associate Professor, English*
Amy Rockwell, *First Year Experience Librarian*
Jennifer Segura Lopez, *Honors Leader*
Adamu K. Shauku, *Assistant Professor, Government, Planning and Philosophy*
Elizabeth Stevens, *Senior Academic Advisor, Muriel A. Howard Honors Program*
Krista Vince Garland, *Associate Professor, Exceptional Education*



Jennifer Segura Lopez speaking at Honoring Honors.

Honors Spaces

The Muriel A. Howard Honors Program offices and student spaces are located on the 3rd floor of South Wing and in Bishop Hall.

- **South Wing 310 – The Honors Academic Suite:** A work and study area including access to free printing, two study rooms with computers and whiteboards, and a larger meeting room. The Suite had more than 2000 visits in 2024-25, and over 300 unique Honors students used the computers during the academic year.
- **South Wing 320 – The Honors Hub:** A mixed-use space with a variety of tables and soft furniture for students to utilize between classes. Many Honors events are hosted in the Honors Hub. Additional features include a large monitor, snacks, microwave, toaster, and event calendar. The Honors Leaders student office is located inside the Honors Hub. The Hub was visited more than 1600 times in 2024-25.
- **South Wing 330 – The Honors Office:** The four Honors staff are conveniently located just down the hall from the student spaces. Students visit the Honors Office for advisement, information about the program, and for general guidance & support.
- **Bishop Hall:** Honors students receive priority placement in this residence hall. HON111 and other Honors courses are scheduled in BISH126, the classroom on the lower level.



*Above: Spring Crafts & Conversations.
Below: HON101 Mock Trial.*



*Above: Honors Academic Suite.
Below: Bishop Hall student room.*



Honors Student Profile

In the fall of 2024 (on 10/11/2024) there were 576 students enrolled in the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program*. This number included 201 new first-year students, 1 Dean's Honors student, and 96 "continuing" Honors students. The Dean's Honors student remains from 2017/2018 and has different requirements from those listed in Honors Academics below. "Continuing" students include those who were not originally offered Honors but achieved at least a 3.3 GPA and applied [n=63], chose not to join as they entered Buffalo State but applied later [n=3], and transfer students [n=30]. Of the 201 first-year students in the Fall of 2024, 125 lived on campus and 76 were commuters.

Honors students were enrolled in 34 programs across campus (Table 1) representing each School and Academic Affairs (Figure 1). More than half of Honors students achieved Dean's list status; 355 students in the fall 2024 semester (61%) and 328 students in the spring 2025 semester (55%) [data from deans_list_rpt_all_20241220 and deans_list_rpt_all_20250523, respectively]. Honors students made up over 22% of the campus-wide Dean's list each semester (25.7% fall, 22.6% spring).

Table 1. Number of Honors students by Department, Fall 2024. Data from SZRHONORS_10_11_2024 report.

Department	#	Department	#
Africana Studies	3	Health, Nutrition & Dietetics	9
Anthropology	6	History and Social Studies Edu	19
Art and Design	53	Hospitality & Tourism	3
Arts and Letters	2	Individualized Studies	3
Biology	38	Mathematics	14
Business	38	Modern & Classical Languages	1
Career, Technical & Sci Edu	4	Music	20
Chemistry	16	Philosophy	2
Communication	19	Physics	11
Computer Information Systems	19	Pol Sci, Public Admin, & Plan	19
Criminal Justice	15	Psychology	43
Economics and Finance	7	Social Work	17
Elem Ed, Literacy & Leadership	62	Sociology	1
Engineering Technology	15	Speech Language Pathology	21
English	27	Television and Film Arts	11
Exceptional Education	12	Theater	4
Fashion Textile Technology	19	Undeclared	16
Geosciences	7	Total	576

*Data for this section is taken from the SZRHONORS_10_11_2024 report. Tableau data for Fall 2024 shows 630 Honors students and we are unable to account for this number as of July 2025.

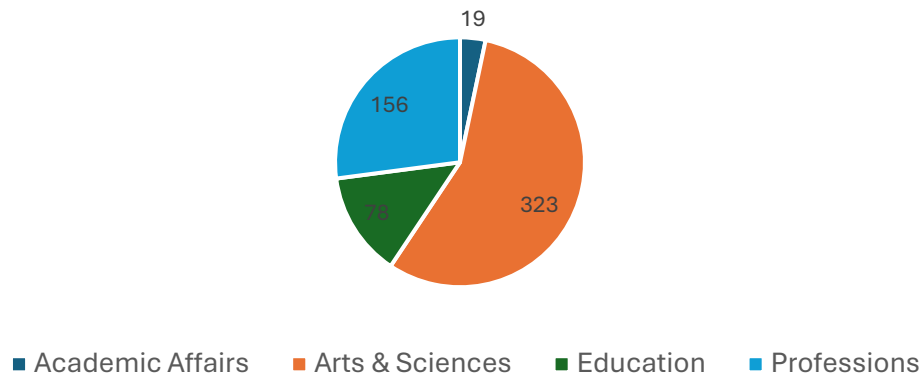


Figure 1. Fall 2024 Honors students enrolled by School. Data from SZRHONORS_10_11_2024 report.

The total enrollment and the ethnic distribution of the Honors Program has changed significantly in the last seven years. Before 2017 the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program was available only to Honors and Presidential Scholarship recipients. In 2017 the program was expanded to also include students who were not provided an Honors Scholarship and promoted to a new demographic of student. In 2017, Honors students made up 3% of the 8,482 undergraduates at Buffalo State and in 2024 Honors students were 11% of 5,203 undergraduates.

Figure 2 shows the fall 2024 ethnic distribution; of the 576 Honors students 38% reported an ethnic group other than white and 62% reported white. In 2016, 243 Honors students are reported in Tableau and 86% of these students reported white as their ethnicity (Figure 3).

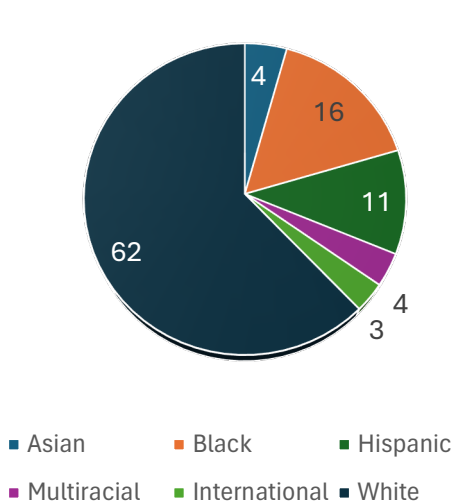


Figure 2. Fall 2024 Honors student Ethnicity. Data shown as % of 576 students. Data from SZRHONORS_10_11_2024 report.

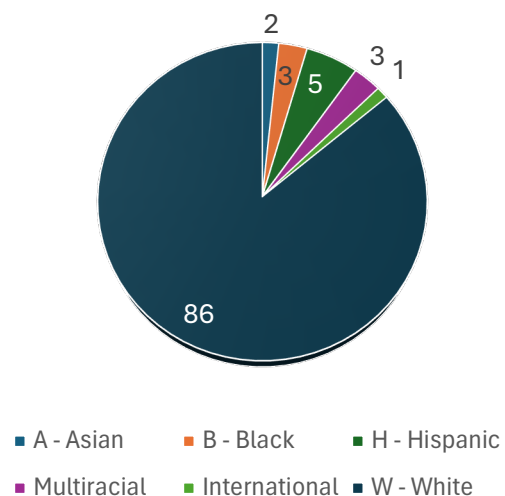


Figure 3. Fall 2016 Honors student Ethnicity. Data shown as % of 243 students. Data from Tableau 10/30/2024.

Persistence, Retention, and Graduation

Honors Program students tend to return each semester and most Honors students graduate. Table 2 compares first-year persistence and retention rates from Honors and non-Honors students at Buffalo State since 2017. As persistence and retention rates have dropped in the non-Honors student population, the Honors student persistence and retention rates have remained relatively stable. The retention drop caused by Covid-19 (2020-2021) is evident in the Honors students, but it has rebounded to pre-Covid levels more quickly than non-Honors student retention (Table 2).

In general, female Honors students persist and are retained at a higher rate than males (Table 3). Honors also enrolls at least twice as many female as male students (Table 3). Honors graduation rates are much higher than non-Honors graduation rates (Table 4) and graduation rates of Honors female students are higher than those of male Honors students except 2019, where the 5-year graduation rate of males exceeded that of females (Table 5).

Table 2. Enrollment, Persistence, and Retention for first-year Honors and non-Honors students. Enrollment includes first-year, first-time student class. Persistence is measured from fall to spring and Retention from fall to fall. For example, the 2017 persistence rate is the % students remaining into spring 2018 from the fall 2017 cohort and the 2017 retention rate is the % students remaining into fall 2018 from the fall 2017 cohort. Data from Tableau June 13, 2025.

Year	Enrollment		Persistence		Retention	
	Honors	Non-Hon	Honors	Non-Hon	Honors	Non-Hon
2017	161	1,640	88.2	85.9	78.9	59.1
2018	149	1,592	94.0	81.3	85.2	55.7
2019	123	1,523	95.9	77.2	85.4	62.8
2020	129	1,486	89.1	65.5	72.1	46.2
2021	138	1,196	89.1	69.3	79.0	45.8
2022	143	1,098	90.9	71.1	77.6	51.7
2023	156	1,289	93.6	74.5	84.0	54.5
2024	201	1,013	90.0	82.0		

Table 3. Enrollment, Persistence, and Retention for first-year female and male Honors students. Enrollment includes first-year, first-time student class. Data from Tableau June 13, 2025.

Year	Enrollment		Persistence		Retention	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
2017	118	43	89.8	83.7	82.2	69.8
2018	102	47	97.1	87.2	88.2	78.7
2019	91	32	96.7	93.8	83.5	90.6
2020	88	41	90.9	85.4	76.1	63.4
2021	103	35	90.3	85.7	79.6	77.1
2022	106	37	92.5	86.5	80.2	70.3
2023	111	45	91.9	97.8	82.0	88.9
2024	134	67	91.0	88.1		

Table 4. Graduation rates for Honors and non-Honors students at 4-, 5-, and 6-year time intervals. Data from Tableau June 13, 2025.

Year	4-Year Graduation Rate		5-Year Graduation Rate		6-Year Graduation Rate	
	Honors	Non-Honors	Honors	Non-Honors	Honors	Non-Honors
2017	47.8	21.7	57.6	31.2	59.6	33.0
2018	56.4	19.7	63.8	28.1	63.8	33.0
2019	58.9	18.6	72.6	29.0		
2020	54.3	16.9				

Table 5. Graduation rates for female and male Honors students at 4-, 5-, and 6-year time intervals. Data from Tableau June 13, 2025.

Year	4-Year Graduation Rate		5-Year Graduation Rate		6-Year Graduation Rate	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
2017	54.5	31.0	62.1	46.6	63.4	50.0
2018	60.8	46.8	67.6	55.3	67.6	55.3
2019	61.5	51.5	71.4	75.8		
2020	56.8	48.8				

In the 2024-25 academic year, 103 students graduated from the Honors Program: 22 in the fall of 2024, 79 in the spring of 2025, and 2 expected in the summer of 2025. Of these students, 19 were students who completed the Muriel A. Howard Honors program as “Continuing” Honors students and one of those “Continuing” students was also in EOP (Educational Opportunity Program).

Of the 103 Honors graduates, 54 were from the School of Arts & Sciences, 33 from the School of Professions, 15 from the School of Education, and one Academic Affairs (Individualized Studies). Eleven of our graduates completed a second major, 14 received an Undergraduate Certificate, 39 completed a minor, and 7 of these completed a second minor.

A more comprehensive Honors retention report is in Appendix I.



Scholarships and Student Funding

The Muriel A. Howard Honors Program manages four scholarships: The Kenzie Family Presidential Scholars, The Muriel A. Howard (Honors) Scholars, the Muriel A. Howard Endowed Scholarship, and the Honors Plus Scholarship (2024 only). The Kenzie Scholars are supported by the Ross B. Kenzie Family Presidential Scholarship given by the late Mr. Ross Kenzie and his family, The Muriel A. Howard and the Honors Plus Scholars are supported by a variety of endowed scholarship funds and non-endowed scholarship donations (see Appendix II), and the Muriel A. Howard Endowed Scholarship is supported by an endowment from Dr. Muriel A. Howard.

