

MURIEL A. HOWARD HONORS PROGRAM

Official Newsletter



Honoring Honors [H²] pg. 2-3

Skating Toward Success pg. 4-5

Alumni Spotlight: Morgan Harrington pg. 6-7

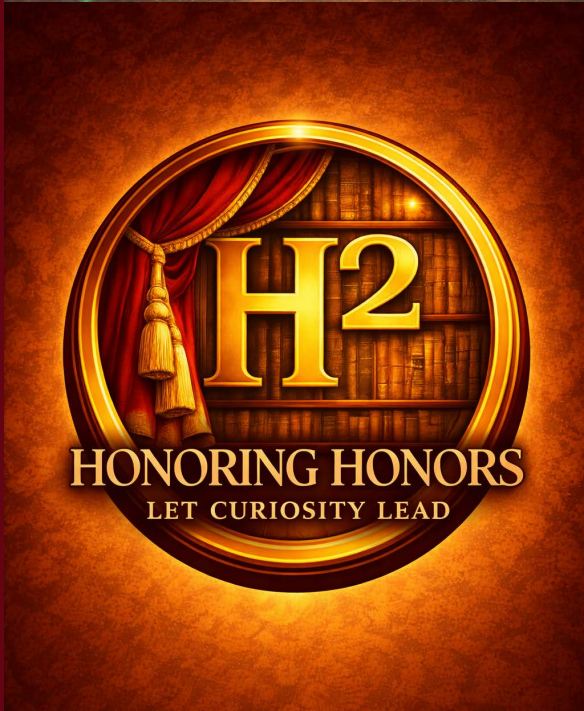
Honors Students Lead the Way pg. 8-9

Fall 2026 Honors Seminar Highlights pg. 10-11

Honors Updates pg. 12



Senior Recognition Group Photo



On Friday, March 6th, 2026, the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program hosted its annual Honoring Honors recognition banquet. Over 130 attendees went down the rabbit hole for an evening inspired by Alice in Wonderland. Guests enjoyed a Victorian-era photo station using props from Buffalo State’s Theater department, a candy jar guessing station, and a buffet of curiosities provided by Chartwells Catering. All event branding and designs were produced by Honors Intern Zeinab Keita.

The program opened with welcoming remarks by Interim President Dr. Durand, followed by four powerful speeches by seniors

Matthew Finsel, Cadence Aguilar, Arie Dorsey, and Rachele Clark. The 2025 Honors Leader peer mentors were recognized for their extensive contributions to the Honors community and their mentees. All graduating seniors in attendance were recognized on-stage, celebrating their achievement of all Honors Program requirements. Last but certainly not least, the program concluded with a reveal of the winning 2026 Honors T-shirt design by Calista Robillard (see the design on page 12!).

Check out the event highlights on the following page!



Honors Leaders Group Photo



#14 Emma Ramseier | Senior | Forward

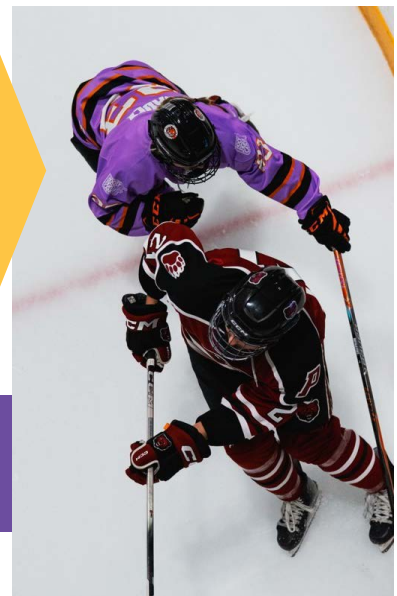


skating toward
SUCCESS

The students in the Muriel A. Howard program excel both academically and athletically. This season, for instance, 14 of the 27 athletes on the Bengals Women’s Ice Hockey team are members of the Honors Program. These athletes juggle demanding schedules, balancing their coursework with daily practices and gamedays. What helps them manage their team commitments alongside their classes and social lives?

