



**BUFFALO STATE**  
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# Muriel A. Howard Honors Program

Official Newsletter



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# Buffalo State Gives 2024

## Thank you Honors Program Donors!

Buffalo State’s Annual Day of Giving took place March 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> and was a resounding success! The fundraising campaign garnered support from nearly 500 donors including alumni, faculty, staff, community members and current students who gave more than \$164,000 to various areas across campus.

At the time of writing, \$1,200 was raised for Honors by 17 generous donors. This year, the Honors Program hosted three different funding opportunities that each support Honors students in unique ways. Learn more about our three funds below, and a HUGE thank you to all who provided the financial support needed to help sustain our Program!



### MURIEL A. HOWARD HONORS PROGRAM FUND

This fund supports a wide range of out-of-the-classroom experiences, spaces, and benefits! Our primary focus this year was to raise money for the Honors Leaders peer mentoring program to offset costs such as mentor stipends and leadership retreat expenses. The fund also helps us offer events throughout the year like the Annual BBQ, ticketed performances, Honors Halloween, and many more.

Additionally, we have been fortunate to be able to continually improve our Honors spaces in South Wing 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor. For example, the fund supports free printing in the Academic Suite and free snacks in the Honors Hub. Funds have also been used in recent years to pay for much-needed upgrades including brand new carpeting, new air conditioning, new window blinds and a new student printer.

### MURIEL A. HOWARD HONORS PROGRAM SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Each year, a small group of high-achieving first-year and transfer applicants are offered an Honors Scholarship equivalent to \$2,500/year to help them pursue an Honors education at Buffalo State. Contributions to this fund enable us to offer a greater number of scholarships to incoming Honors students.



### HONORS ENDOWED ENHANCEMENT FUND

Current Honors students may apply for funding through the Honors Endowed Enhancement Fund to offset the cost of academic experiences such as conferences, research opportunities, internships, study away, creative projects and more.

The Endowed Enhancement Fund was launched in 2022 and has already supported over 30 students. This fund has supported study away travel to Kenya, Spain, Dominican Republic, Italy, and U.S. locations. Students have attended professional meetings around North America including Florida, New York City, Toronto, and Chicago. This fund has also supported creative projects including a TV series pilot and several senior art exhibits. Contributions help us assure continued funding for many years to come.



# Julianna Kraft '21

## Honors Alumni Spotlight



**SHARE ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY SINCE GRADUATING BUFF STATE**

2021 was an odd time to graduate from college. The adrenaline from 2020 had since worn off, but life still wasn't quite back to normal. I had chosen Hospitality and Tourism as my major, however the industry that I had chosen to dedicate my last four years to was at a standstill.

About two months into the summer I was still browsing LinkedIn and drafting cover pages. I had interviewed for a position at a financial firm that I had been very excited about, but unfortunately I was turned down at the last step of the process. One Sunday afternoon at a friend's garden party I was introduced to a young man from Missouri. He told me he was in town working on a film called *Cabrini* and that they were looking for local talent to work on set. After submitting my resume I got called in for an interview. Based on my high-end service

background the producers wanted to offer me a position as personal assistant to their lead actress, Cristiana Dell'Anna - Mother Cabrini herself!

The rest of the summer was an adventure. The job was a lot of fun, but also extremely demanding. As dazzling and glamorous as the film industry could be, I realized it wasn't for me. As filming wound down and I was wondering where I should go next, another fortuitous opportunity presented itself. I received a call-back from the financial firm I had interviewed with earlier in the summer. They had a vacant position and were wondering if I wanted to come in for a second interview. The company was called Sandhill Investment Management. I came in for an interview and they offered me the position. Joyfully I accepted and I have been there ever since. I began as a front desk assistant, training in the client service department. Now, almost three years later, I am a full client Service Associate supporting four different financial advisors.