Since the inception of the Honors Program over 5 million dollars have been provided to students in the form of Honors scholarships (Figures 4 and 5). Except for 2011 and 2012, when scholarships were a mix of \$1,000 and \$1,250/ semester, these scholarships provide \$1,250/semester for up to eight semesters to the highest achieving high school students. The Kenzie Scholarship provides \$1,200/ semester for selected students, and the Honors Plus Scholarship provides \$1,000/semester, both renewable up to eight semesters. In 2024-2025, 173 students were supported with Muriel A. Howard Honors Scholarships, 18 students received the Ross B. Kenzie Family Presidential Scholarship, and 12 students received Honors Plus Scholarships.

Six of our 2024-2025 graduates were Kenzie Family Presidential Scholars and 30 were Muriel A. Howard Honors Scholars. These students all received scholarships for up to eight semesters of their enrollment at Buffalo State. Each year one student is provided the Muriel A. Howard Endowed Scholarship as the “Honors Student President.” Finalists for this award are senior-level students selected by the Honors staff who have scholarship funding (because they need to represent Honors for Institutional Advancement), are in good standing in Honors, are involved in Honors and/or the campus, and have demonstrated that they are a good representative of Honors. The final selection of the Student President is made by the Honors Advisory Board. The Student President represents Honors by sitting on the Foundation Board, attending fundraising events including the Bengala and the Peterson Society Luncheon, and as a member of the Honors Advisory Board. The scholarship varies in total amount based on the markets. In 2024-25 that award was \$1,880 and was awarded to a senior with a triple major in Arts & Letters (Dance concentration), Africana Studies, and Environmental Geography.

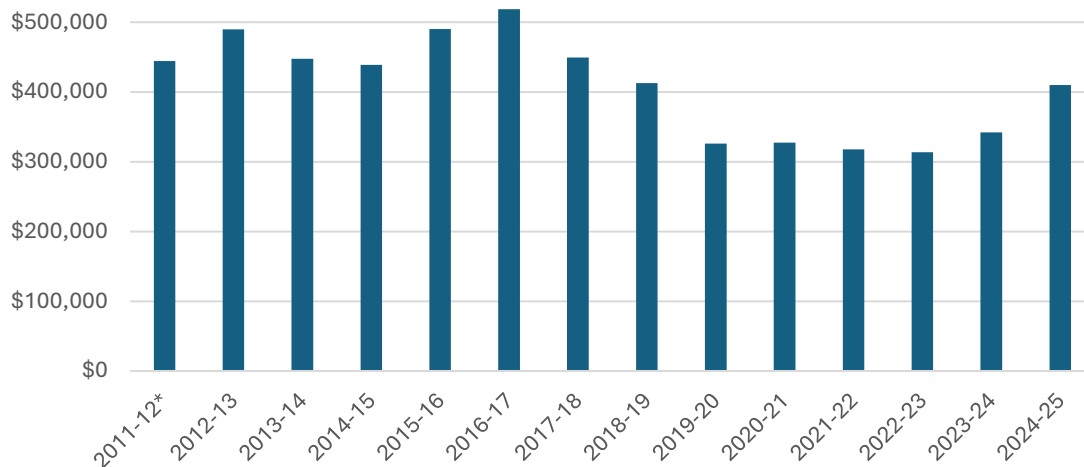


Figure 4. All College and Muriel A. Howard Scholarship spending since 2011. In 2011-12, awards were a mix of \$1,000/semester and \$1,250/semester. Since that time, scholarships are all \$1,250/semester for each student. In 2018-19 several scholarships were awarded for students to live in Bishop Hall. In 2019-20 several scholarships were provided in J-term.

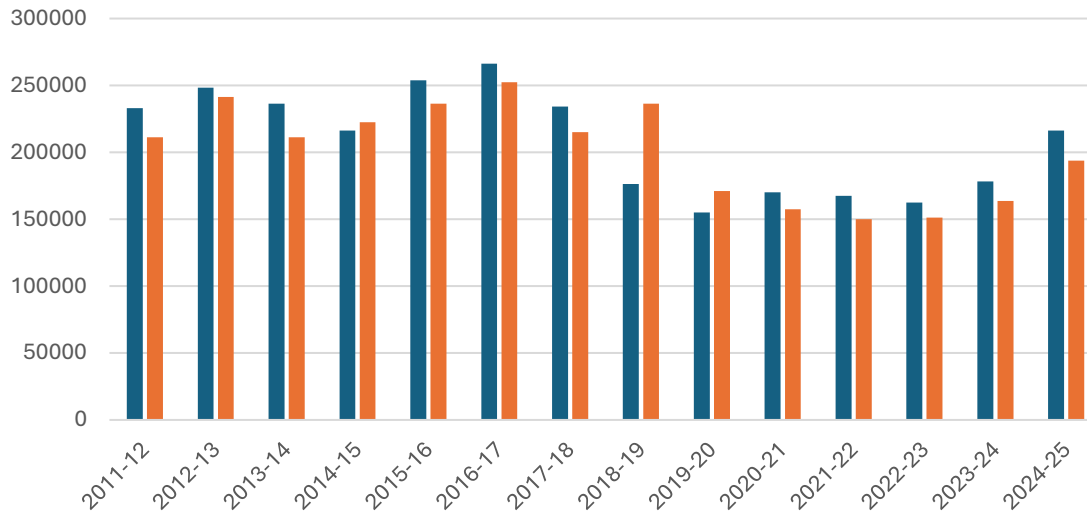


Figure 5. All College and Muriel A. Howard Scholarship spending since 2011 by semester. Blue bars are fall and red bars are spring semesters. In 2011-12, awards were a mix of \$1,000/semester and \$1,250/semester. Since that time, scholarships have been \$1,250/semester for each student. In 2018-19 several scholarships were awarded for students to live in Bishop Hall. In 2019-20 several scholarships were provided in J-term.

In addition to the scholarships, the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program manages the Honors Endowed Enhancement Fund. This fund provides financial support to Honors Program students who wish to participate in opportunities that will enhance their academic experience. Examples of Enhancement Fund support include:

- Participating in an overseas, national, regional, or local study experience
- Participating in a volunteer experience such as Alternative Break
- Conducting research or creative works related to academic major
- Participating in a professional conference or meeting
- Hosting speakers including honorariums, travel, housing and meals, receptions, and other appropriate costs
- Undertaking an internship or other applied learning experience
- Other similar academic experiences

In the three years that this fund has been available to Honors students it has provided \$29,574 to 60 students (\$8,354 in 2022-23, \$9,720 in 2023-24, and \$11,500 in 2024-25). In 2024-25, 21 students were funded. The fund supported traveled abroad to Chile, Dominican Republic, Italy, Ghana, Rwanda, Spain and Portugal, and Sweden. Other students were funded for student showcases including the Television Film Arts Pilot, a Senior art exhibit, and research projects or funds to support a student during an unpaid internship.



Above left: IPDS Dominican Republic. Above right: Anne Frank Project in Rwanda.

Honors Academics

Honors Program Requirements

Incoming first-year students are required to complete at least 17 total credits of Honors coursework:

- HON111 Introduction to Honors (1 credit)
- Choose at least five 3-credit Honors seminar courses. Courses can be repeated if topics differ except where indicated:
 - HON101 Humanities Seminar
 - HON102 Natural Sciences & Scientific Reasoning Seminar
 - HON103/106 The Arts Seminar
 - HON104 US History & Civic Engagement Seminar (can only be taken once)
 - HON201/209 World History & Global Awareness Seminar
 - HON202 Social Sciences Seminar
 - HON303 Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice Seminar
 - HON189/389 Special Topics (not General Education)
 - Honors Enhanced Course (can only be taken once)
- HON444 Senior Seminar (1 credit)

Students joining the Honors Program as “Continuing” Buffalo State or transfer students are required to complete at least 7 total credits of Honors coursework:

- Choose at least two 3-credit Honors seminar courses. Courses can be repeated if topics differ except where indicated:
 - HON101 Humanities Seminar
 - HON102 Natural Sciences & Scientific Reasoning Seminar
 - HON103/106 The Arts Seminar
 - HON104 US History & Civic Engagement Seminar (can only be taken once)
 - HON201/209 World History & Global Awareness Seminar
 - HON202 Social Sciences Seminar
 - HON303 Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice Seminar
 - HON189/389 Special Topics (not General Education)
 - Honors Enhanced Course (can only be taken once)
- HON444 Senior Seminar (1 credit)

All Honors students must maintain a 3.3 cumulative GPA and complete an Applied Learning Experience (a component of most majors). For first year students to remain in Honors, HON111 must be taken during the first fall semester. For all students, HON444 must be taken in one of the last two semesters, and Honors seminars may be taken any semester but must be completed by graduation. Students may take more than the required number of Honors courses.

Honors Faculty and the Honors Course Experience

Since the expansion of the Honors Program in 2017, faculty from 18 departments and all three Schools have taught Honors courses. For example, in the 2015-16 academic year, 12 different

faculty members representing seven departments taught Honors courses. In contrast, 35 faculty representing 15 departments taught Honors in the 2024-25 academic year (Tables 6 and 7).

Most Honors courses offered fulfilled General Education requirements, although several faculty members offered seats in special, non-general education sections. In the fall 2024 semester, ten sections were reserved for first-year students. We also offered seven sections of the 1-credit HON111: Introduction to Honors for first-year students and one section of HON444: Honors Senior Seminar for seniors (Table 6). Fewer course sections are typically offered in the spring semester. Instead of 35 course sections offering 764 seats in the fall, 23 sections with 407 seats were offered in the spring. In the spring of 2025 Honors also offered two experimental 1-credit classes as HON189, which allowed staff members to teach hands-on topics in their expertise (Table 7). Figure 6 shows Honors enrollment from fall 2015-spring 2025.

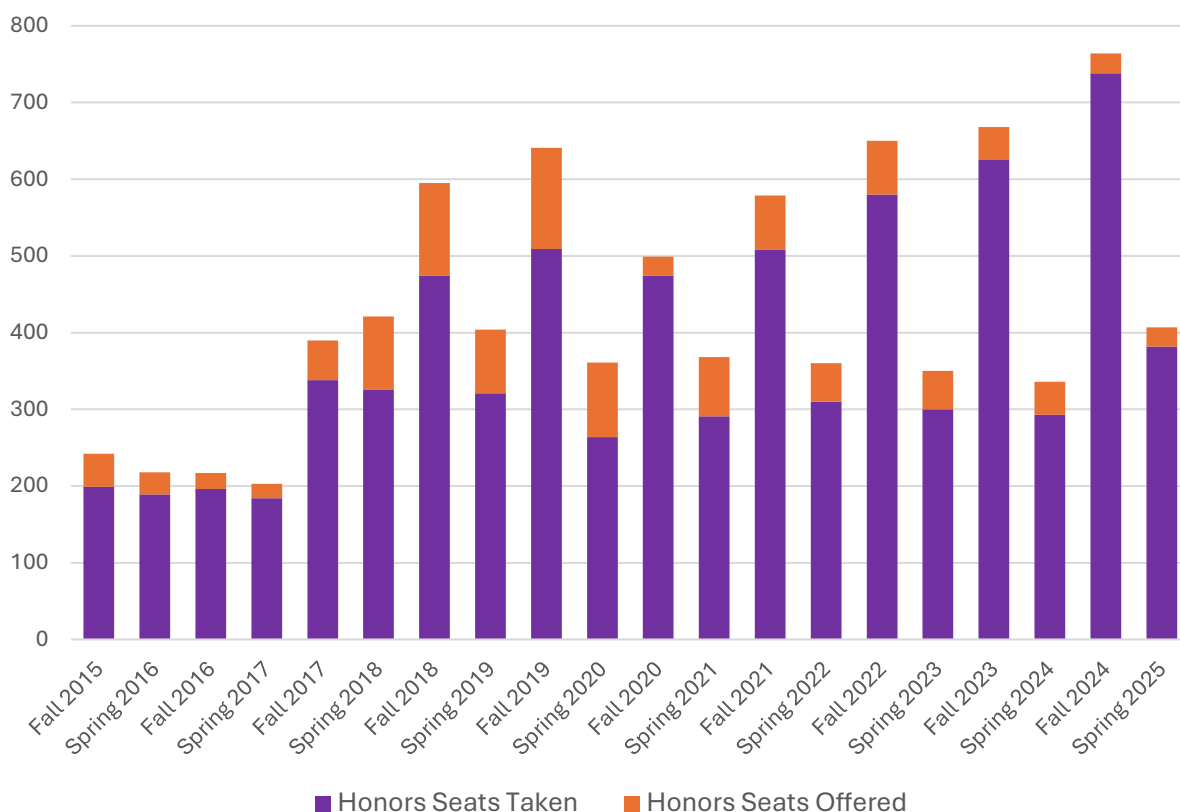


Figure 6. Honors course enrollment Fall 2015 through Spring 2025. Orange bars represent the number of seats offered each semester and the purple bars represent the number of seats enrolled. Data taken at the end of each semester from Banner enrollments.