#23 Kaylee Cadez | Freshman | Forward

“My whole family played hockey, and that’s how I got introduced to it. I’ve been playing competitively since I was about six years old. I can’t remember the time when I wasn’t playing. Balancing life as a student athlete hasn’t been super hard for me. All the freshmen are put into a study hall, where we must do five hours of homework a week. We must log where we studied, what we worked on, and how long we worked on it for. The amount of time that I’m spending on sports in college isn’t any more than what I was spending on it in high school. I just have more time in between classes to eat and do my schoolwork/chores. This past season I am most proud of our game against Nazareth. They are ranked second, and their record was 24-0-1. We were able to ruin their perfect season when we tied them. I think it was one of our best games and one of the most fun to play in.”



#33 Alexa Todd | Freshman | Goalie

“I got into hockey because my dad and brother both played, and I always wanted to be like them. When I was younger, I had to choose between figure skating and hockey, and hockey ended up winning. I started playing goalie when I was around 8 years old and have been playing competitively ever since. Balancing life as a student-athlete can be challenging at times, but I’ve handled it pretty well so far. You really have to find a balance between academics and athletics. Being a student-athlete has helped me become a strong time manager with everything I have going on each day. I’m most proud of the small successes and milestones that my teammates and I have accomplished together this season. Individually, things have been going well—I’ve been named SUNYAC Rookie of the Week and SUNYAC Goaltender of the Week, as well as Bengal Athlete of the Week. These achievements mean a lot to me, but being able to share success with my team is what I value most.”

#9 Arissa Vettraino | Junior | Defense

“My dad played hockey his whole life; he played college hockey in Michigan and Wisconsin and then furthered his hockey career to play pro for a few years post-grad. I also grew up with my brother playing hockey. Hockey was a big part of my family, so I never had a second thought about playing. I started learning to skate around age 4, played boys hockey until I was 10, and then have since been playing competitive girls’ hockey. I find that being a student athlete actually has helped me balance my life much easier. Playing sports competitively my whole life has taught me time management with my academics and social life. It helps keep me focused and busy and teaches me a work ethic that I think has benefitted me so much. This season I have been most proud of seeing the growth within our team. This is my third year with this program, and it has been the most exciting one. We have beaten multiple teams in conference this season and got our first point against Plattsburgh in history. We are in playoff contentions this year as well, so we are hoping we get to squeeze into a spot and make our first run since the 2017-18 season.”



Head Coach Rachel Grampp also has advice and insight for student athletes. Grampp graduated from Elmira College in 2018 as an award-winning athlete. After coaching at SUNY Canton for one year and serving as the assistant coach at Buffalo State for two and a half years, Grampp became head coach in 2022.

SINCE YOU WERE APPOINTED HEAD COACH, THE TEAM’S RECORD HAS BEEN IMPROVING. WHAT HAS THAT JOURNEY BEEN LIKE WITH THE TEAM?

“It’s been hard, but it’s really enjoyable at the same time. When I first started, my main focus wasn’t on the record but changing the culture. The shift from watching a group of players simply being friends at the rink to referring to the team as ‘their second family’ or ‘home away from home’ has probably been our biggest success so far.”

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR STUDENT ATHLETES WHO ARE TRYING TO FIND A BALANCE?

“The biggest piece of advice I give student athletes is this: be intentional with your time. When you’re at practice, be at practice. When you’re in class or studying, lock in there. Second, understand that balance doesn’t mean equal time; it means priority. There will be weeks when academics, hockey, or family may need more of you and that’s where you need to communicate with professors, coaches, teammates, and ultimately planning ahead and asking for help instead of reacting late and trying to solve all problems by yourself. Lastly and probably most importantly, is to take care of your non-negotiables. Eating, sleeping, and doing something for yourself everyday will help you be your best self every day. The goal isn’t to survive being a student-athlete. It’s to grow because of it. The skills you build will continue to serve you long after your playing career ends.”