**WHO WAS YOUR FAVORITE HONORS PROFESSOR?**

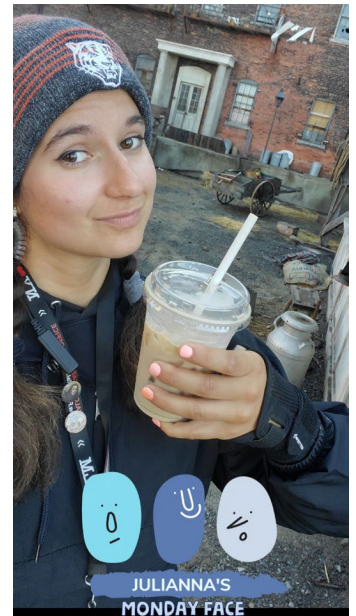
My favorite Honors Professor was Dr. Jason Grinnell. He inspired me to pursue my philosophy minor. He held his students to a high standard, and was not afraid to critique us, but always with the kind and encouraging authority of someone who wanted to see us excel. He made me realize that true wisdom is in learning, not just in knowing.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU SHARE WITH CURRENT STUDENTS?**

If I had some advice to give to current Honors students it would be to keep an open mind and a learning mentality. As cliché as it is to say, everything you do teaches you a little bit more about yourself. I promise you, there is so much about the world you don't know yet. And that's ok! Be willing to take criticism, don't be afraid to change your mind, and embrace every obstacle as an opportunity for growth.



Julianna with 'Cabrini' actress Cristiana Dell'Anna



Photos from the set of 'Cabrini' filmed in Buffalo



## *Honoring Honors*

On March 15<sup>th</sup>, we held our annual Honoring Honors [H<sup>2</sup>] recognition event! Over 100 Honors students, their guests and families, and faculty members enjoyed an evening of celebration. The upcoming Total Solar Eclipse served as this year's theme and made for a truly memorable experience! Chartwells offered a delicious menu following the path of totality from Texas to Midwest BBQ to Buffalo... to the moon! Attendees also received free eclipse glasses to safely observe the moon block the sun on April 8<sup>th</sup>.



The program featured graduating seniors JT Flores, Joe Cannizzaro, Fasika Zewdie, and Angela Nicotera who each shared inspiring messages with the audience. Interim Provost Dr. Amitra Wall offered words of wisdom for Honors graduates, and two special staff members received recognition for their immense impact on Honors (see p. 5). Thank you to everyone who attended and who contributed to this amazing event! Enjoy these photos courtesy of student photographer Marykate Schmitz and campus photographer Jesse Steffan-Colucci!





### Campus Partner & Staff Recognition

Admissions Advisor **Chelsea Kettle** ('14, '17) has served as the Admissions liaison for Honors since 2018. She works year-round to recruit amazing students to the Honors Program and support them throughout the application process. Chelsea's outstanding collaboration and dedication to the Honors Program are what inspired the new Campus Partner Recognition and naturally led to her being the first recipient.

Administrative Assistant **Celestine Simmons** has worked for Honors since 2018. She expertly supports all aspects of the Program as it continues to grow, and her warmth and impact extend far beyond the walls of South Wing to every single corner of campus. She is truly extraordinary, exceptional, and essential to the students, staff and families of the Honors Program.

# Professor Lorna Perez

## Honors Faculty Spotlight



### SUMMARIZE YOUR CAREER AND SOME FUN FACTS ABOUT YOU.

I moved to Buffalo immediately after finishing my undergraduate degrees in Philosophy and English at Creighton University, in Omaha, Nebraska. I began my graduate work at the University of Buffalo in English in 2000. I earned my MA in 2003 and then my PhD in English in 2008. My dissertation focused on Latina Literature and representations of Empire. I began teaching at Buffalo State in the fall of 2008, and am currently an Associate Professor of English, and have affiliations with Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, as well as Africana Studies. I'm a native of California, born in the East Bay, and raised in the Central Valley, which in some ways prompted my interest in Ethnic Studies and Latina studies, as I grew up in a city—Stockton, CA—that was marked by extreme wealth and extreme poverty, as well as incredible diversity (Stockton was one of the first major US cities to not have a single ethnic/racial majority, but rather is a majority/minority city). In terms of hobbies, I love live music, especially Jazz, and I am a bit of a food snob, though I also love diners. I write creatively, as well as academically and my creative work has been published in *elima*, *The Mississippi Review*, *Blaze Vox*, *Label me Latina* and *The Buffalo News*. I love traveling, though much of it lately has been to see family in New York, California, and the Caribbean. I come from an academic family; my older sister and brother-in-law are cultural anthropologists, my younger sister and brother-in-law are economists, one brother is a high school math teacher, and my oldest brother is a police officer in San Francisco.