Table 6. Fall 2024 Honors course offerings. * First-year students only, # Cross-listed with departmental section

Course	GE 23 Area	Course Title	Instructor	Instructor Department
HON111*		Intro to Honors	Matthew Baran	Honors Program
HON101*	Humanities	Romantic Love	Ann Emo	Honors Program
HON101*	Humanities	Dylan: Six Decades of Noble Lyrics	Andrea Guiati	Modern & Classical Languages
HON101*	Humanities	Intro to Philosophy	Leigh Duffy	Government, Planning, and Philosophy
HON101*	Humanities	Friendship and Happiness	Jason Grinnell	Government, Planning, and Philosophy
HON101*	Humanities	Mock Trial	David Ben-Merre	English
HON101	Humanities	Literature and Games	Timothy Bryant	English
HON101	Humanities	The Personal Essay	Kim Chinquee	English
HON101#	Humanities	How Humans Construct Reality	Michele Ninacs	English
HON102	Natural Science	Oceanography	Camille Holmgren	Geosciences
HON103	Arts	Ceramics	Robert Wood	Art & Design
HON104	Am History	American History	Alex Blair	History
HON201#	World Global/Non-West	Africa to 1800	Ken Orosz	History
HON201#	World Global/Non-West	World Civ I	Ken Orosz	History
HON201#	World Global/Non-West	Ancient Civilizations	Susan Maguire	Anthropology
HON201#	World Global/Non-West	Arctic Geography	Stephen Vermette	Geosciences
HON202*	Social Science	Human Geography	Vida Vanchan	Geosciences
HON202	Social Science	Data and Global Conflict	Mehwish Sarwari	Government, Planning, and Philosophy
HON209	World Global/Western Civ	The Rise of Modern Market Society and its Consequences	John Abromeit	History
HON303	Diversity	"Saving" Africa	Marcus Watson	Africana Studies
HON303	Diversity	Borderland Literature	Lorna Perez	English
HON303#	Diversity	Indigenous Peoples of Western North America	Lisa Anselmi	Anthropology
HON389#		Seminar on Cultural Anthropology	Kimberly Hart	Anthropology
HON389#		Undergrad Research Journal	Kim Chinquee & Joe Riggie	English and Library
CWP101*	College Writing	College Writing I	Margaret Herb	English
CWP101*	College Writing	College Writing I	Natalie Szymanski	English
CWP102*	College Writing	Argumentation and Research	Lori Ann Woods	English

PSY101*	Social Science	Soc Sci Sem/Intro Psychology	Carol Wannemacher	Psychology
HON444		Honors Senior Seminar	Amy McMillan	Honors Program

Table 7. Spring 2025 Honors course offerings. # Cross-listed with departmental section

Course	GE 23 Area	Course Title	Instructor	Instructor Department
HON101	Humanities	Professional Ethics	Jason Grinnell	Government, Planning, and Philosophy
HON101*	Humanities	Women in Literature	Jennifer Bryant	English
HON101#	Humanities	Intro to Rhetoric	Michele Ninacs	English
HON102	Natural Science	Environmental Sustainability	Camille Holmgren	Geosciences
HON102#	Natural Science	Meteorology	Stephen Vermette	Geosciences
HON102#	Natural Science	Human Origins	Susan Maguire	Anthropology
HON103	Arts	Ceramics	Robert Wood	Art & Design
HON104	Am History	American History	Alex Blair	History
HON106	Arts	Europe's Got Talent: Classical Music Shapes a World	Daniel Blum	History
HON202	Social Science	Power, Resistance, Redemption: Narratives in Literature & Film	Andrea Guiati	Modern & Classical Languages
HON202#	Social Science	Global Marriage Practices	Kimberly Hart	Anthropology
HON209	World Global/Western Civ	Europe and the World in the 20th Century	John Abromeit	History
HON209#	Diversity	Indigenous Hawaiians	Lisa Anselmi	Anthropology
HON303	Diversity	Immigrant Literatures	Lorna Perez	English
HON303#	Diversity	Intro to LGBTQAI2+ Studies	Ruth Goldman	Communication
HON189		Event Planning Fundamentals	Elizabeth Grady	Institutional Advancement
HON189		The Queen City: Understanding Place in Buffalo	Matthew Baran	Honors Program
HON389#		Film Analysis & Evaluation	Ruth Goldman	Communication
HON389#		Weather & Society	Stephen Vermette	Geosciences
HON389#		History of Collecting and the Museum	Frances Gage	Art History
HON389#		Exercise Physiology I	Leah Panek-Shirley	Health, Nutrition, and Dietetics
CWP102	College Writing	Argumentation and Research	Natalie Szymanski	English
HON444		Honors Senior Seminar	Amy McMillan	Honors Program

Honors Advisement

The Honors Program academic adviser, Elizabeth Stevens, is housed in the Honors office suite. Her duties include registering all first-year students over the summer before the start of their first fall semester and advising all first- and second-year students. Over the summer of 2024, Ms. Stevens registered over 200 Honors students. Incoming first-year Honors students completed an advising survey and were scheduled for classes based on their chosen major and Honors requirements. The advising survey asked for information about former AP, IB, and college courses, class preferences, and information about the students' work and sports schedules. During summer orientation, students were provided their schedules. The rest of the summer, Ms. Stevens met with students via phone and email and adjusted schedules.

During the fall 2024 advisement period, Ms. Stevens took a leave and two Professional Advisors from the Academic Advisement Center worked with the Honors students to determine schedules for the spring 2025 semester. Hilary Andelora-Lease and Ariana Veltri-Clark were wonderful campus partners who held office hours in South Wing 330 and saw over 100 Honors students each, along with their regular advising load. Elizabeth Stevens returned in January and helped students with early spring semester schedule adjustments and fall of 2025 advisement. She is currently completing the fall 2025 schedules for the incoming first-year class of Honors students. For the second year in a row the incoming first-year class is over 200 students.



Honors Student Experience

HON111 – First-Year Experience

All incoming first-year students are required to take the HON111 Introduction to Honors seminar. This 1-credit non-academic course meets once a week for 50 minutes in BISH126, the classroom in the lower level of Bishop Hall. The Honors Assistant Director, Matt Baran, is responsible for facilitating this experience. The goals of the course are to orient and connect students to Honors, Buffalo State, and the community surrounding Buffalo State. Appendix III contains the syllabus for HON111. Students get to know each other by working together on in-class activities and they complete weekly homework assignments that check in on their transition to college. As part of the course, students read one of the Fall BABEL Literary Series authors; in the Fall 2024 they read *The House On Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros and had the opportunity to attend her BABEL lecture at Kleinhans Music Hall on Thursday, November 10th. A signature element of HON111 is the Out-of-class Involvement Journal worth 25% of their final grade. Students must attend/participate in nine opportunities on- or off-campus and then create a photo journal documenting their experiences. This semester-long assignment promotes sustained involvement in cocurricular activities, prompts valuable reflection, and creates a keepsake for students to look back on their first-year journey. In 2024, Matt published an article promoting the assignment in the National Collegiate Honors Council's *Honors in Practice*, Volume 24 (see Appendix IV). In Fall 2024, 201 students enrolled in seven sections of HON111 (average class size 29 students).

The Honors first-year experience also includes support from an Honors Leader peer mentor. The mentors (described in the next section) each supported a group of 7-10 first-year students throughout the Fall semester and assisted with the HON111 class several weeks during the semester.

Honors Leaders Peer Mentoring Program

The Honors Leaders Peer Mentoring Program launched in Fall 2022 with three goals:

- Support and engage first-year Honors students as they transition to college
- Provide leadership experience for returning Honors students
- Foster a sense of community across class years within the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program.

Returning Honors students in good academic standing with the Honors Program apply and interview in the spring to fill positions for the upcoming fall semester. Interviews are conducted by the Assistant Director and Honors Leaders from the previous year. Those students who are selected receive a \$600 stipend for the fall semester, an Honors Leader shirt, office space in SW320, leadership experience, and formal recognition during the Honoring Honors event. As part of their experience, they have the following responsibilities in the fall semester:

- Attend training retreat at Whispering Pines Lodge
- Attend Honors First-Year Kickoff to meet their mentees

- Send weekly communications to their mentees via email or GroupMe
- Join their mentees in their HON111 section 4 times during the Fall semester
- Utilize Honors Leader office space in the Honors Hub (SW320) as needed for meetings with mentees and to host rotating “office hours”
- Plan and facilitate one Honors event (can be co-hosted)
- Attend monthly meetings during the Fall semester with all Honors Leaders
- Promptly communicate any student concerns to the Honors Assistant Director

In Fall 2024, 21 Honors Leaders managed caseloads of 7-10 mentees each. Returning leaders (who served in the fall of 2022) made up nine of the 21 mentors and 12 were new leaders. This mix of leaders introduced varied experience levels to the group and fostered some mentoring relationships among the leaders too.

Honors Leaders attend a mandatory two-overnight retreat at Whispering Pines Lodge at the beginning of the Fall semester led by the Honors Program staff team. Retreat activities target three primary areas: Leadership development, mentoring skills, and team building. The remote wilderness, ‘off-grid’ environment enabled strong bonds to be formed among the Honors Leaders as they cooked meals together, shared campfire stories, hiked the premises, and wrote notes of encouragement throughout the weekend. Comments from the HON111 course about the Honors Leaders are found in Appendix V.

Honors Events

Honors students have numerous opportunities to attend events during the academic year. In 2024-2025, the Honors Program coordinated 40 events for students to build social connections, experience on- and off-campus attractions, give back to the community, and develop leadership and professional skills (Tables 8 and 9). Honors Leaders hosted or co-hosted 16 of these events.

The Honors Program hosts two signature large-scale events annually. The Honors “Welcome Back” BBQ in September had a record 217 student attendees this year and included catered dinner, Honors t-shirts, “speed-friending”, yard games, giveaways, and a group photo. The Honoring Honors H^2 recognition event had 82 student attendees and featured a sustainable vegetarian dinner, activity cards, photo station, senior gifts, and giveaways. Three graduating seniors gave speeches to their peers. Honors graduates, Honors Leaders, an outstanding campus partner (Katelyn Brickhouse), and an outstanding staff member (Matt Baran) were all recognized on stage. Honors Intern Finn Button produced all graphic designs for the event including the logo, invitation, program, menu cards, and signage.

Table 8. Honors-sponsored events in the Fall 2024 semester.

