

MURIEL A. HOWARD HONORS PROGRAM

Official Newsletter



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT P. 4



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT P. 5



HONORS BBQ P. 6-7

HONORS LEADERS
RETREAT P. 10

PLUS:

WELCOME FROM THE HONORS DIRECTOR P. 2

MEET THE CLASS OF 2029 P. 3

FEATURED ORGANIZATIONS P. 8-9

HONORS EVENTS RECAP P. 11

SPRING 2026 COURSE PREVIEW P. 12



WELCOME FROM THE HONORS DIRECTOR



“In October, any wonderful unexpected thing might be possible.”
–Elizabeth George Speare

Happy, happy October, Honors students, faculty, friends, supporters, and alumni!

To be candid, I sat down to write this introduction to our first newsletter of the year several times over the last few weeks, but I kept getting distracted. In the best possible way:

- by the sound of spirited conversations, as students chat with our Honors adviser Elizabeth Stevens about which courses to take for spring semester;
- by students dropping into the office to deliver their artwork for the Honors Art Gallery Show that our Assistant Director Matt Baran has organized;
- by the commotion of students painting, cutting, and gluing as they prepped our door for Buff State’s annual Homecoming Door Decorating contest [last minute editor note: while we didn’t win—#robbed! – we did get a very respectable honorable mention!];
- and by the laughter and conversation floating down the hall as Honors Leaders and their first-year mentees chat and study in the Honors Hub.

In short, there’s no doubt that fall semester is in full swing here in the Honors suite!

As some folks already know, I stepped into the role of Director of the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program this summer. While there is always a bit of a learning curve for any new job, I could not be happier to be here! I am also so appreciative of our former director, Dr. Amy McMillan, for her guidance, advice, and amazing stewardship/leadership of the program over the last 8 years. The growth and success of the program during that time is truly impressive, and my goal as the new director is to continue this growth trajectory, with both creativity and attention to best practices. Although I am new to the Honors

Program, this is actually my tenth year at Buffalo State. I am Associate Professor of English, and I served as Director of the Writing Center for eight years, experiences which reminded me every single day of the incredible creativity, determination, drive, humor, and kindness of Buffalo State’s student body. I am so grateful to continue this learning and mentorship from and with students as Honors Director!

As is our tradition, the Honors Program has chosen a theme this year to use as an anchor point for our readings, coursework, and programming. This year’s theme, “Let Curiosity Lead” feels particularly apt in the national landscape of 2025. In an increasingly polarized environment, leading with curiosity is an important and intentional stance, for all of our interactions, whether scholarly, political, professional, or personal. As someone who has taught writing and mentored peer writing tutors for many years, I have learned that when I sit down to read a student writer’s work, my starting point should never be to look for what is “wrong” or what needs to be “fixed”, but rather on the far more important (and genuine) questions: What does this work say? What does it mean? Where is the writer going next? How can I help the writer get there?

And these are the kinds of questions we can apply across all of our academic disciplines, professional paths and personal lives—the kinds of questions that focus not on what, but on why and on how and on *wonder*. To our students: this year, in your classes, in your activities and events, at your jobs, I invite you to intentionally ground your interactions with the world around you and with others from a stance of curiosity. Who knows how your mind may change or open? Who knows what someone may learn from you? Whatever unexpected discoveries you may make, I can’t wait to hear about it all!

–Dr. Herb

SAY HI TO OUR OTHER NEW HONORS STAFF TEAM MEMBERS ON SOUTH WING, 3RD FLOOR



Mark Brumby
Administrative Assistant



Elijah Hundley
Graduate Assistant



During the first “Bengal Pause” of the fall semester, freshmen Honors students enjoyed the opportunity to meet each other and bond with their Honors Leader peer mentors during the Honors First-Year Kickoff event (above, left).

In the HON111 first-year seminar, students have made the most of the sunny weather recently with class trips to Delaware Park (right) and group scavenger hunts around campus to find key resources.



FAST FACTS

- 602 total Honors students pursuing 70+ majors
- 174 First-Year Honors students
 - 60% live on-campus, 40% commute to campus
 - Average high school GPA of 94%
- 82 Honors Athletes
- Our students are from 18 U.S. states, 3 territories, and 8 countries outside the U.S.