The Women’s Ice Hockey team recently recognized International Women’s Day (IWD). The team’s special purple uniforms commemorate the “Hockey Fights Cancer” initiative.

Alumni Spotlight: Morgan Harrington '23

“BETTER TO LEARN THAN NOT.”

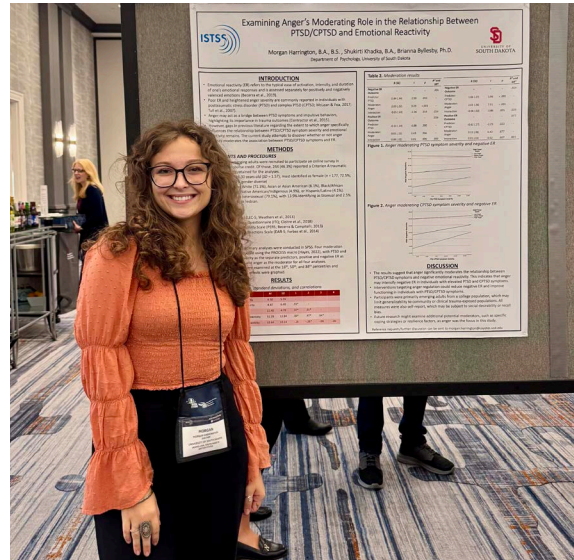
Imagine it's 2020 and you are starting your first semester in college. You enter college in the midst of a pandemic, but you also are thrown into junior/senior level classes, despite your age. You start to feel overwhelmed and unable to ask for help.

This happened to Morgan Harrington, '23. Morgan shared that her first semester at Buffalo State was very difficult. But she went on to become an Honors Leader, participate in multiple research projects, attend the Northeast Regional Honors Council conference, and serve as President of Sigma Delta Tau sorority. Now, she is pursuing a PhD in Clinical Psychology at the University of South Dakota. So how did she go from struggling to thriving?

WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE AT BUFFALO STATE LIKE?

I would say my first year was a little bit tough. I started in 2020, so everything was online. And I had about 60 college credits already. So, in my first year, I ended up in 300 level courses. At the time my job was considered essential, and so I was working probably about 60 hours/week, on top of trying to do school. I didn't have my priorities lined up. In between that and being online and working way too much, I definitely struggled my first year, and then I had a super candid conversation with Dr. McMillan, and I got put right back on a better path.

I reduced my class load to four classes a semester after that. Because I came in with so many credits, I was going to graduate early. So, I added an additional degree. I went down to working only about 20 to 30 hours a week, and so that helped me just build a more rigid and structured schedule. I ended up being involved in research, in Honors, and I joined a sorority. I was pretty involved with the psych department, started traveling for conferences for research and things like that. I went from struggling to being on the Dean's list every semester. I tell Dr. McMillan all the time that she's like my lifesaver.



WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES OF HONORS?

OK, so I went to NRHC two years in a row, which is a Northeast Regional Honors Council Conference, and the first year I was the only student from Buffalo State. So, it was just me, Matt and Dr. McMillan. Because I was the only student from Buffalo State, I forced myself to meet other students. But it worked out because I'm still very close to a lot of the students that I met during that first year. Matt, Dr. McMillan, and I were able to travel around Philly and explore the city. And then the next year that I went, I was one of five Buff State students. So, it was a better experience, because I got close with the other students that I had gone with.





WHAT IS ONE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU HAVE FOR HONORS STUDENTS? SOMETHING THAT YOU WISHED SOMEONE HAD TOLD YOU?

Don't wait so long to ask for help. I learned it the hard way, but truly there is no shame in asking for help. The resources are there for a reason. That's why college is set up with all of those resources. So, don't wait so long to ask for help. It's super normal to need help in college. And then also, think about some long-term goals while you're in undergrad. Those four years go so fast, so you want to take advantage of them and try to tailor what you're spending your time on to what will be most helpful for you post college, whether it's going right into a career or continuing your education. I would say that without those experiences, where I would be now would look a little bit different. Try to be a little bit mindful of not joining organizations just to say that you have this long list of organizations on your resume. You know, be mindful of what will be most helpful for you long term and then also like what's of interest to you. I mean, don't get me wrong, there's probably hidden gems that you wouldn't think you'd enjoy. But college is expensive. You don't want to be spending money to not get any long-term things out of it. You want it to be a useful experience.