Fall 2024 Events	Facilitator	Category	Attendance
Honors First-Year Kickoff	Honors Staff	Social	90
Welcome Continuing & Transfer Honors Students	Honors Staff	Social	24
7th Annual Honors BBQ	Honors Staff	Social	217
Study Abroad Info Session	Campus Partner	Educational	3
Breakfast at the BPAC	Campus Partner	Social	15
Honors at Homecoming Alumni & Family Tailgate	Campus Partner	Social	10
Mindfulness in the Park with Glasha and Jessie	Honors Leader	Wellness	6
Latina Author Spotlight: Dr. Lorna Perez discusses Sandra Cisneros	Honors Faculty	Educational	0
Fall Into Autumn with Alyja, Chelsea, and Jennifer	Honors Leader	Social	29
Honors Trivia Night with Matt and Asher	Honors Leader	Social	8
BABEL Author Talk: Sandra Cisneros	Honors Staff	Educational	17
Mindful Mandalas with Ceci	Honors Leader	Arts	15
Honors Karaoke Night with Noah, Morgan, and Vincent	Honors Leader	Social	55
Visit the Buffalo History Museum with Jamie	Honors Leader	Educational	12
Honors Movie Night: The Matrix with Jessie	Honors Leader	Social	36
Honors Art Gallery Reception with Mary Teresa	Honors Leader	Arts	32
Fall Photoshoot at Delaware Park with Grace	Honors Student	Social	3
Honors Movie Night: Beetlejuice with Kevin	Honors Leader	Social	14
Honors Halloween	Honors Staff	Social	46
Build A Bracelet with Michelle	Honors Leader	Arts	15
Board Game Night with Matthew and Cadence	Honors Leader	Social	12
Honors Theatre Night: Antigone	Campus Partner	Arts	11
BABEL Author Talk: Tommy Orange	Honors Staff	Educational	3
Honors Movie Night: The Florida Project with Cadence	Honors Leader	Social	3
Cards and Cupcakes with Aoife	Honors Leader	Service	10
Farewell Friday with Sarah	Honors Leader	Arts	25
		Total	711

Table 9. Honors-sponsored events in the Spring 2025 semester.

Spring 2025 Events	Facilitator	Category	Attendance
Welcome Back Social	Honors Staff	Social	34
Honors Chess Night with Dan Blum and John Abromeit	Honors Faculty	Social	10
Valentine's Day Cards and Crafts	Honors Staff	Arts	10
Honors Ice Skating with Anna and Brianna	Honors Leader	Social	51
Honors Planetarium Night	Campus Partner	Educational	30
Fulbright and IPDS Information Session	Campus Partner	Educational	4
Honors Theatre Night: Ride the Cyclone	Campus Partner	Arts	26
Honoring Honors [H2]	Honors Staff	Social	138
Honors Trivia Night	Honors Staff	Social	7
Spring Crafts and Conversations	Honors Staff	Arts	11
South Wing Courtyard Clean-Up	Honors Staff	Service	0
Credit Scores and Reports with M&T Bank	External Partner	Educational	4
Honors Film Screening: The Edge of Heaven with Dr. Abromeit	Honors Faculty	Social	1
Honors Ice Cream Social	Honors Staff	Social	86
Total			412

Applied Learning

All Honors students are required to participate in an applied learning experience before graduating. Applied learning at Buffalo State includes research and creative projects, entrepreneurship, internships, practicum, study abroad, student teaching (clinically rich practice), and community service or service-learning projects. For example, of the 2024-25 graduating seniors reporting applied learning, 24 participated in creative or research projects, 24 were student teachers, 27 had internships, 8 had a practicum, and 10 participated in a community service or service-learning project. One student participated in an entrepreneurial experience. Six students reported a study abroad or away experience, but many studied abroad along with their other applied learning experience. There were thirty total Honors students who visited another country as part of an educational experience in 2024-25 (nearly 25% of all students traveling out of the US); including Canada and countries in Europe, Central and South America, and Africa. Not all of these students were seniors.

Honors students are involved in research and creative pursuits on campus at all levels. According to the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR), fourteen Honors students participated in Early Undergraduate Research Opportunity (EURO), four Honors students received 2024 Undergraduate Summer Research Fellowships (USRF), and seven received 2025 USRF funding. More than one-third (30 out of 87) of all 2024-2025 OUR awards were granted to Honors students. A total of 50 Honors students presented at the Student Research and Creativity Conference (SRCC) at Buffalo State in May 2025.

HON444 – Senior Experience

All Honors students must enroll in the 1-credit HON444 Senior Seminar before they complete their degree. Usually, they register for this course during the fall or spring of their senior year. Exceptions occur for the students in 3+1, 3+2, or 3+3 programs where they begin graduate or other study during their fourth year. The goals for this class are to prepare students for their next career or post-Bachelor's education steps and reflect on their experience at Buffalo State and in Honors. Students also read a book by a BABEL Literary Series author, discuss the book, and create a final project as part of that book and the Honors theme. In the fall 2024 semester students read *There There* by Tommy Orange and the spring 2025 class could choose to read *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* by Cheryl Strayed or *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride. Students were offered tickets to attend the BABEL talks. Fall 2024 HON444 enrollment was 59 students and 47 completed the spring 2025 semester. The HON444 syllabus is in Appendix VI.

As part of the HON444 class students also meet with the Director, Dr. McMillan, one-on-one to discuss their career goals and to check that they are clear to graduate. As part of this meeting, we make sure that all Honors students have participated in an Applied Learning experience and check in with students on their long-term plans and goals.



*Above Left: Welcome Back BBQ. Above Right: Ride the Cyclone Musical.
Below: HON189 trip to Niagara Square in Downtown Buffalo.*



Program Assessment

The Honors Program student experience is assessed through the HON111 and HON444 course evaluations and the Senior Exit Survey, which is administered as part of the HON444 course. Highlights of each of these are in Appendix VII.

The goals for the Introduction to Honors (HON111) class were to orient and connect students to Honors, Buffalo State, and the community surrounding Buffalo State. The HON111 course evaluations ask students to rate each aspect of the class on a Likert scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Each assignment or topic received a majority of “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” responses with the most popular being “The registration overview...helped me understand the course registration process” (97% positive), “The introductions on Google Slides were helpful for getting to know other honors students” (95% positive), “I benefitted from the Honors Leaders visiting class this semester” (90% positive), “I enjoyed the walking trip to Delaware Park” (88% positive), “The out-of-class involvement assignment challenged me to participate in opportunities...” (82% positive), and “The Bengal Connect assignment helped me know about some of the opportunities on campus” (81% positive). To make sure students feel connected with campus and the Honors Program we asked “HON111 made me feel connected to the Honors Program” (79% positive), “HON111 helped me get engaged on campus” (83% positive), “HON111 helped me connect with other... honors students” (77% positive). An additional goal of HON111 is to have students understand campus and the available resources. To that end we asked “HON111 helped me locate resources on the...campus” (89% positive) and “HON111 helped me understand what the different offices on campus do” (84% positive). Finally, we wanted to know if this course, and subsequently being part of the Honors Program, help students make the college transition easier and set them up for success; “HON111 helped make the transition to college life at Buffalo State easier” (80% positive) and “HON111 helped me understand my role in being successful at Buffalo State” (78% positive).

The primary goal for the HON444 class is to prepare students for the next step after their undergraduate degree. The HON444 course evaluations ask students to rate each aspect of the class on a Likert scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Students found completing and having a professional review their resume most helpful/important (92% positive both semesters). Additionally, students appreciated interviewing a professional in their field (88%-93% positive), attending a professional or leadership seminar (66%-93% positive), and reading and discussing a BABEL book (75%-93% positive). The HON444 experience connected students to the Honors Program and the Honors theme through meeting with Dr. McMillan and a book project. Students also appreciated these connections.

The Honors Senior Exit Survey is administered every semester to the HON444 students. It asks questions about the Honors student experience from a broad perspective. One hundred eight students enrolled in HON444 filled out the Senior Exit Survey in 2024-25. Of these, 84 came into Honors as first year students (and 80 took HON111) and 24 were continuing Buffalo State students. Only 7 respondents indicated they had never attended an Honors event. Most (39) had attended 1-3 events, 29 attended 4-6 events, and 33 attended 7 or more events. Senior students

who took HON111 in their first year, despite Covid disruptions, thought the class connected them to Honors and the campus. For some students, it helped them form lasting friendships (Table 10).

Table 10. Honors Senior Exit Survey results pertaining to the HON111 Introduction to Honors course. Results are shown as the % responding out of n=80 respondents.

HON111 helped me:	Agree/strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree/strongly disagree
Be involved on campus	84	10	6
Understand support services on campus and where to find them	80	10	10
Connect to Honors	71	19	10
Feel like an Honors student	69	21	10
Connect to Buffalo State	61	33	6
Form lasting friendships	41	25	34

Honors Seniors also appreciated the perks that came with the Honors Program. Early registration was the most popular perk, with 94% of the survey participants selecting “somewhat” or “very important” as their response (Table 11). The Honors faculty and access to free printing were also important perks (84% “somewhat” or “very important”). Bishop Hall housing was the least important, but also the largest N/A response. This perk would only be important to students who lived on campus, which are about half of the Honors students. Overall, most students appreciated most of the benefits they receive in the Honors Program.

Table 11. Honors Senior Exit Survey results pertaining to the importance of Honors perks. Results are shown as the % responding out of n=108 respondents.

Importance of	Somewhat/ very important	Neutral	Somewhat unimportant /not important	N/A
Early registration	94	0	2	4
Excellent Honors Faculty	84	6	5	5
Free printing	84	7	5	4
Small Gen Ed classes	74	16	8	2
Honors Staff	69	17	9	6
Honors-specific Scholarship	65	7	10	18
Honors Hub	62	22	12	4
Honors Events	56	28	12	4
Computer lab	56	19	21	4
Honors Adviser	52	18	26	5
Bishop Hall	34	8	23	34

Community Connections

Newsletter, Social Media, Marketing

The Honors Program, with assistance from student interns, publishes three newsletters each semester plus one “Senior Edition” issue at the end of the spring semester. These newsletters aim to showcase the life and rich experience of our Honors community. Readers include students, faculty, staff, administrators, donors, as well as prospective students and families. Stories often cover recent events, student accomplishments, and spotlights on Honors students, faculty, and alumni. Digital versions of the newsletters are emailed to all Honors students and faculty, and past issues may be viewed on our [Honors website](#). In 2023, the Northeast Regional Honors Council recognized the quality of our newsletter by awarding us first-place in their annual competition.

Other forms of communication come through our weekly announcements and social media. Each Monday during the semester, the Honors Program sends a curated email of upcoming events, academic deadlines, and general announcements to current members of the Honors Program community (students, staff, and faculty). Content also is posted on both Facebook (Buffalo State Honors Program) and Instagram (@buffstatehonors) frequently throughout the academic year. The Honors Instagram account gained over 100 new followers this year, officially passing 1,000 total. Each semester, a variety of Honors students takeover the account for a day to showcase their experience in classes, events, commuting, working, competing, or even studying abroad.

Although Admissions is primarily responsible for recruiting incoming students and inviting those who are eligible to join the Honors Program, the Honors Staff partners with Admissions in several ways to aide in recruitment. Chelsea Kettle serves as the Admissions liaison for Honors and supports prospective Honors students throughout their admissions process. Invited students receive a series of email communications describing various benefits of the Honors Program and reminding them to “secure your spot” using the Applicant Portal. The Honors Staff participate in numerous Admissions events including tabling at Fall Open Houses, hosting an Honors Meet & Greet at Spring Open House, conducting Virtual Information Sessions and One-On-One Appointments, and facilitating campus visits. This year, Director McMillan traveled with Admissions to Long Island and New York City for Accepted Student and Counselor information events.

Honors alumni receive a consolidated email newsletter after each semester with stories most relevant to them. Two alumni from 2001 and 2017 provided newsletter spotlights this year. Honors also tabled at the Homecoming Alumni Tailgate and partnered with recent alumna Emily Ersing to provide an M&T Credit Score 101 event.

National Professional Involvement

The Muriel A. Howard Honors Program is a member of the Northeast Regional Honors Council (NRHC) and the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC). Involvement in these organizations in the 2024-25 academic year included:

- 1) Assistant Director Matt Baran attended the NCHC Place as Text Faculty Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico in preparation to teach HON189 *The Queen City: Understanding Place in Buffalo, NY*.
- 2) Assistant Director Matt Baran attended the NRHC Conference in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania with one student who presented in the Art Gallery and participated in the “Publishing in Honors” panel discussion.
- 3) Three students published work in the NRHC *Illuminate* journal.
- 4) Director and Assistant Director reviewed submissions for the NRHC *Illuminate* journal.