**82 Honors Athletes
Competing in 13
Different Teams**



**174 First-Year
Students**

**60% On-Campus
Residents
40% Commuters**





ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: ROBIN LAZZARA

What if you thought you'd be pursuing one dream, but your path changed and it morphed into another? Will everything still be OK? That is what Robin Lazzara, Class of '18, talked about when she met with Honors Intern Arie Dorsey. Lazzara majored in Television and Film Arts with a minor in Dance. In 2022, she founded Glow Video LLC. Recently, she was recognized as the NYS Small Business Development Center's (SBDC) 2025 Young Entrepreneur of the Year. But if you were to ask her in high school, she would have said that she would be majoring in dance. So, what changed?



WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN FILM AND MEDIA?

When I was in high school, they would give us some freedom with our different class projects. I would always end up doing video projects, and that kind of became my thing. My friends and I would act in them, and then I would film them and edit them together. I didn't have an educated background in terms of editing or filming. I would pick up the Mac computer with the camera on there. I would carry that around to film different things and just use whatever I had access to. I realized that making videos was something that I really enjoyed doing.

WHY DID YOU SPECIFICALLY CHOOSE BUFF STATE?

In my senior year, I was diagnosed with tendonitis in one leg, and I now have it in my other leg. So, dance wasn't a viable option to pursue in terms of a major. My mom and I went to a SUNY college fair in Long Island, and we were just looking around to see what the options were. There was a Buffalo State table there, and the representative talked about how there was this very small film program, they accept 15 people a year, and there's a lot of individualized attention. So, I ended up applying to Buff State for the TFA program, and I got accepted. I remember I was coming back from lunch during high school, and I saw the e-mail that said I was accepted, and I started crying. I was so happy!

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN THE HONORS PROGRAM?

In my junior and my senior years of high school, I took 10 AP classes total. Very overwhelming...so, when we saw the opportunity for that Honors scholarship, I was like, 'Oh my gosh, that would be so great!' There's so many people that I still keep in touch with to this day in the Honors Program, like my friend Olivia Harbol who actually works at the SBDC now at Buff State. That's the reason why I even have my business today, because Olivia's boss was like, 'Oh, you should really consider opening your own business.' It's just so awesome how you don't realize how these connections that you make at one point in time will seriously impact your future.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR STUDENTS?

I think just the idea of graduating college or starting your own business individually or together can seem very overwhelming because you might not even know where to start. That's a normal feeling and that's OK. It's OK if you don't know what you want to do right away. I recommend exploring different opportunities, if you have the ability, to figure out what really interests you; even if it's outside what you majored in, it doesn't hurt to just try different things and see what sticks. When I graduated high school, I was like, 'oh, I'll just go for this.' And then it brought me to where I am now.



Lazzara has worked hard to achieve her current position and to establish connections within the WNY community. She has worked even harder to prevent burnout to maintain a good work-life balance. Students aiming to start a business are encouraged to visit the Small Business Development Center at Cleveland Hall for free resources and assistance. Lazzara says the center was awesome and helped her navigate setting up her LLC. So, if your path changes, it will be OK. As we see with Lazzara herself, a change of course can lead to so much happiness and great opportunities. Everything will be OK.

DR. RUTH GOLDMAN



“JACK OF ALL TRADES, MASTER OF NONE...”

At first, this infamous quote could sound like an insult, implying that the person cannot do anything great. But, when you look at the rest of the quote, the meaning changes: “...*but oftentimes better than a master of one.*” This saying encourages us to learn as much as we can and to not limit ourselves to master just one thing. And this is a perspective that Dr. Ruth Goldman and Honors Intern Arie Dorsey were able to discuss. Dr. Goldman attended University of Massachusetts and graduated with a Bachelors in English. At UMass, she discovered her love for film and media production, but also for the university’s honors program.

“I went to a huge university, and the honors program was a way for me to feel like it was much smaller,” Goldman said.

While still attending UMass, Dr. Goldman was the Public Relations intern for the women’s center there and later had the opportunity to work on a women’s radio show on the campus radio station.