### WHAT ARE YOUR RESEARCH AND LITERARY INTERESTS?

My research interests are on contemporary Latinx Literature. I have published articles on Puerto Rican authors Esmeralda Santiago, Judith Ortiz Cofer and Ernesto Quiñonez, Chicana authors Sandra Cisneros and Alicia Gaspar de Alba, and I have a chapter in a new critical edition on Magical Realism on Latin American great Gabriel Garcia Marquez. My current project is on the Afro-Puerto Rican writer Dahlma Llanos Figueroa's novel *Daughters of the Stone*. I have larger

projects in the works on Latina Neo-Slave Narratives, and Latinx Literature and Spectrality. I am the Special Issues Editor of *Label me Latina*, an e-journal of Latina/o/x Literary production in the 20th and 21st centuries, and right now we are finishing up our next summer issue on Latinx Graphic Novels, which will go live in early summer. This year, I am also serving as a SUNY Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice fellow.

### HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING FOR HONORS?

I am not sure what exact semester I began teaching for Honors, but I am guessing it has been close to 10 years now. I taught the Humanities Seminar for a number of years and lately have been teaching the Diversity Seminar. I usually try to have this follow a theme of some kind, from issues of structural power, to general overviews. Next year, I am teaching it on Borderland Literature and immigration, which I am really excited about.

### DESCRIBE YOUR DREAM HONORS COURSE TO TEACH IF GIVEN INFINITE FUNDING?

I get to teach my dream Honors course pretty much every semester, so this is a hard question to answer. As a literary scholar, I do not need fancy lab equipment or to be in the field, or things like this; to do my work and to teach the things I want to teach, I need a library and a notebook. That said, in this dream world of infinite money, I would love to be able to teach Latinx Literature and diaspora in such a way that we could go to New York City, look at some of the archives at Centro (the Center for Black and Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College), as well as the Schomburg collection at the New York Public Library, and then catch a JetBlue down to Viejo San Juan, over to Santo Domingo, then on to Havana, back up to Miami and Orlando, over to Chicago and then finish back in Buffalo. Thinking about the various locations of diaspora, and how those places shape and in turn are shaped by diasporic communities would be incredible.

### WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE TO THE CLASS OF 2024?

It's hard to answer this question without falling into cliché, but I suppose I would say something like this: The world is large and full of possibilities you are only just beginning to dream up. Allow yourself the time and the space to be in the world—to wander in it, to explore it, to go to all those places you thought you might want to see one day. None of this is a straight path leading to some foregone conclusion; allow yourselves the detours and the missteps. Learn to do the New York Times crossword. Keep your passport current. Watch weird films you don't understand. Make cool stuff because you can. Listen to stories different than your own. Of course the world is broken; do not let that deter you. Do good. Be brave. Because the world needs you.

Register for HON303 Borderland Literature with  
Professor Perez this Fall: TR 4:30-5:45pm!

# Spring 2024 Honors Leadership Workshop: Creative Collaboration and FourSight

Join us for a highly interactive workshop exploring the attitudes, behaviors, vocabulary, and skills that contribute to effective collaboration, creative thinking, and problem solving. Participants will use the **FourSight Thinking Profile** to understand their problem-solving preferences and blind spots. This workshop will challenge your creativity, your teamwork, and your communication skills alongside other Honors students!

**Friday, April 26**  
**3:00-6:00pm**  
**Tech 358**

**FREE DINNER  
INCLUDED!**

**RSVP By April 16!**

\*Before the workshop, participants will complete the **FourSight Profile** online. This **37-question assessment** takes **10-15 minutes** to complete.



You must **join** our Honors Program organization to view this event link

## Meet the Facilitator

**Kristen Peterson** brings a big dose of passion, energy & infectious can-do mentality to her work as an Innovation Catalyst as well as 20 years of hands-on experience for global clients such as Clorox, Disney, Google, Intel, Kellogg's, L'Oréal, Michigan State University, Ontario College of Art & Design University, PepsiCo, Pzifer, Starbucks, the United Nations, Wavemaker. She is an Adjunct Faculty for the Master of Science degree program in Creativity and Change Leadership at SUNY Buffalo State where she also received her MSc. She is a former Director of the Creative Problem Solving Institute and a founder of Mindcamp Canada. For fun and to stretch her brain, she completed the Improvisation Program at Second City Toronto.



# Congratulations to Gabby McCrory! Winner of the 2024 Honors T-Shirt Design Contest



## Finalists:



Gabby McCrory



Grace Maldonado