



MURIEL A. HOWARD HONORS PROGRAM

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

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Jennifer Segura Lopez and Bella Lamberty share their original poems for Hispanic Heritage Month.

Welcome Back!

Happy Fall 2024

We are *thrilled* to return to action after summer break and have hit the ground running to start the 2024-2025 academic year! Despite an irregular admissions season due to FAFSA delays, we welcomed our largest incoming class ever of more than 200 first-year Honors students. This brings our total size to nearly 600 Honors students and serves as an important milestone as the program celebrates its 40th year. It brings us immense joy to see the South Wing 3rd Floor so full of activity. Over 300 students visited the Honors Hub and Academic Suite in just the first two weeks of the semester, enjoying perks like free printing, snacks, and support from Honors Leaders.

Our program theme this year is *Cultivating Community and Connection*. First-year students in HON111 will be reading *The House On Mango Street*, a series of vignettes written by Sandra Cisneros that follow a teenage girl navigating life in a Chicago neighborhood. Seniors in HON444 will read *There There* by Tommy Orange, whose novel spotlights the lives of twelve Native Americans as they navigate contemporary issues. Students in both courses will have the opportunity to meet the authors at their BABEL talks this Fall hosted by the Just Buffalo Literary Center at Kleinhans Music Hall.

As we progress further into the year, we have so much to look forward to from numerous events hosted by our Honors Leaders this semester to Honoring Honors and new courses coming this Spring. Whether we see you at an event or support you through a challenge, we are eager to connect with our Honors community all year long.

-The Honors Staff Team



FIRST YEAR KICK-OFF



MEET OUR HONORS WORK STUDY: SOFIKA HUDAK



Hi! My name is Sofika Hudak and I am a freshman at Buffalo State in the Honors Program! I am originally from Long Island but am so excited to be here. I chose Buffalo State because it seemed like an environment that helps students grow to their potential, and I love it here so far! Thank you so much to the Honors team for bringing me on board!

Farewell to Celeste



With VERY heavy hearts, we recently said goodbye to our Administrative Assistant Celestine Simmons, who has accepted a promotion to work at the scenic Letchworth State Park. Since 2018, Celestine supported the Honors Program in every way imaginable and made a lasting impact on the lives of hundreds of students & families. She was involved across Buffalo State in numerous committees and volunteer initiatives including service on the latest Presidential Search Committee, and will be greatly missed by the entire campus community.

HONORS FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: CAMILLE HOLMGREN



TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND HOBBIES

I earned BA degrees in both Environmental Studies and Geology from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota and my Master of Science and Ph.D. in Geosciences (with a Ph.D. minor in Global Change) from the University of Arizona in Tucson. I then spent two years on the faculty at California State University, Long Beach before coming to Buffalo State in 2007. I spent five years serving as department chair of Geography & Planning but following the creation of the new department of Geosciences, I was happy to step down and return my focus to the teaching.

I really enjoy being outdoors, so outside of work I enjoy hiking, running, SCUBA diving, and bird watching. I also love traveling to see different landscapes and ecosystems. I like to weave examples from these interests into my courses, and hope they inspire students to think about the natural world around us.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESEARCH INTERESTS?

As an undergrad I discovered a love for fossils and what they can tell us about the history of life on our planet. My research involves using ancient packrat middens, which are the nest or den of the rodents, that are constructed of leaves, seeds, twigs, flowers, and fruit from the surrounding vegetation, as well as bones, insects, and pollen. These rodents live in arid environments where their middens can be preserved

for more than 50,000 years in caves and crevices in rocks. By collecting ancient middens, which can be radiocarbon dated, I can identify the plants that were living at various time from the last ice age until today. My research has taken me to Peru, Chile, Baja California Mexico, Arizona, New Mexico, southern California, and Colorado.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING HONORS COURSES?

My first Honors course was in 2017 and I've had the opportunity to teach Honors courses off and on since then. I've taught HON102 World Natural Environments, HON102 Introduction to Environmental Sustainability, and this fall I am offering HON102 Oceanography for the first time. I began teaching oceanography last fall and am excited to have an Honors section of this course this year. Over the summer I worked to develop some new assignments and activities for the course, which I look forward to trying out with the honors students. Teaching Honors students is a treat because they tend to be highly motivated. They also tend to have wide-ranging interests, which helps them connect information from other courses or experiences to class topics and can lead to some great insights and discussions.

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

I think getting out to explore the world and see new places is such a great way to learn and understand the diversity of what the world has to offer. So, my dream Honors course would be an around-the-world journey in which students could see rainforests, deserts, savannas, mountains, ice caps, and ocean environments up close. But even without that we can use photos, videos, the planetarium, and lab materials and equipment (rocks, fossils, microscopes, thermometers, computer models, etc.) to better understand our world.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU SHARE WITH CURRENT STUDENTS?

Get involved and try new things. There's so much going on all the time at Buffalo State. Take some time to join a club or attend events—there are lots of performances, talks, and activities happening every week. These are a great way to make connections with other students, gain additional experience within your discipline, or explore something completely unfamiliar to you. Also, don't be afraid to try new things because you think you might not be good at it or because you don't know much at first. In life we're all students and start at the beginning. It's how we grow and learn that matter. Finally, if you get the opportunity to travel—go! You will learn a lot about the world and yourself.

[honors.buffalostate.edu/
course-schedule](https://honors.buffalostate.edu/course-schedule)



Check out our Spring
2025 Honors Courses

7TH ANNUAL HONORS BBQ



September 6th, 2024, was one for the books, as the 7TH ANNUAL HONORS BBQ was the highest-attended BBQ ever! Over 60% of all first-year Honors students attended, and a total of 217 Honors students and 21 friends of Honors enjoyed the event.