“I did that radio show for four years,” Dr. Goldman continued. “I was a DJ, and I really loved that. Other than photography, that was my first media production experience.”

After graduating from UMass, Dr. Goldman attended graduate school at the University of Wisconsin, Madison where she had the opportunity to take and teach television studies and media production classes. Later, Dr. Goldman received her Master of Fine Arts in Media Study from University at Buffalo.

Dr. Goldman is passionate about media production and film analysis, complemented by her educational background. She holds a Master’s degree in American Studies from the University of New Mexico and a doctorate from the University at Buffalo (UB). Her expertise in English, Media, and American Studies offers her a unique perspective in analyzing and teaching media studies.

“I like to also understand the economic history, like what was driving it, right?” Dr. Goldman explained. “I like to look at all aspects of history around the topic. I think sometimes we have to dig a little bit deeper into that.”

Dr. Goldman began to teach at Buffalo State University in 2013. She was drawn to Buff State by the eagerness and the passion she saw in the students.

“I wanted to be somewhere where the students were there because they wanted to be there,” Dr. Goldman said.

Inspired by her experience at UMass, she became involved with the Honors Program upon arriving at Buffalo State. This semester, Dr. Goldman is teaching HON303 Women, Gender, & Sexuality. In Spring 2025, she will be offering HON303 Intro to LGBTQ+ Studies as well as HON389 Film Analysis.



“My dream Honors course to teach with an infinite budget would be a class where students would be able to travel off campus. The goal would be to get Honors students involved in the greater Buffalo community, in essence, combining communities.”

In parting, Dr. Goldman encouraged Honors students to “be engaged, not just in your classes, but in the life of the university, and the life of the community of Buffalo and Western New York.”

Stepping out of our comfort zone can be challenging, but Dr. Goldman’s experience shows how it helps us discover our passion, build communities, and learn more about the world around us.

“Don’t just stop with what you’re learning in the classroom,” Dr. Goldman advised. “Keep learning from everything, from everything that you do.”

So yes, be a “jack of all trades and a master of none”; not only will you learn and grow, but you’ll also have more fun.



8TH ANNUAL HONORS BBQ

Nearly 200 Honors students celebrated the start of another academic year at our 8th Annual Honors BBQ on Friday, September 5th. Students enjoyed tabletop games, a prize wheel, candy jar guessing, cornhole, free Honors T-shirts, and delicious food provided by Kevin's Catering. Interim President Dr. Durand welcomed our new and returning Honors students back to Buffalo State, and she even participated in "Speed Friending" to make 10 new friends in 5 minutes! Thank you to our amazing volunteers for all their help before, during, and after this event.





**FIND THE FULL ALBUM ONLINE!
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
NICK BUTLER**



WBNY Radio Station

Kevin Thompson, General Manager

91.3FM WBNY is an FCC-certified Alternative Radio station located in the Student Union. It is entirely student-run and has been a staple of Buffalo State since 1982.

I became the music director last year, and after curating the music library, interviewing artists, and hosting on-campus concerts for a year, I became the General Manager. It has been a great responsibility and a fantastic time as the head of the radio station, and I have learned so much about public speaking, equipment usage, music curation, and strong leadership!

We are always looking for passionate students to reach out through our website (<https://wbny.buffalostate.edu>) and offer their interests to the station, whether it be aspirations of becoming a music DJ with a weekly show, talking on the sports show, learning how to engineer and produce in a licensed station, or any other sort of interest.

Featured Clubs & Organizations

Honors students love clubs (and not just the sandwiches!). Extracurriculars are a part of the Honors D.N.A. Most of us in high school participated in clubs, and some of us took on leading roles. And the Honors Program encourages students to get involved in the school community. So, let's hear about five featured organizations from the Honors students who lead them, and how *you* can get involved too. Who knows, they might have sandwiches there too?



C Chess Club

Jamie Ervolina, President

The Chess Club recently hosted its first-ever tournament at Buffalo State to kick off Homecoming Week. Both unrated and rated players of all abilities competed in the competition. Whether you are looking to learn how to play your first game of chess or are ready for some serious competition, Chess Club has a seat for you! Follow @buffalo_state_chess on Instagram or email Jamie Ervolina at ervolije01@buffalostate.edu for more information.