“DON'T WAIT SO LONG TO ASK FOR HELP. THE RESOURCES ARE THERE, BUT YOU HAVE TO TAKE THAT FIRST STEP.”

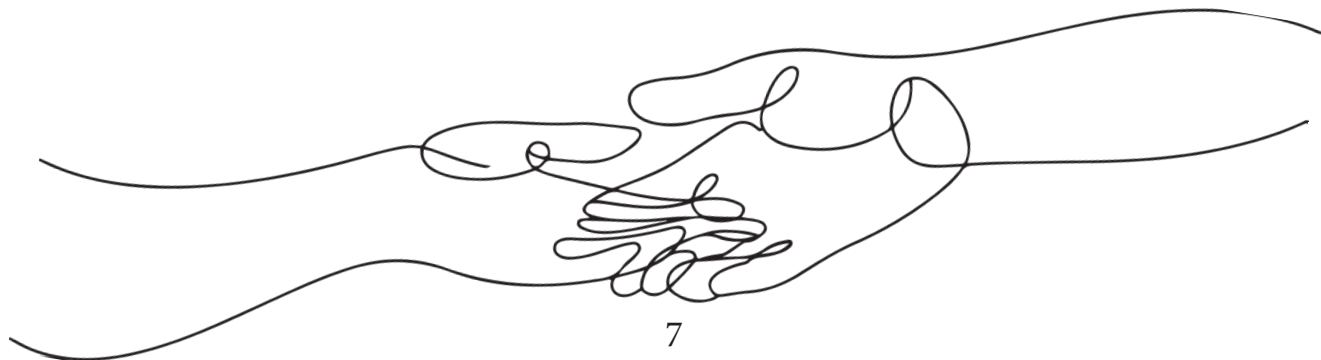
WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN STARTING OR PARTICIPATING IN A RESEARCH PROJECT?

Reach out to professors. You know, you can't be told no or yes if you don't ask in the first place. So, I would say seek out those opportunities. I know specifically in the psych department, quite a few of [the professors] are still doing active research. They have this super fun phase where it's “publish or perish” for tenure-track professors. So, a lot of times you'll have these tenure-track professors who are looking to continue doing research to get tenured. Also, I definitely had projects or moments where it was of my interest, and I said this is what I want to do. And [the professors] were super open to that. So, the opportunities are there, you just have to ask.

Morgan's story shows it's okay to ask for help and know your limits. Reaching out enabled her to make the most of her time in Honors and now in South Dakota. By recognizing her strengths and boundaries, she created meaningful experiences.

“It's unfortunate. I learned it the hard way, but **better to learn than not.**”

“REACH OUT TO PROFESSORS. YOU KNOW, YOU CAN'T BE TOLD NO OR YES IF YOU DON'T ASK IN THE FIRST PLACE.”



HONORS STUDENTS LEAD THE WAY

Many Honors students take active leadership roles in the organizations on campus, ranging from Esports and Greek Life to Competitive Dance and USG. We had the privilege to meet some of these Honors students, to see how they feel about their organization, and to learn how interested students can get involved.

“I got involved because I’ve always had a deep love for politics and making a difference. I walked by a USG advertisement on the way into the dining hall on my first week of classes in my freshman year, scanned the QR code and applied. It was a very fast and seamless transition into being a USG Senator, and I loved every second of it. It only took a few months before I was the Vice President of USG and only a couple more months until I became President. I’m approaching the one-year mark of my Presidency, and I’ve loved every last second of it!