Buffalo State Service

The Honors Program staff support campus student service areas throughout the year. For example, in 2024-25 Honors staff volunteered for Admissions events, New Student Orientation, Residence Life move in day, Part-time Job Fair, Homecoming tailgate, Bengala planning and execution, Commencement, and many other events. Along with these activities, the staff supports campus activities by sitting on committees and participating in many campus events. The list of committees in 2024-25 is below:

Director:

Academic Success Collaborative
 Bengal Success Network
 Provost Council
 Commencement Committee
 Banner IT Team
 Change Management Working Group
 Sat on 2 Biology Graduate student committees: Danielle Dolan and Jonathan Promowicz

Assistant Director:

Vice Chair of the Senate Student Welfare Committee
 At-Large Senator
 PSC Executive Board and Community Engagement Committee
 Homecoming Committee coordinating Office Door Decorating Contest
 Orientation Work Group (now New Bengal Orientation Committee)
 Bus Pass Appeals Committee
 BPAC Advisory Group
 Honors Advisory Board

Academic Advisor:

Honors Advisory Board
 Co-adviser for the photography club



Assistant Director Matt Baran attending NCHC Place As Text Faculty Institute in Albuquerque, NM.

Appendix I

Honors Retention Report

The Muriel A. Howard Honors Program has been through a transformation over the last eight years; from a scholarship-only program admitting only the highest achieving students (HON), through the Dean's Honors Program (DHP) and the current iteration of the program (MAH) [Table 1]. This transformation included changes in almost every aspect of the honors experience for students and the desire for the Honors Program to serve a larger group of high-achieving students at and entering Buffalo State. This report provides a snapshot of that transformation and how it has impacted retention of Honors students.

The Honors Program students have always been retained at a higher rate than the general population at Buffalo State University (Figure 1). Before 2017, all students in the Program were awarded both the Presidential and Honors Scholarships, had excellent high school GPAs, and many of these students came from local suburban schools (HON cohort, Table 1). These student attributes and scholarship privileges likely contributed to high retention rates in the HON cohort between 2010 and 2018 (Figure 1 and Figure 2). During this period, Honors students received benefits including Honors-specific housing and a computer lounge/study space in North Wing, and a set of Honors-specific classes they took with their peers.

The Dean's Honors Program was established to increase the enrollment and diversity in Honors. It welcomed high achieving students in 2017 and 2018 but with lower admissions GPA requirements (Table 1). These students were provided honors-specific housing (Perry Hall in 2017 and Bishop Hall in 2018), a computer lab in the Technology Building, Dean's Honors-specific courses, and several special activities (Welcome Back BBQ, Babel Literary event tickets, movie nights). In 2018, the Dean's Honors Program began welcoming "continuing" students from Buffalo State who were performing well (DHPC) and offering them an Honors experience.

In 2019, both the Honors scholarship students (HON) and the Dean's Honors students (DHP and DHPC) were combined into the current Muriel A. Howard Honors Program (MAH). The minimum admissions GPA was increased, and all students received the same classroom experience and expectations (Table 1). Successful Buffalo State students not already in the Honors Program continued to be recruited and welcomed to the program (MAHC). All Honors students selected from a larger variety of Honors courses offerings, enjoyed an increase in Honors student activities, and residential Honors students lived in Bishop Hall. In 2020, the Honors Program student computer lab moved to the 3rd floor of South Wing and an activity/study space was added – all within close proximity to the Honors staff, who were located on the same floor in South Wing. Table 2 gives numbers enrolled for each honors iteration and the non-honors enrollment for each year.

Starting in 2017, incoming students offered a spot in the Dean's Honors Program were required to "Opt-in" to participate in the program (DHPO). Those students who did not opt-in after being

invited to the program were tracked as well (DHPI). Figure 3 shows that students who chose to be in the Dean's Honors Program were retained at a higher rate than those who were not in the Dean's Honors Program but had the same incoming profile.

Admissions continued to track “invited” and “opted-in” students as the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program was implemented (MAHI and MAHO, respectively). Students were also offered the option to “decline” the invitation (MAHD). Figure 4 shows that, except for 2020 when Covid-19 shut down campus and required on-line work, students who chose to be in the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program were retained at a higher rate than students with the same demographic profile who chose not to be in the program. Figures 5 and 6 break down retention by female vs. male and resident vs. commuter status. In general, Honors Program participation brings higher retention.

In summary, enrollment in the Honors Program results in higher student retention after one year. This difference is very clear when comparing Honors students to the general population (Figure 1) but also holds for students who are not enrolled in Honors but with the same academic profile as Honors students (Figures 3-6). Two significant changes have occurred between 2010 and the current Muriel A. Howard Honors Program. First, the program enrollment has increased from ~200 total students to >600 students. Honors students now represent over 10% of the Buffalo State undergraduate student population. We are recruiting ~200 new students/year for the last two years without changing the academic requirements. That means Buffalo State is bringing in a larger group of high achieving students than it has in the past. The Honors Program is a very important part of that recruitment effort. For example, Table 2 shows that in 2019 there were 276 incoming students who would qualify for Honors – and the entry GPA that year was 90. In 2024, the number of incoming students who qualified for Honors was 459 – and the entry GPA was 91.

Second, the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program is now a fully realized, wrap-around support program. First year students are enrolled in a 1-credit honors class that introduces college life and the campus, helps with the high school-to-college transition, and encourages community building. Trained peer leaders are integrated with the first-year class and check in regularly with their assigned students. Peer leaders host activities and hold office hours throughout the first semester. The Honors spaces allow easy access to the Program staff, including a dedicated Academic Advisor. They are also provided free printing in a computer lab that is used extensively by Honors students. Residential students have the option to live in Bishop Hall with other Honors students.

Overall, the Honors Program is a valuable and important part of the Buffalo State community. It supports many great students who receive benefits for their hard work. We anticipate increased retention as the various support and student resources continue to mature and evolve to meet student needs.

Table 1. Comparison of the three Honors cohorts.

Honors Cohort	Years Active	HS GPA Required for Invitation	Required Buffalo State GPA	Honors Scholarship
HON	1984-2018	~ 95%	3.5	All students
DHP	2017-2018	86.5 % (2017), 88% (2018)	3.2	No students
MAH	2019-current	90% (2019-2020), 91% (2021-current)	3.3	Top ~1/3 students

Table 2. First-year enrollment for Honors and non-Honors students by year.

Data from Tableau 25 June 2025 (non-honors students) and an Honors Enrollment and Retention report.

Year	Non-Honors	Honors	DHP	DHPI	MAHO	MAHI/D
2010	1,412	44				
2011	1,344	47				
2012	1,268	60				
2013	1,268	52				
2014	1,797	59				
2015	1,765	70				
2016	1,562	57				
2017	1,598	44	161	365		
2018	1,592	27	122	214		
2019	1,522				123	153
2020	1,486				129	164
2021	1,196				138	214
2022	1,098				143	220
2023	1,289				156	206
2024	1,013				201	258

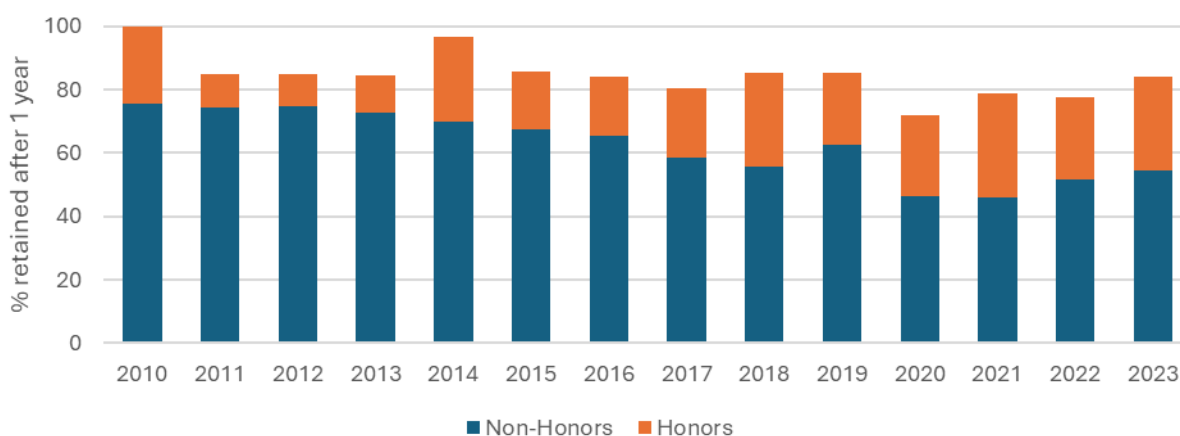


Figure 1. Honors vs. non-honors student retention from Fall 2010 through Fall 2023. Blue bars indicate % non-honors students retained, and orange bars indicate % Honors students retained. Honors students include all Honors cohorts (HON, DHP, DHPC, MAH, MAHC).

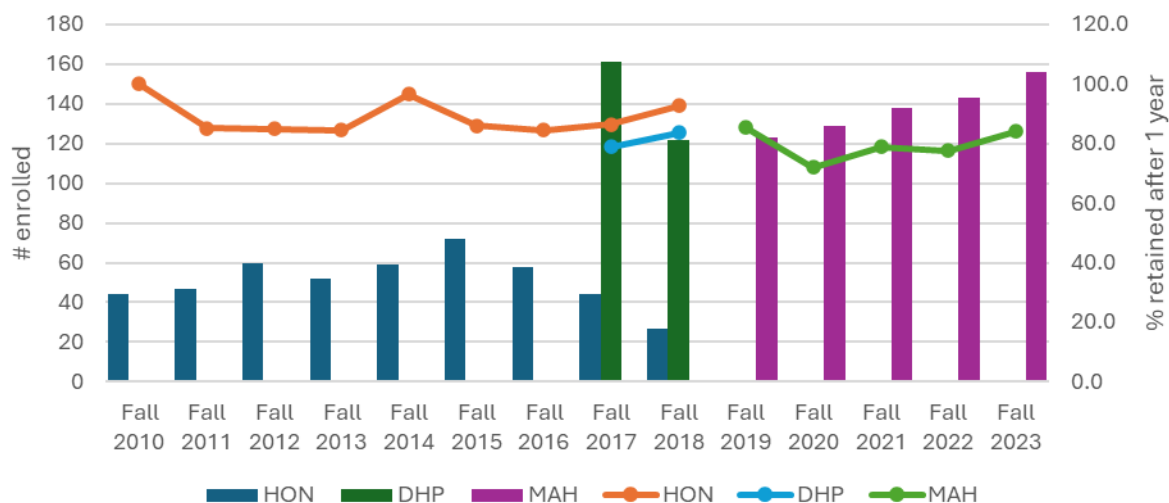


Figure 2. Honors Program retention from Fall 2010 through Fall 2023. Blue bars (enrollment) and orange lines (retention) from 2010 – 2018 are scholarship-only students. Green bars and blue lines in 2017 and 2018 are the Dean’s Honors Program students. Pink bars and green lines are the combined program (see Table 1 for specific cohort information).