Pom Dance Team

Miranda Shepard, President

The Buffalo State Pom Dance Team (BSPDT) is an energetic group of dancers who bring excitement to campus with a unique style that fuses hip-hop and jazz. The team performs on the sidelines and at halftime during basketball and football games and at other school-hosted events. We also travel to compete in collegiate dance competitions during the spring. This fall, BSPDT has already performed at three football games plus a performance at Benji's Block Party for Homecoming. We will also take the field on October 25th to raise money for Breast Cancer Awareness Month and close the football season by honoring our seniors at the November 8th football game. Honors students and the entire community are encouraged to come support BSPDT and our football team! Interested in joining? Watch for 2026-2027 tryout details on Instagram @buffalostate_pomdance.

Fashion Club

Kaylee Starkweather, Vice President

Leading the club has shaped my Buff State experience by seeing how our events and projects inspire students to explore their personal style, network with industry professionals, and gain real-world experience. It's rewarding to help create a space where fashion unites and empowers our community.

This semester, we are hosting a Winter

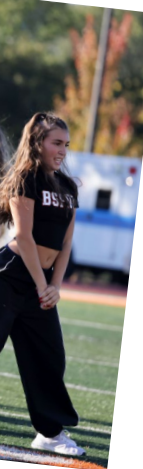
Clothing Drive for Family Promise of Western New York, a nonprofit supporting families facing homelessness. We're collecting new or gently used coats, hats, gloves, scarves, boots, and other warm clothing in all sizes. Please bring your donations to the Technology Building 3rd floor office by October 27th.

Honors students can get involved by attending our meetings as seen on Bengal Connect, following us on Instagram @buffstatefashionclub, or reaching out via

email at fsa.bsc@gmail.com to stay updated on events and opportunities. We welcome all majors and levels of experience, whether you love design, styling, or just want to meet creative people!

Top left: Fashionpreneurship small business panel, Fall 2024. This is one of our favorite Fall semester traditions!

Top right: Bedazzle T-shirt event, Spring 2025. We are doing another one of these events this October so bring your creativity!



Psychology Club

Jessie Ricotta, President

Psychology Club allows students to network with professors & students in the Psychology department, become involved in academic research, participate in fundraisers, attend informational meetings about graduate school, and more! Check Bengal Connect for upcoming event dates and reach out to President Jessie Ricotta with any questions (ricottjj01@buffalostate.edu). Follow them on Instagram @buffstatepsychclub.

Center left: Pie-a-professor fundraiser.

Center right: Presenting at the Student Research and Creativity Conference (SRCC), Spring 2025.

TENTATIVE FALL 2025 EVENT SCHEDULE		Psychology Club
OCT. 9	2 nd Research Project Meeting!	
OCT. 16	"B.A. VS B.S." Speaker Event!	
OCT. 23	Meet Your Professors!	
OCT. 27-31	Trick-Or-Treat in the Psych. Dep. Offices!	
NOV. 13	3 rd Research Project Meeting!	
NOV. 17-21	Fall Bake Sale Event!	
DEC. 4	De-Stress & Secret Santa!	
Dates And Locations Are Subject To Change!!		

HONORS LEADERS RETREAT AT WHISPERING PINES



Our 18 Honors Leaders recently dedicated their Labor Day Weekend to a 48-hour training retreat experience! Camp Whispering Pines, located in Franklinville, NY and managed by United Students Government (USG), provides a wilderness oasis perfect for connecting with friends while disconnecting from devices. Students spent their time honing their skills as peer mentors, practicing difficult conversations and counseling techniques, and learning to support each other throughout this Fall. Honors Leader alumni Calogero Tiermini ('22, '24) and Carolyn Freeman ('23) each served as guest facilitators at this retreat, sharing their perspectives with the current cohort.

In addition to training and skill practice, the Honors Leaders also built community through a series of icebreakers, team challenges, family-style meals, and free time to enjoy the 600-acre property. Evening activities included fire pit s'mores, stargazing, and a midnight dance party. Visit the Honors Leader Office located in South Wing 320 to hear more about their retreat and to receive support from a peer this Fall!