Students can get involved by going to USG’s Bengal Connect page and applying to be a USG Senator! If students want to learn more or even just use their voice to advocate about concerns on campus, they can attend any of USG’s Senate Meetings which happen on Mondays at 7:15 PM in Bulger.” –Nick Smith, President, United Students Government



“I joined the African American Student Organization because after attending general interest meetings and AASO events, I admired the creativity, the sense of community, and brilliance among those present. Additionally having a supportive group of other fellow Black students, many of which have similar experiences to me, makes campus feel more like home. I am grateful for AASO and encourage all those that are interested, to join! @aaso1967 on Instagram.”

–Destiny Odigie, Treasurer, African American Student Organization

“I danced all through high school and I wanted to continue that here, either taking dance classes or joining a team. I was quite scared of going to auditions by myself, which is why I had originally planned to wait a semester. But when auditions came during the Fall semester, I ended up being brave enough to go to the choreo days and auditions by myself and had a blast! It’s been 3 long years. I was grateful enough to get on the board my second year on the team and now I’m the President which has been quite the job, but I wouldn’t change it for the world.

Interested students should definitely follow our page @buffstate_legacy. We post all our updates there, and we host choreo days and auditions at the beginning of each semester. We also perform on-campus and off-campus so you may be able to watch some of our performances. Coming up, we have Runway and Springfest so stay tuned! We also host occasional dance classes and other events with some other orgs like NAACP and AASO.” –Zeinab Keita, President, Legacy Dance Team





“I joined SDT last year during the Spring 2025 semester after meeting the org at Meet The Greeks in the Fall of 2024. Once I went through the recruitment process, I learned about the different positions in the chapter and ultimately felt that I would work best as the head of Philanthropy and Service! Sigma Delta Tau supports PCAA, Jewish Women International and the SDT Foundation through our philanthropy efforts, and I felt strongly about being the one to focus on these causes that I was passionate about. It is now my responsibility to plan all of our fundraising and volunteer events.”
 –Kenzie Carpenter, Vice President of Philanthropy and Service, Sigma Delta Tau sorority

“Visit our Instagram, @sdtbuffstate, and sign the interest form. You can message us with any and all questions. We also are constantly around campus tabling or hosting fun events so you can chat with us there as well!” –Ava Fletch, Standards, Sigma Delta Tau sorority

“Coming to Buff State as a freshman, I only knew about two people on campus, and I am an introvert so meeting new people was a bit of a struggle for me. But I saw a poster in the Student Union that was promoting the upcoming Esports season, and I enjoyed gaming in my free time. So, I emailed the president at the time, and he helped me join and get set up with everything I needed to participate. Not only was it super easy, but everyone involved was very kind and supportive.”
 –Zachary Ellis, President, Buffalo State Esports

“The registration deadlines to compete are usually before the start of semester, or very early in the semester, so we generally recruit people who are interested in competing for us in the following semester. If anyone is interested in playing games or competing for Esports in Fall 2026, follow our Instagram @buffstateesports! You can also find us on Bengal Connect, join our Discord, or email us at buffstateesports@gmail.com.”
 –Cadence Aguilar, Secretary, and Joseph Fedder, Vice President, Buffalo State Esports

“I’m a member of Buffalo State’s only SATB (soprano-alto-tenor-bass) group on campus. I was encouraged to audition for A Hint of Orange during the 2025 spring semester by an existing member as the group needed lower male voices. We hope to see you at our spring concert (April 24th) and auditions in the fall :)”
 –Mateo Sturmer, Vice President, A Hint of Orange

“We hold auditions at the beginning of each semester. We usually table at Orgapalooza, where we give out audition information. You can contact us on our Bengal Connect page, email us at ahintoforangebsu@gmail.com, or DM us on Instagram (@ahintoforange_).”
 –Lorelai Mucciolo, Secretary, A Hint of Orange



FALL 2026 HONORS SEMINAR HIGHLIGHTS

Believe it or not, registration for summer and fall courses is right around the corner! Honors students can take advantage of priority registration beginning April 8th at 6:00AM to secure their top choice from a range of unique options.