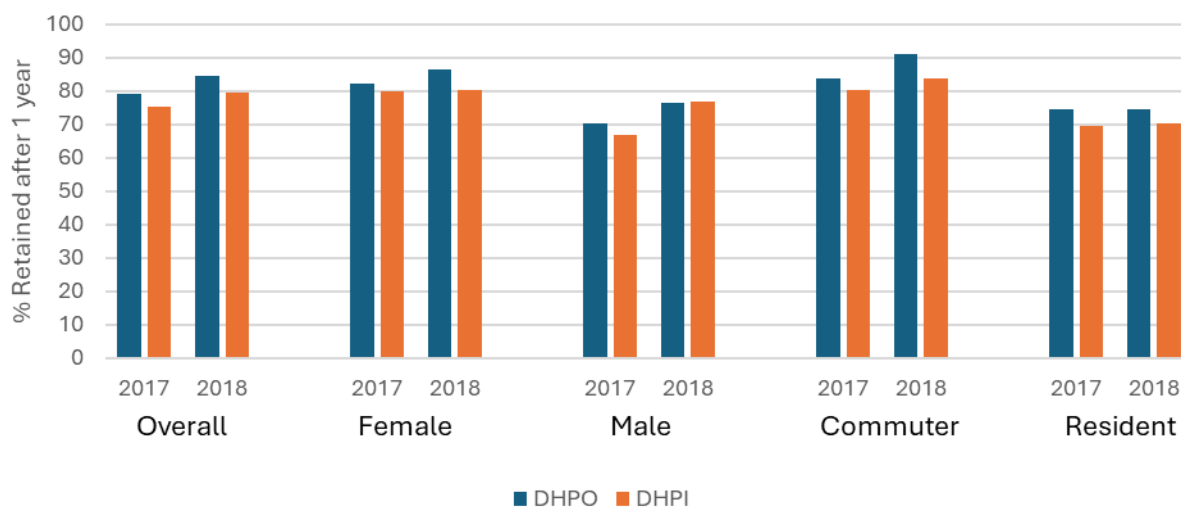


Figure 3. Dean’s Honors Program retention from Fall 2017 and Fall 2018 by demographic group. Blue bars are “Opted-in” Dean’s Honors students (DHPO) and orange bars are invited students who did not opt-in (DHPI).

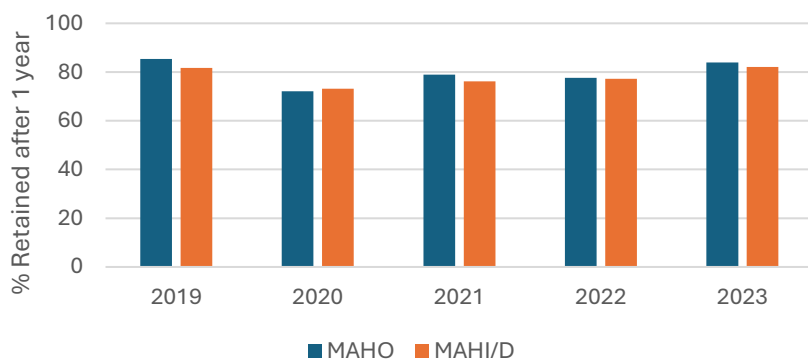


Figure 4. Muriel A. Howard Honors Program retention from Fall 2019 and Fall 2023. Blue bars are “Opted-in” Honors students (MAHO) and orange bars are invited students who did not opt-in or declined honors (MAHI/D).

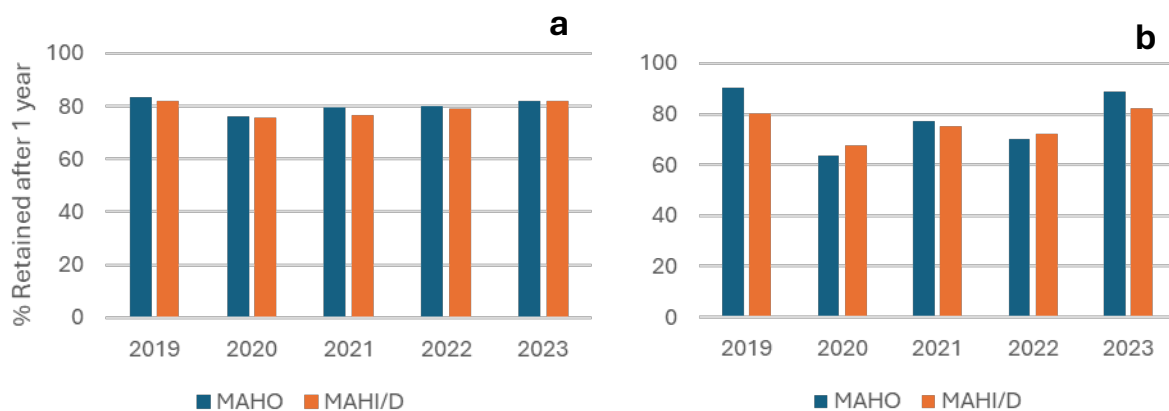


Figure 5. Muriel A. Howard Honors Program retention for female (a) and male (b) populations from Fall 2019 through Fall 2023. Blue bars are “Opted-in” Honors students (MAHO) and orange bars are invited students who did not opt-in or declined honors (MAHI/D).

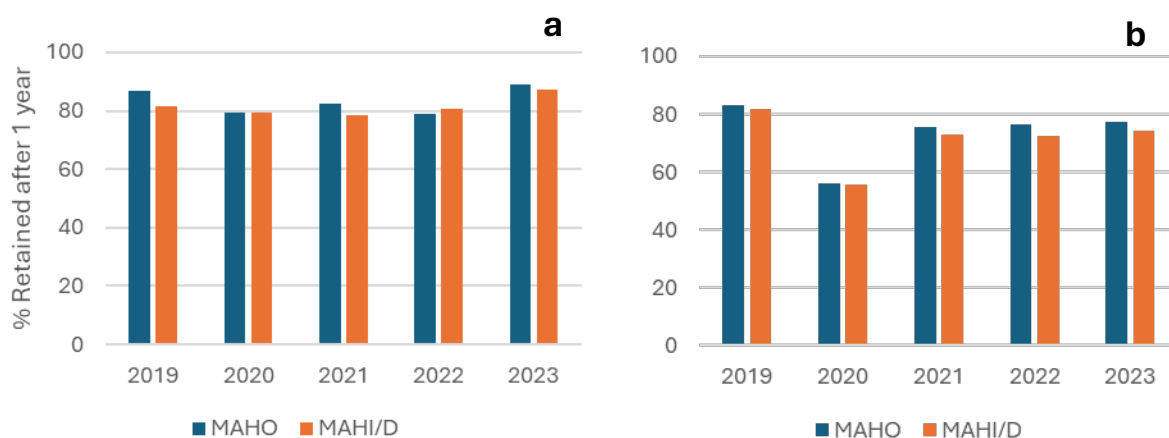


Figure 6. Muriel A. Howard Honors Program retention for commuters (a) and residents (b) from Fall 2019 through Fall 2023. Blue bars are “Opted-in” Honors students (MAHO) and orange bars are invited students who did not opt-in or declined honors (MAHI/D).

Appendix II

Scholarships and Student Funding

Honors Endowed Scholarship Providers 2024-2025

Byron Hill Scholarship
Chester A. Pugsley Scholarship
Corinne and Victor Rice Honors Endowment
Edward Brese Scholarship
Ethel Lockman Newman Fund
Gail E. and D. Bruce Johnstone All College Honors Scholarship
Genevieve and Richard Brown All Honors Scholarship
Graphic Controls Scholarship
Grunebaum Family All College Honors Scholarship
Hermina Takats Scholarship
Hodgson Ross Honors Scholarship Fund
Karen Kostecky Penfold All College Honors Scholarship Fund
Marion and Leonarda Cyran Scholarship
Mary Jane Orcutt Endowed Scholarship Fund
Dr. Muriel A. Howard Endowed Scholarship Fund
Nelson K. Upton Scholarship
Richard and Gretchen Stevenson Endowed Scholarship
Rosalie Turton Scholarship
Thelma and Gordon Jones Endowed All College Honors Scholarship



Bengala 2025.

Appendix III

HON111: Introduction to Honors Syllabus

Instructor: Matt Baran – baranmj@buffalostate.edu

Classroom: BISH 126

Office Location: South Wing 330 (*Inside the Honors Program Office*)

Office Hours: In-person or virtual appointments available throughout each week upon request

Section Meeting Times:

3528 – Wednesday 10:00-10:50am	1958 – Thursday 3:05-3:55pm	2328 – Friday 10:00-10:50am
1957 – Wednesday 11:00-11:50am	2326 – Thursday 4:30-5:20pm	2327 – Friday 11:00-11:50am
1956 – Wednesday 12:00-12:50pm		

Course Description: First-year Honors students are enrolled in this introductory class that orients them to the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program and to their education at Buffalo State. Students will learn about the many resources and opportunities available to them, gain valuable skills to support their academic experience, and create connections with fellow Honors students.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will...

- Make connections with other first-year Honors students
- Gain an understanding of the Honors Program requirements, perks, and opportunities
- Become familiar with resources, services, and supports available on-campus
- Attend activities and events in Honors, at Buffalo State, and in the surrounding community and document their involvement
- Read and discuss a recently published book
- Build valuable skills to aid in a successful transition to college

Required Course Material: Students are required to read or listen to *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros (available through campus bookstore, [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/s?k=The+House+on+Mango+Street), and elsewhere). Told in a series of poetic vignettes, this is a coming-of-age story of a young Latina girl growing up in Chicago. The author will be hosting a talk at Kleinhans Music Hall on Thursday, October 10th at 8:00pm as part of the [BABEL Literary Series](#) and Honors will provide FREE tickets to attend!

Grading Breakdown:

- Attendance and Participation: 33%
- Assignments (3 points each): 42%
- Out-of-class Involvement Journal: 25%

Brightspace: All course materials, presentations, announcements, homework submissions, due dates, and grades will be available on the HON111 Brightspace course page. Take time to explore the site and contact the instructor if you need any assistance navigating the materials.

Attendance: Regular attendance in HON111 is required not only for you to be successful but for the whole class to be successful. No one can replace the unique perspective and contributions that you bring to class each week! If you miss class, it is your responsibility to review the material for that week (posted on Brightspace) and submit any assignments.

You can make-up a missed class by attending another HON111 section in the same week

In-Class Participation: Active participation during in-class lectures, discussions, activities, groups, and assignments is expected.

Active participation looks like...

- Arriving on-time and prepared for class
- Listening and responding to the instructor
- Listening and responding to your classmates
- Thoughtfully engaging in discussions and assignments
- Managing distractions to your learning

Active participation does NOT look like...

- Showing up late or leaving class early
- Having side conversations
- Scrolling through social media
- Listening to music
- Completing work for other classes

Homework: Homework is assigned on most weeks throughout the semester and is due by Fridays at 11:59pm unless otherwise specified. Assignments typically expand further on the weekly topic or prepare for the upcoming week.

Late work policy: Students should make every effort to submit work on time and stick to the course schedule. Late homework assignments and missed in-class assignments will be accepted until the last day of class (December 6th at 11:59pm) for up to ½ credit (1.5 points).

Accommodations: Students who need accommodations to complete the requirements and expectations of this course because of a disability are invited to make their needs known to the [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) Office, E. H. Butler Library 160, (716) 878-4500, email sas@buffalostate.edu or complete their request by filling out the [Initial Accommodation Request form](#).

Students registered with SAS should use the [Accommodate Portal](#) to submit their "[Semester Request](#)" (Letter of Accommodation) every semester. This letter informs faculty of the student's academic accommodations.

Statement on Academic Misconduct: All Buffalo State students are expected to display honesty and integrity in completing course requirements. Any student suspected of engaging in academic misconduct (i.e. cheating, plagiarism, aiding in academic dishonesty, etc.) could face sanctions according to the [Academic Misconduct Policy](#). Students are highly encouraged to contact the instructor if they are worried about meeting assignment requirements or deadlines.