The event was held in the Social Hall for the first time in history! Although the weather was gloomy, the atmosphere inside was electric. Our Interim President, Dr. Durand, kickstarted the event with a beautiful speech showcasing the unique community the Honors Program offers.

The setting encouraged new and returning students to expand their social networks! Students participated in “speed friending,” where they met ten new Honors students in ten minutes. Students connected with friends, old and new, playing games like Uno and cornhole. Many even took it upon themselves to create their own games! With good company and good food, this was indeed a fantastic day. Thank you to all who attended and volunteered to make this day successful!





“This year’s barbeque was special. The whole atmosphere was inviting, and I feel like we got the chance to really connect with everyone, especially with the roundtables. It was cool to see everyone get out of their shells!”
 - Brielle Lum, Sophomore

“It was super fun, and it was great to make friends who are like-minded students! Definitely worth going to again!”
 - Abi Murphy, Sophomore



HONORS BREAKFAST

AT THE BURCHFIELD PENNEY ART CENTER

On September 19th, Honors students were invited to participate in the annual “Breakfast at the BPAC” event. Students assembled early in the morning at the Burchfield Penney Art Center to enjoy breakfast with a view!

The view overlooking AKG and Rockwell Hall was exciting, and the atmosphere was even more so. Professor Kathy Shiroki offered students the opportunity to sketch their surroundings or freely draw. The Honors Program values the importance of creative freedom, and this event was indeed a reflection of that. Conversations were also vibrant, as Honors members could meet other like-minded peers in the program. For first-year students especially, these events are crucial in easing the transition to college life, which is often challenging.

The event was quite tranquil despite facing the busy Elmwood Avenue. In the middle of a new, bustling semester, this event was a phenomenal day for students to take a much-needed break!



HONORS LEADERS RETREAT



HOMECOMING WEEK



TOGETHER We Grow

BUFFALO STATE UNIVERSITY HOMECOMING 2024

The Honors Program proudly placed third overall in the Homecoming Office Door Decorating Contest thanks to the incredible work of two Honors students. Seniors Ceci Brooks and Sarah Zakeri dedicated hours bringing their artistic vision to life on the door to the Honors Academic Suite. Their take on the homecoming theme “Together We Grow” included a scenic painting, a three-dimensional paper tree, and dyed coffee filter flowers spotlighting the Honors Leaders and staff team. Visit the South Wing 3rd Floor to see the door in-person!



AT WHISPERING PINES

Twenty-one Honors Leaders recently dedicated their Labor Day Weekend to a 48-hour training retreat experience! The retreat took place at Whispering Pines located in Franklinville, NY, which provided abundant natural space and an “off-the-grid” environment perfect for building community amongst the leaders. Students spent their time honing their skills as peer mentors, practicing difficult conversations and counseling techniques, and learning to support each other in their positions. Five Honors Leaders have been serving in their roles since the program launched in 2022 and were able to share their extensive experience with newer Honors Leaders. Recent alumna Lizzie Evans ('23) also attended the retreat this year to facilitate activities and provide her perspective on leadership and the importance of strong relationships.

In addition to training and skill practice, the Honors Leaders also built community through a series of icebreakers, team challenges and wilderness activities. Highlights included untangling a human knot, a “toolbox” improv game, hiking, s'mores, and stargazing.

All first-year Honors students are matched with an Honors Leader to support them with their transition to college. New this year, mentees are tasked with visiting an Honors Leader in the Honors Hub to form a connection outside of class. Each Honors Leader hosts weekly office hours, facilitates activities and check-in conversations during the HON111 first-year seminar, and plans an Honors event during the fall semester. This program is made possible by generous funding from Ms. Lillian Gondree and other donors.



PLACE AS TEXT FACULTY INSTITUTE



Over the summer, Assistant Director Matt Baran participated in a 4-day faculty institute in New Mexico hosted by the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC). He was among 20 instructors from institutions across North America who gathered to learn how to teach an experiential learning course called Place As Text. This immersive approach to teaching brings students out of the classroom to explore a city or public place. Through direct observations, mapping exercises, interviews with locals, discussions, and journaling prompts, participants gain a better understanding of a place and a greater awareness of how they experience that place.

During the first 3 days of the institute, the group put on their 'student' hats to participate in all the class activities themselves (including daily homework!). "Our explorations took us all over Albuquerque and Santa Fe to experience the rich culture and history of these Southwestern cities," says Matt. "Many of the excursions were intentionally unstructured to avoid influencing our perceptions of these places. We were given a map and an assigned list of neighborhoods, and were encouraged to get lost along the way! I spoke with commuters on the busses, lifelong residents of a farming community along the Rio Grande, restaurant waiters serving delicious red & green chile, Native American artists, and many other people who call New Mexico their home. This experience was absolutely transformative. I learned so much about myself, including my assumptions about a new place and the nuances of tourism."

Instructors spent the final day together workshopping their own ideas to bring Place As Text back to their home campuses. "My colleagues at the institute had so much experience to offer and they helped me decide the best ways to facilitate this course here in Buffalo. I'm excited for the opportunity to offer this experience to our Honors students!" Matt will be teaching HON189 *The Queen City: Understanding Place In Buffalo, NY* in Spring 2025.



**Explore our Honors
Handbook to learn
more about the
program**

CALL FOR HONORS ARTWORK

***HONORS
ART GALLERY***

Drop off deadline:
Friday, October 11



honors.buffalostate.edu



Buffalo State Honors Program



@buffstatehonors

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