The lineup of fall 2026 Honors seminars includes many familiar faces. Veteran Honors faculty like Lorna Perez, Lisa Marie Anselmi, and Marcus Watson return to offer engaging classes in the HON303 Diversity category. Courses such as HON201 Power and Inequality: Civilization in the Ancient World with Susan Maguire and HON202 Dreams and Nightmares of Reason

with John Abromeit offer critical perspectives on past societies. David Ben-Merre once again invites returning students to serve as mentors for his popular first-year Mock Trial class through HON389.

In addition to more than a dozen returning Honors faculty members, we are excited to welcome three experienced Buffalo State faculty who will be teaching Honors courses for the first time! Check out their course highlights below and find information about all fall 2026 Honors seminar choices at: honors.buffalostate.edu/course-schedule.

HON103 INTRODUCTION TO WOODWORKING

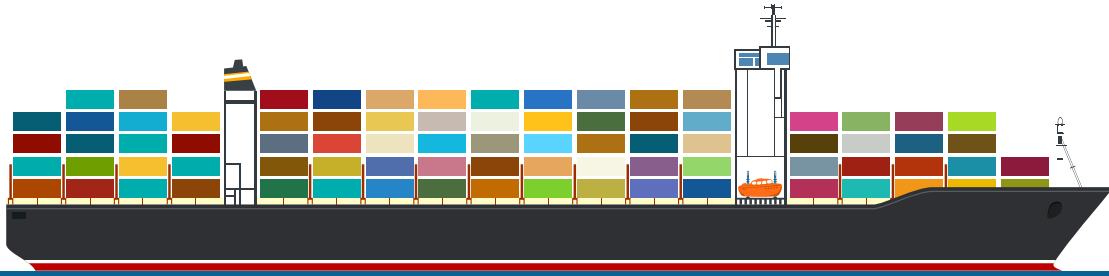
In this course, students will develop foundational skills in wood furniture construction through the design and fabrication of a small table and other simple wood objects. Emphasis is placed on solid wood construction, right-angle joinery, the physical properties of wood, proper assembly sequence, and basic finishing techniques. Students also learn essential shop terminology and practice safe, responsible operation of tools and machinery in the furniture studio.

Since 2008, Associate Professor Sunhwa Kim has served as the coordinator of the Wood/Furniture Design program at Buffalo State. Her professional work integrates traditional Asian lacquer techniques with contemporary furniture design. "Through teaching and my craft, I aim to foster cultural exchange and create thoughtfully crafted objects that evoke emotion, enrich daily life, and connect past and present."

Before teaching in the United States, she taught at several colleges and universities in South Korea. She studied at the Ishikawa Prefecture Institute of Wajima Lacquer Art in Japan and holds two MFA degrees.



"I truly enjoy watching students' creativity unfold and seeing them succeed," Kim shared. "In an Honors seminar focused on wood and furniture design, I look forward to encouraging thoughtful dialogue about concept, material, and craftsmanship while supporting bold, innovative ideas. It is especially meaningful to mentor students as they challenge themselves and transform their ideas into well-crafted, intentional objects. Being part of their creative growth is deeply rewarding."



HON389 THE HIDDEN COST OF EVERYTHING

From smartphones to your morning coffee, every product has a hidden story—one that spans continents, workers, raw materials, and waste. This course covers the global supply chains behind everyday goods and explores their environmental, social, and ethical dimensions. Students will investigate where products come from, who makes them, how they travel, and what happens when they are discarded.

Professor Lorena Mathien brings 20 years of real-world industry experience to her classroom. In 2022, she was awarded a prestigious Fulbright opportunity in Vietnam where she focused on studying and teaching global sustainability and supply chains. She has since returned to Vietnam twice and will again this summer to continue this work.

Students interested in environmental science, economics, design, business, sociology, and education can all benefit from Mathien's new course. HON389 will be workshop-based with active learning and discussions. Students will also conduct a product life cycle audit, tracing a good from raw material to disposal while understanding its carbon footprint.