Course Schedule (Subject to Change):

WEEK	DATES	TOPICS	DUE THIS WEEK:
1	8/28-8/30	Course Overview, Syllabus, Honors Handbook	
2	9/4-9/6	Meeting Classmates, Honors Leaders	- Introduction Google Slide - Letter To Yourself
3	9/11-9/13	Delaware Park Day – MEET AT ROCKWELL HALL FRONT STEPS FACING ELMWOOD AVE!	- Find Yourself On Campus - Connections on Introduction Google Slides
4	9/18-9/20	Resource Scavenger Hunt	- Bengal Connect
5	9/25-9/27	Advisement with Ms. Stevens	- Upload Resource Commercial to Yuja
6	10/2-10/4	Academic Success and Time Management	- Ideal Study Space
7	10/9-10/11	Check in with Honors Leaders	- Mid-Semester Survey
8	10/16-10/18	<i>The House On Mango Street</i>	- Finish reading book before your class time
9	10/23-10/25	Wellness Dimensions and Self Care	- Book Review
10	10/30-11/1	Communication Challenge	- Visit Honors Leader Office Hours by November 1 st
11	11/6-11/8	Honors Leader Week	- Register for Spring classes
12	11/13-11/15	VIA Character Strengths	- VIA Strengths Survey before your class time
13	11/20-11/22	Small Group Meetings – SIGN UP FOR TIMES (No regular class)	- Gratitude Reflection
14	11/27-11/29	NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING	
15	12/4-12/6	Reflecting on the Semester, Course Evaluations, First Semester Vignette	- First Semester Vignette - Out-of-class Involvement Journal due by 12/6 11:59pm
CEP	12/9-12/12	NO CLASS	

Out-of-class Involvement Journal (Worth 25% of your grade):

PART ONE: Attend 9 different events, activities, programs, or opportunities over the course of the semester. You must attend at least one from each of the three categories below:

- **HONORS:** Annual Honors BBQ, Honors events, workshops, BABEL, guest lectures, Honors Leader office hours, Honors faculty talks, Open House tabling, etc.
- **ON-CAMPUS:** Homecoming activities, SLE programs, USG clubs/organization meetings, AFP Social Justice Festival, special events, study sessions, guest speakers, sporting events, theater productions, art exhibitions, concerts, commuter breakfast, Res Hall events, Bengal Kitchen events, Bengal Pause activities, CAPE workshops, meetings in your major, etc.
- **OFF-CAMPUS:** BABEL, Delaware Park, Walden Galleria Mall, downtown attractions, farmers markets, festivals, sporting events, concerts, architecture tours, museums, hiking, Niagara Falls, Riverworks, Canalside, West Side Bazaar, Frightworld, volunteering, voting in-person, Camp 1871, class field trips, etc.

***Athletes may use one game or team event from their sport towards this assignment**

PART TWO: Create a journal of your out-of-class involvement. This could be a PowerPoint presentation, Word document, video, physical notebook/journal/scrapbook, or similar format.

Your journal should contain the following:

- A. Cover Page / Title Slide** – Create a title for your journal and include your full name, “HON111 Fall 2024”, and any decorative elements to personalize your journal.
- B. Event Entries (9 or more)** – Each entry should be on a separate page/slide and include:
 1. Event title and date
 2. Category – HONORS, ON-CAMPUS, or OFF-CAMPUS
 3. Picture(s) – either a selfie/group photo at the event or other proof you attended (ex. Concert program, event giveaway, certificate, social media post, screenshot, etc.)
 4. Brief description – 1-3 sentences describing the opportunity/activity
 5. Reflection – One paragraph reflection. Use the following prompts for inspiration:
What did you like/dislike? Was it what you expected? Would you go again? What did you learn/gain? Would you recommend to other Honors students? Any other thoughts?
- **EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY**** – Complete additional events and log them in your journal to earn 1 extra point on your final HON111 grade per entry, up to 5 points maximum.
- C. Summary Reflection** – Conclude with a final entry summarizing your journal and reflecting on the semester. Consider these prompts: How did getting involved impact you or your transition to college? Did you grow or change because of your involvement? Is there anything you would do differently?

**Completed journal is due on Brightspace or in-person by December 6th at 11:59pm.
LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

Appendix IV

The Involvement Journal: A Signature First-Year Seminar Assignment

MATT BARAN

BUFFALO STATE UNIVERSITY

Abstract: An involvement journal assignment encourages first-year students to attend a variety of events and engage in meaningful reflection and development.

Keywords: student engagement; journaling; first-year seminar

Citation: *Honors in Practice*, 2024, Vol. 20: 301–303

First-year honors students at Buffalo State University, State University of New York (SUNY), create a semester-long involvement journal as part of their transition to college. Student involvement and engagement have long been associated with student development (Astin, 1984; Kuh, 2009), and the journal assignment pushes students to participate in and reflect on meaningful opportunities throughout their first semester. In recent years, particularly as students continue to emerge from the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, this assignment has evolved into the keystone of the first-year seminar that promotes exploration, connection, and self-reflection.

Students must attend nine events during the semester and document their activities through a photo journal. The journal format is left up to each student. A slideshow is the most popular choice, but students have also submitted videos, scrapbooks, blogs, and social media accounts. Regardless of the format, each journal entry must contain basic information about the event, proof of attendance (e.g., a photo of the student at the event), and one paragraph reflecting on their experience. This kind of reflective journaling has often been received well by students (Fritson et al., 2013) and can help them thoughtfully evaluate their chosen activities.

Perhaps the most valuable component of the journal is the concluding summary reflection, in which students must respond to prompts about their semester: Prompts include “How did getting involved impact you or your transition to college?” “Did you grow or change because of your involvement?” “Is there anything you would do differently?” The use of these scaffolding prompts can help solicit the most effective reflections from students who are still developing their metacognitive skills (Dinç et al., 2023). The resulting conclusions build self-awareness and provide administrators with exceptional insight into the experiences and growth of first-year honors students, particularly those who are less vocal during class.

Ample opportunities are available to customize this assignment so that it aligns with the values, demographics, and desired outcomes of any first-year seminar or honors program. For example, our program is evenly split between commuter and residential students, and our campus is situated in a vibrant, urban location. I require students to attend at least one event in each of three categories: honors, on-campus, and off-campus. This added structure pushes residents to explore their surroundings, helps commuters find resources and social connections on campus, and increases participation at our program-specific events. Another way to add structure is by allowing high-impact events to count twice. This simple incentive results in dozens of first-year honors students spending their Saturdays volunteering together in our institution’s annual day of community service. Since honors students are often academically motivated, I also offer extra credit for additional journal entries beyond the nine required to encourage continued involvement throughout the semester.

Initially, many students express apprehension about the assignment because of social anxiety, competing responsibilities, or assumptions about the time and effort required. I respond to these valid concerns by emphasizing the flexibility of this project. A one-on-one meeting with an honors peer mentor can count as an opportunity and would make an excellent option for more introverted students. Busy commuter students can opt to visit organizations tabling in the student union during their lunch hour on campus or to attend community events closer to their homes. We also embed several low-stakes but inviting events early in the semester—such as our program-wide Welcome Back Barbeque and Honors First-Year Kick-off—to help build confidence and encourage students to make progress on their involvement journals together. By the end of the semester, students who previously expressed apprehension often regret not participating in more events and praise the assignment for expanding their comfort zones.

The benefits of the involvement journal extend to honors administrators, too. Student reflections provide valuable feedback about their experiences at events, which can inform future honors programming and direct the promotion of certain campus opportunities. Qualitative data from reflections can also be used to assess the learning outcomes of a first-year seminar or honors program. Crucially, the involvement journal serves as an effective alternative to requiring and tracking student attendance at honors events. First-year students themselves select and document their own event attendance, which eliminates the administrative tracking task, instills greater autonomy in students, and promotes the opportunity for reflection.

Neither encouraging student involvement nor facilitating thoughtful reflection are novel ideas in honors education; individually, they are major elements of most first-year seminars. The involvement journal has the advantage of synthesizing these two practices, and it has been a highly successful approach with numerous positive outcomes that include flexibility for students and adaptability for instructors.

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- Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25(4), 297–308.
- Dinç, E., Wherley, M. S., & Sankey, H. (2023). Student perception of journaling as an assessment for an engagement experience. *Journal of Experiential Education*, doi.org/10.1177/10538259231203671
- Fritson, K. K., Nelson, D. A., Vontz, H., & Forrest, K. D. (2013). Students' perceptions of journaling in undergraduate classes. *Journal of Instructional Research*, 2, 3–9.
- Kuh, G. D. (2009). What student affairs professionals need to know about student engagement. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(6), 683–706.

The author may be contacted at baranmj@buffalostate.edu.

Appendix V

Honors Leaders Feedback

Do you think the Honors Leaders should be more or less integrated into the HON111 experience in the future? *Select responses from first-year students; 2024 Course Evaluations.*

- “Definitely more integrated! I loved my honors leaders, they provided relief and guidance during what was a stressful time.”
- “I think they should be more involved in HON111. They could lead activities, help with discussions, or offer advice. Having them more integrated would help new students feel more supported and create a stronger community. My Honors Peer Leader was great, I love her. She made me feel so comfortable and supported, and I think other students would really benefit from having that kind of guidance.”
- “I definitely think they should be more integrated because my honors leader was one of the best resources I had this semester and the opportunity to meet other honors leaders was sometimes limited to me as a music student with a packed schedule.”
- “I think more as long as it's not too much on them. They were genuinely one of the nicest parts of the program.”
- “I think they should be more because as much as I loved my honors leader I only saw her two or three times in the semester and it would be more helpful if they sent out weekly check ins or something along those lines.”
- “I think they should be more included because they are a very reliable resource and are also very nice. It can be hard for some students to go and talk to them or ask for help since they don't know them. But the more they engage with them the more comfortable they would be to reach out if they needed.”
- “I think they should come more often because it is nice to make an easy friend and be able to have full conversations with and participate in the challenges with them. They get to tell their experiences, so we can learn and make the best of our college experience.”
- “More integrated because we get to hear from our peers in college and the different and fun experiences they have had. They were personal and made me feel welcome.”
- “More integrated, I feel like it is easy to be scared to reach out, I feel like if they were more integrated I would've had a stronger bond.”
- “More! I loved having them in class because it made it more fun.”
- “The Honors Peer Leaders need to be more involved in HON111. Their advice and experiences make students feel more supported and connected. If they took on more roles, like leading discussions or running workshops, it could really help build a sense of community and give important tips for getting through the Honors program.”
- “They should have been more integrated as they can connect with us as the same level and help us through our problems around campus very easily, as they are about our age only.”

Appendix VI HON444: Honors Senior Seminar Syllabus

Dr. Amy McMillan
Fall 2024

Office: South Wing 330A

Office Hours: Any time by appointment – in-person, by phone, or in virtual Teams room

Email: mcmillan@buffalostate.edu – please use HON444 in the subject!

Phone: 878-3371

Required Text: *There, There* by Tommy Orange

Class Description:

This course is planned as final course in the Buffalo State Honors course sequence. Students will evaluate and share career goals, skills and professional dispositions; reflect on their academic journey related to the Buffalo State institutional learning outcomes and their required applied learning experiences. Additionally, we will use this class to explore contemporary issues and evaluate ourselves as thinkers and learners at the end of the journey to a bachelor's degree.

Course Outcomes:

Students will ...

1. *Develop skills to further career aspirations;*
2. *Articulate reflections about the impact of their Honors and academic program on their cultural fluency, urban engagement, scholarship and creative activity, and ethical reasoning;*
3. *Create an abstract or a description of their applied learning project required as part of the Honors Program (internship, clinical placement, practicum, service-learning, community service, creative work, research, or study away);*
4. *Explore and reflect on current issues and articulate reactions in an expressive product.*

Course Requirements:

Participation and attendance: This class will be taught **in-person or virtually** (MS Teams).

There will be 4-5 class meetings during the semester. Students will be given a choice for how to attend each required meeting. You will also be required to attend two workshops or seminars of your choice (selections will be provided and may be virtual or in-person).

Assignments: There will be assignments throughout the semester divided into units (Career Development, Applied Learning, Honors Theme/Book Project, Honors). Requirements for each assignment will be clearly stated along with a dropbox and a deadline. Late assignments may be penalized and for some assignments may not be accepted.

Presentation: You will give a presentation at the end of the semester that includes describing your Applied Learning experience and presenting your social justice expressive project.