Current Honors students can apply to serve as an Honors Leader in March. This program is made possible by generous funding from Ms. Lillian Gondree and other donors.





2025 HOMECOMING DOOR DECORATING CONTEST: *IGNITE THE ROAR*

More than two dozen departments and offices across campus, including the Honors Program, participated in this year's door decorating contest for Homecoming. Honors student Calista Robillard created a dynamic, three-dimensional design featuring a book igniting the imagination and innovation of Honors Bengals. The poem written on the open book pages is *The Tyger* by William Blake. Take a closer look at our honorable mention door decorations next time you visit the Honors Academic Suite!



Honors students took advantage of the nearby art museums recently with events such as M&T First Friday at the AKG led by Honors Leaders Joshua and Cadence, Honors Breakfast at the Burchfield Penney Art Center (BPAC), and an exhibit tour & art activity at the BPAC led by Honors Leader Max.



Spring 2026 Honors Courses

Course	Title	Gen Ed Category	CRN	Day/Time	Instructor
HON102	Intro to Environmental Sustainability	Natural Sciences	1909	MWF 11:00-11:50 am	Holmgren, Camille
HON102	Meteorology	Natural Sciences	2523	W 6:00-8:40 pm	Vermette, Stephen
HON104	American History	American History	1795	MWF 10:00-10:50 am	Black, Scott
HON106	Europe's Got Talent: Classical Music Shapes a World	The Arts	2285	TR 1:40-2:55 pm	Blum, Daniel
HON201	Africa Since 1800	World History	3206	TR 9:25-10:40 am	Orosz, Ken
HON202	Power, Resistance, Redemption: Narratives in Literature and Film	Social Sciences	2330	R 3:05-5:45 pm	Guiati, Andrea
HON202	Politics of Developing Nations	Social Sciences	3203	MW 4:30-5:45 pm	Sarwari, Mehwish
HON202	Comparative Democracy	Social Sciences	3204	TR 10:50 am-12:05 pm	McGovern, Patrick
HON202	Intro to Social Work	Social Sciences	3205	TR 9:25-10:40 am	Elliott, Jennifer
HON209	Europe and the World in the 20 th Century	World History	3207	TR 10:50 am-12:05 pm	Abromeit, John
HON209	Architecture in Western Civilizations	World History	3208	TR 9:25-10:40 am	Schnier, Jorg
HON303	Intro to LGBTQ+ Studies	Diversity	2547	MW 4:30-5:45 pm	Goldman, Ruth
HON303	Haunting in Diverse Literature	Diversity	3215	TR 4:30-5:45 pm	Perez, Lorna
HON303	Intersectionality of Difference	Diversity	3216	TR 3:05-4:20 pm	Elliott, Jennifer
HON303	Gender and Archaeology	Diversity	3236	MWF 11:00-11:50 am	Maguire, Susan
HON189 (1 credit)	The Queen City: Understanding Place in Buffalo, NY		2558	R 3:05-4:20 pm (*3:05-6:00pm on trips)	Baran, Matt
HON389	Anthropology of Contemporary Issues		3285	TR 10:50 am-12:05 pm	Hart, Kimberly
HON389	Literary Criticism & Theory		2586	TR 3:05-4:20 pm	Ben-Merre, David
HON389	Constitutional Law		2418	TR 6:00-7:15 pm	Shauku, A.K.
HON389	Weather & Society		2519	MW 3:05-4:20 pm	Vermette, Stephen
HON389	American Realism		2515	TR 1:40-2:55 pm	Bryant, Timothy
HON389	Disease and Global Health		3307	MWF 10:00-10:50 am	Wieczkowski, Julie
HON389	Film Analysis		3308	T 6:00-7:40 pm	Goldman, Ruth
HON444	Honors Senior Seminar		2043	Hybrid	Herb, Maggie
CWP102	Argumentation and Research	College Writing II	1317	MWF 12:00-12:50 pm	Woods, Lori

Priority registration begins Wednesday, November 5th at 6:00AM.

Read the course descriptions on our Honors Program website:

honors.buffalostate.edu/course-schedule



honors.buffalostate.edu



honors@buffalostate.edu



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

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