"I particularly love when I have interdisciplinary students in a classroom or discussion. The differing viewpoints add depth and richness to the discussions," says Mathien.

HON202 THE HOGWARTS EXPERIENCE

Incoming Honors students this fall will be the first to experience a new Social Sciences seminar based on J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter book series. The "First Years" in HON202 will study six modules including:

- **MUGGLE STUDIES WITH MR. WEASLEY:** Explore Hogwarts references to Sociology and Anthropology.
- **HOGWARTS, A HISTORY WITH PROFESSOR BINNS:** Follow the history of Hogwarts from the origins of the three schools and their founders to the present day.
- **DEFENSE AGAINST THE DARK ARTS WITH HARRY POTTER AND DUMBLEDORE'S ARMY:** A philosophical treatment of the use of light and dark imagery in philosophy and religion, and the references to Harry as the Chosen One as a recurrent theme in mythology and religion.
- **THE MINISTRY OF MAGIC, THE WIZENAGAMOT, AND HOGWARTS WITH ALBUS DUMBLEDORE:** Locate and discuss elements of power, politics, and the conflicts that pervade in the books.
- **SPEW (SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF ELFISH WELFARE) WITH HERMIONE GRANGER:** Explore the concept of enslavement and the British enactment of voluntary service to noble classes.

This faculty member (going by Dr. McGonagall for now) has been incorporating the Harry Potter series into her teaching

since around 2000 when J. K. Rowling began obligingly writing and premiering a book each year. "This will give me a chance to expand my teaching far beyond the graduate literacy content I have used previously," she noted. "I believe that all students need to discover that they are made of magic. I look forward to assisting with that transformation!"

What makes Harry Potter an effective teaching tool? According to McGonagall, all muggles, witches or wizards enjoy discovering a great book series. After the *Lord of the Rings* saga, there weren't any extensive series like it for both young adults and adults that appealed to a diverse population up until the Harry Potter series.

"Because the books deal with the real feelings of real kids and adults who are growing up, going to school, experiencing prejudice, facing fear and conquering evil, finding love, having good and bad teachers and negotiating the usual issues that face every school age student (bullies, hazing, sports-anxieties, exams, etc.), all readers can see themselves in the characters and situations, even if the protagonists are magical beings. After all, wouldn't we all love to be?"

Message from the Honors Director

“Spring is the time of plans and projects.” – Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*



If the cold and snow of the first week of this semester told us anything, it's that spring is something to be truly celebrated when it finally arrives. And as we head into April, I find myself energized, not just by the longer, brighter days and warmer temperatures, but by the projects and passions that our students are pursuing with enthusiasm and purpose as spring semester hits its stride. I'm also excited to welcome 45 students into the Honors Program this semester! These students were invited to apply to join Honors on the basis of their excellent academic record during their first or second year at Buffalo State. We are so glad you're here and part of our community.

And speaking of community, this spirit could not have been more evident last month at our annual “Honoring Honors” recognition banquet. In between the photo station, the games, and the delicious food, what I will most remember about this evening is the camaraderie and fellowship among our students, as well as the thoughtful and inspiring insights of our student speakers. Thanks to all who brought such curiosity, creativity, and warmth to this evening!

Of course, the back half of this semester also has more excitement in store. Among the highlights, during spring break I traveled to New Haven, Connecticut with our Assistant Director Matt Baran and NINE Honors students who were accepted to present their research and share their talents at the 2026 Northeast Regional Honors Council conference. Spring is indeed the season of plans and projects, and here in the Honors Program, we have plenty of both. I hope you'll read on to learn more about our terrific students and faculty!

- Dr. Maggie Herb



Congratulations to
Calista Robillard!

Winner of the
2026 Honors T-Shirt
Design Contest!



honors.buffalostate.edu



honors@buffalostate.edu



[@buffstatehonors](https://www.instagram.com/buffstatehonors)

South Wing 330 | Monday-Friday 8:30am - 5:00pm | (716) 878-3093