Grading:

Participation and attendance:	20% of course grade
Career Development Assignments:	25% of course grade
Applied Learning Assignments:	10% of course grade
Honors Theme/Book Project:	30% of course grade
Honors Reflection Assignments:	15% of course grade

Course Breakdown (500 total pts):

- 1) Career Development (125 pts)
 - a. Career aspirations and exploration of CAPE website - 10
 - b. Resume - 20
 - c. cover letter or personal statement - 15
 - d. personal website/social media - 10
 - e. interviews/deportment - 40
 - f. Workshop or leadership reflections - 30
- 2) Applied Learning – Abstract or description process and purpose (50 pts)
 - a. Project outline and description and explanation of fit to applied learning objectives
- 3) Honors Theme/Book Project - 2024-25 (150 pts)
 - a. Theme: **Cultivating Community and Connection**
 - b. Book Review - 25
 - c. Creative/Reflective Project - 70
 - d. Video or written description of project – 25
 - e. “6 Word Memoir” - 30
- 4) Honors Reflection (75 pts)
 - a. Institutional Learning Outcomes
 - i. Cultural Fluency- Culture, disagreement, privilege, and bias
 - ii. Urban Engagement- Opportunities and challenges of urban settings and citizenship
 - iii. Scholarship and Creative Activity- Framing, investigating, and solving problems creatively
 - iv. Ethical Reasoning- Honor, conscientiousness, professionalism, and ethics
 - b. What has your Honors experience been like for you? Where could it improve, where did it work well?
 - c. Qualtrics response on above – 35
 - d. Graduation Slide – 40
- 5) Class participation (100 pts)
 - a. First Class – 10
 - b. Applied Learning Discussion – 20
 - c. Book Discussion – 25
 - d. Final Class Presentation and Participation - 45

Course Expectations:

- Meet with class as expected throughout the semester. Be respectful and involved in each of these meetings – whether online or in person. **If you are online, video on and active participation are required.**
- If we meet in person, we will follow the campus health guidelines, which may include wearing a mask, regular cleaning, and social distancing. Expectations will be posted on Brightspace if they change throughout the semester. Please do not meet in person if you are experiencing any Covid symptoms or have any other indication of illness.

Students with Accessibility Needs:

Students who need accommodations to complete the requirements and expectations of this course because of a disability are invited to make their needs known to the Student Accessibility Services (SAS, <https://sas.buffalostate.edu/>) Office, E. H. Butler Library 160, (716) 878-4500, email sas@buffalostate.edu or complete their request by filling out the Initial Accommodation Request Form (https://buffalo-accommodate.symplicity.com/public_accommodation/).

Students registered with SAS should use the Accommodate Portal (<https://buffalo-accommodate.symplicity.com/>) to submit their “Semester Request” (Letter of Accommodation, <https://sas.buffalostate.edu/submit-your-semester-request-students>) every semester. This letter informs faculty of the student's academic accommodations.

Students with Other Needs:

The Dean of Students Office helps students navigate the college experience, particularly during difficult situations such as personal, financial, medical, and/or family crises. If you or someone you know needs support, services are available. For a list of support services and information, please visit <http://deanofstudents.buffalostate.edu/>, 716-878-4618 or stop by 311 Campbell Student Union during business hours.

Academic Integrity:

Needless to say, violations of academic integrity are not consistent with the community standards of Buffalo State College or with the Honors Program. This includes *plagiarism*, which involves submitting as one's own work part or all of any assignment that is copied, paraphrased or purchased from another source (including A.I. options), without the proper acknowledgement of that source. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the instructor. Other violations of academic integrity include cheating; fabricating data; facilitating academic dishonesty, that is, helping another individual violate these policies; and attempting to gain advantage over fellow students by lying about the need for an extension, destroying library materials, etc. Violations will result in a failing grade for the assignment in question, **a failing grade for the course**, and referral to the Dean as per the student handbook. This is a serious matter, and such behavior will not be tolerated.

Procedures Regarding Disruptive Individuals:

Disruptive behavior by students in our class will not be tolerated. If we deem a student to be acting in a disruptive or threatening manner, we will exercise our right to ask that individual to leave the classroom. If refused, we will exercise our right to notify University Police. The responding officer will determine whether an arrest should be made or whether a referral to medical or counseling staff is appropriate. If a student is perceived as a danger to himself, herself, or others, the Dean of Students may propose an interim suspension until a hearing is held. Any student removed from class will have the right to a hearing.

Appendix VII

Honors Program Assessment

Quotes from HON111 Course Evaluations:

- “Being an honors Student helped me make friends and become more comfortable with the people around me and open up more.”
- “Explaining registration and the meeting with the Honors leaders was the most helpful. I know that some non-honors students struggled with that process, so that was really helpful.”
- “The coolest thing about HON111 was how it really helped us grow as individuals and make connections with others through different activities, like keeping a journal of events. The way the class was set up made it easy to balance schoolwork and new experiences.”
- “I like that Matt was always welcoming and enthusiastic about this class and I think that the walk around Delaware park or even the majority of activities are something that incoming honors students next year could benefit from.”
- “I enjoyed doing the out-of-class involvement journal. It helped me get out of my comfort zone and do things I don't usually do. I usually like being on my own but this assignment helped me get to know other people better.”
- “I loved that we met each week and I loved the team activities or group activities that we did sometimes in class such as the cutting the paper activity. It was a very welcoming and inclusive class which is great for new incoming students.”
- “I really enjoyed how eager Matt seemed to make sure everyone knew we had a place here. By meeting with our honors groups, splitting tables into groups, and doing engaging activities I felt that I was able to make connections with people that I may not have otherwise. Also, I believe that being given information about events, advisement, and other important things on campus was extremely helpful.”
- “What I liked best about HON111 was the supportive environment. The class was small, and we had a lot of discussions, which made me feel comfortable and connected with my peers. The incoming Honors students next fall would really benefit from this. The class creates a space where we can be ourselves and learn from each other.”
- “I liked Matt's positive attitude the most, you can tell he really cares to help all the students in whatever way he can. I think forcing some social interaction is good for the freshman, perhaps not excessively but I didn't feel it was too forceful this semester, so keep it up!”
- “The out-of-class involvement assignment gave me the incentive to attend events that I otherwise wouldn't have. The assignment helped me realize how much I love creating memories with friends and how valuable they are in the long run.”
- “I really enjoyed the involvement journal assignment because it gave me and my friends a reason to go out and not stay inside doing homework all day. Also I liked see how it came together when I finished the assignment. Seeing all of the different things I did made me feel very accomplished and happy that I did them.”

Quotes from HON444 Course Evaluations:

What aspects of this class did you think were most useful or interesting?

- “I enjoyed the parts of this class asking me to reflect upon my experience through college. This includes the graduation slides and the resume building/interview, as it encourages me to see how I have progressed emotionally and professionally.”
- “I found the resume, cover letters, workshops, and interview interesting. They were super informative, especially since some people, including me haven't checked out the CAPE resources and the people in Cleveland Hall were super helpful to work with us, I wish I had known sooner.”
- “The career development parts of this class were the most useful to me. I didn't realize how unprepared I was with my resume and overall career readiness. I wish I had more time to dedicate to the workshops, and that I had gone to teacher recruitment day earlier in my college career, just to be there more than be recruited.”
- “I think that the most useful part of this class was interviewing a professional. I liked the idea of having to reach out to those in your field, as this can make your name recognizable later on to those who may be hiring. I thought it was great to hear about my field from someone with lived experience in it.”
- “I really enjoyed reading the book *There, There* it was very interesting to read about a demographic that isn't necessarily covered that often in today's media.”
- “Reading the book was enjoyable because it is not often I read for fun during the semester (usually it's just textbooks for 3.5 months) but this book split up my time in a good way. I actually loved the story I read and felt I could apply the lessons throughout to my own life. I also really enjoy the book project because it pushes me to be a bit more creative with what I have learned and is a needed break from writing papers/getting out of my comfort zone (I have always appreciated this about every honors class I have taken!).”

Quotes from Senior Exit Survey:

What do you think we do particularly well for Honors students?

- “Establishing community and confidence in campus living; provide support with potential needs (including printing, funding, advisement); ability to get the classes you want on your schedule.”
- “Just assisting students whenever in need, and the extra care and advisement which they get from Honors, I don't think anyone gets that on campus.”
- “Fostering a supportive and close-knit community for Honors students. Encouraging interactions with others. Providing engaging events.”
- “I think the first year Honors-specific advisement is extremely helpful, it made the transition to college less stressful knowing someone was going to help with my academic roadmap.”
- “The perks are really nice, such as free printing and early registration. It shows that working hard pays off.”
- “I think the honors program does a great job at preparing students for their future endeavors. HON 444 was incredibly helpful taking this semester as is has help me prepare for life outside of college.”

- “Always being there. It was very easy to get in contact with someone and get help when needed.”
- “I think that the classes given and offered are quality. I think students should take classes that are not a part of their major because it helps people grow and expand their horizons.”
- “The range of resources and benefits that come with being an honors student is truly impressive.”
- “I think that the Honors Program does a good job of helping first year students become acclimated to Buff State and give a lot of opportunities to not only be involved in the communities and organizations on campus but also provide events that can be fun or better help students develop the skills necessary to become young adults.”
- “Allowing students opportunities to grow as people. From all of what you do I think the honors hub does the best in this. The classes you offer focusing on personal growth are amazing. Having a safe space for engagement, events, and even just a place to do your homework is great.”
- “Providing resources for student success and challenging students to think deeper about their academic experience.”
- “There's always someone willing to help and support. I appreciated all of the events the Honors Program held (even if I didn't go to many).”
- “First year students are welcomed in and are provided with resource to make the transition to college efficient and easy.”
- “I think providing a space where more academically driven students are gathered together really helps push everyone to work harder together.”
- “I think the [weekly announcements] are super informative and helpful even though I didn't go to events advertised. They helped me keep track of deadlines and upcoming important campus events. The courses are also a great part of the program.”
- “There is so much support and kindness offered by the Honors staff, and for that I am so grateful.”
- “The Honors program and their staff did an amazing job making students feel both comfortable and welcome. It is entirely possible for an Honors program to be stuffy and stale: the environment here is the opposite of that.”
- “Connecting Honors students with the program and providing them with a place to go. The Honors Program has truly been such a home on campus and I owe so much of my college experience to being in the Honors program.”
- “I love attending the events when I have the time and really appreciate access to the printer and the space in the honors hub.”
- “The classes were interesting and there is a good support network, you always know who you can talk to about an issue instead of being bounced around from person to person.”
- “Joining the honors program made my experience here 1000x better and gave me a smaller community to be a part of where I felt a part of. Thank you!”

What would you have wanted in an Honors Program that we did not provide?

- “Everything was pretty great, but potentially in the future maybe adding more trips for the program. To get students off campus together and have time away.”
- “Additional help with scholarships and more opportunities to do internships.”
- “More Honors based scholarships and tech-related courses.”
- “As there is an HON111 and HON444 to begin and end the honors undergrad program, I feel that it may be beneficial to have another 'check in' during end of sophomore year. While that does not have to be another 1 credit course, I think having something at that midway point may be helpful to students!”
- “Reduced or free parking passes for commuter students.”
- “More STEM related courses.”

What could we have done better?

- “Speak more with the students about ideas for events.”
- “Perhaps increased opportunities for engagement with research (outside of a formal conference structures).”
- “I think more information and inclusivity with scholarships or things along the lines.”
- “As a commuter, having more events in the middle of the day or early afternoon would be very helpful as I would be more likely to attend.”
- “I just think the variety of certain classes by semester were lacking sometimes, which made it difficult to make decisions on classes that are required for a separate major and the honors program.”
- “Since there are so many education students in Honors from a variety of areas, I would have loved some Honors-specific education opportunities to connect the areas.”
- “Given the amount of resources and challenges present at an institution like Buffalo State, the Honors Program has done an amazing job. I do not believe you all can do much better.”
- “Bring a more academic emphasis instead of social, or tie the two together more frequently especially first semester.”
- “Better course timings, a lot of honors courses are offered at the same time.”
- “Diversifying the program, allowing for more leeway for new students—(transfer and incoming first years).”
- “I do not feel that the Honors program is particularly diverse or discusses cultural fluency.”
- “Honors has in the past, and still does in some ways seem very white, which is somewhat strange to find in an institution that has so many people of color. I feel like the Honors program could benefit from doing more outreach to students who couldn't join Honors in their first year but have the GPA to do it later.”



Above: Honors Leaders Retreat. Bottom left: Honors Halloween. Bottom right: Senior Sendoff.



Graduating seniors at Honoring Honors [H²] annual recognition event, March 14, 2025.



MURIEL A. HOWARD HONORS PROGRAM

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