



THE
Medallion

Southern Miss
HONORS COLLEGE
Spring 2023

LETTER from the DEAN

Dear Alumni and Friends,

This issue of the Medallion features several exciting firsts for our Honors College and for Southern Miss. Beginning this spring, our Honors College graduates are wearing gold caps in addition to their Honors medallion during commencement. The brightly colored caps, which allow everyone to easily recognize the Honors Scholars in the crowd, are a fitting recognition of our students' academic achievements. Another first is the Honors Abroad Seminar course in Germany we offered at the beginning of the year. Although definitely not the ideal time to visit my home country—January is cold, windy, and wet—students' feedback about their experience was overwhelmingly positive, and we are excited to offer the trip again this coming academic year. Be sure to read about our group's contributions to the Stolpersteine initiative!

Now for the most difficult part of this letter: saying good-bye. For the past 35 years, Southern Miss has been my professional home, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunities I have enjoyed as a researcher and as a student mentor and teacher. Among the roles I have played at this university, serving the Honors College as associate dean and most recently as dean has been the high point in my career because the many awe-inspiring Honors Scholars past and present, my dedicated faculty colleagues, and my superb team of coworkers have made coming to work each day pure joy. I am proud to have played a role in designing our innovative Honors curriculum and to have worked with so many exceptional students whose contributions to academic research are shining examples of what it means to be a scholar. However, now is the time for me to step aside. I am excited to pass on the leadership of the Honors College to

my colleague Joyce Inman, whose compassion for students will continue our time-honored tradition of fostering academic excellence and providing strong student support. I cannot wait to learn about the path Dr. Inman will chart for the Southern Miss Honors College as dean!

As always, thank you for your continued interest and support! We will keep you up to date on Honors College news and events and hope that you will be as excited as we are about upcoming opportunities for you to engage with the Honors College and our students. HCTTT!

Sincerely,

Dr. Sabine Heinhorst

Interim Dean
Honors College



New Staff INTRODUCTIONS

As the Honors College continues to grow and develop as a community, we are thrilled to welcome a group of individuals who are passionate about education and dedicated to supporting our students. From admissions and advising to research and outreach, our new team members bring a wealth of experience and expertise to our college. The Honors College team welcomes Vivian O'Neal as coordinator of recruitment and strategic communication, Jessica James-Prince as academic advisor and coordinator of living-learning communities, and Kyle Ethridge as coordinator of scholarships and student support services.



VIVIAN O'NEAL

Vivian O'Neal is a Hattiesburg native and graduated from Southern Miss in 2020 with a Bachelor of Arts in public relations. Upon graduation, she accepted a full-time position as a member of the communications team for a U.S. Senator in Washington, D.C. Vivian later moved back to her hometown to pursue a Master of Education in higher education administration and student affairs. She has been the coordinator of recruitment and strategic communication for the Honors College since November 2022.

"My favorite part about working for the Honors College at Southern Miss is the opportunity to get to know prospective students from all over the world. College is a time when students discover so much about who they are and what they want from life, and I love getting to play even a small role in the beginning of their journey."

JESSICA JAMES-PRINCE

Jessie is from Hattiesburg and received her Bachelor of Science in psychology from Southern Miss in 2018 and her Master of Science in clinical mental health from Mississippi College in 2020. Jessie practiced as a mental health therapist before joining the Honors College team, and she and her husband own Prince Sign Co., a local fabrication and hand-painted sign shop. She loves to travel and enjoys family time with her husband, River, and one-year-old little boy, Rider. She has been an Honors College academic advisor and the coordinator of Honors Living-Learning Programs since August of last year.



"My favorite part of working in the Honors College is the one-on-one time with the students. I'm a counselor by nature, so I strive to make every student that sits in my office feel seen and heard. College is a huge adjustment for students, and although it's exciting, it can be challenging to navigate and feel like you belong. My goal is to give Honors scholars the tools they need to feel confident while they work toward their future goals."

KYLE ETHRIDGE



Born and raised in Decatur, Miss., Kyle moved to Hattiesburg to attend USM, where he earned an undergraduate degree in English education and graduate degrees in English literature and library and information science in 2012, 2014, and 2016, respectively. After finishing his graduate degrees, Kyle moved to north Mississippi, where he taught high school English for six years. He returned to Hattiesburg and USM in 2022 when he began working at the Honors College, the same place where he worked as a graduate assistant for three years. He lives with his cat and enjoys baking, playing D&D, futilely trying to maintain his yard with a manual push mower, and listening to music (Laura Stevenson is currently in heavy rotation).

With a background in education, Kyle now works with Honors scholars by managing their scholarships and tracking their progress in the curriculum. "Most of my work is behind the scenes with the various reports and queries that I create. However, all those Excel spreadsheets lead me to my final task of formally clearing students for graduation from the Honors College. I am with the students from the moment they enter the Honors College, and I have the pleasure of also being with them as they finish their time with us. I enjoy being with them along their journey and have learned much from them in the time that I've been here," he says.

Graduating with a GOLD CAP!



Commencement ceremonies at Southern Miss looked a little different this year! Beginning this spring, USM students graduating from the Honors College wore a gold cap as part of the University's recognition of their academic accomplishments. Honors College graduates complete an elective curriculum and a year-long independent thesis project that illustrates their dedication to their academic and creative pursuits, and the University wanted to make sure that this additional effort was recognized.

Associate Dean Joyce Inman explains, "Our Honors College graduates demonstrate a desire to take their education to the next level. Completion of the thesis project is a significant accomplishment that will position them as more competitive in their future professional and academic goals. The University administration wanted a way to highlight these students and their dedication to their studies, and we are excited to see them stand out among their peers in their gold caps."

Students received their gold caps at the Honors College graduation reception after their thesis advisors conferred their medallions. The following day, Honors College graduates wore their medallions and their gold caps, and Honors College faculty and staff were proudly cheering them on from the stands!



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT HUGH MOLOTSI

We are proud to feature Honors College alumnus, Hugh Molotsi (1988), who graduated from Southern Miss *summa cum laude* with a Bachelor of Science degree in computer engineering technology. Hugh also holds a Master of Science degree in computer engineering from Santa Clara University, and he is a seasoned product and technology leader with over 30 years of experience developing global solutions for small businesses and consumers.

Hugh is the founder and CEO of Ujama Inc., and he had a 22-year career at Intuit, where his last position was engineering fellow and vice president of innovation. During his Intuit tenure, Hugh helped develop QuickBooks and several other small business offerings. In 2011, Hugh became the first recipient of Intuit's Founders Innovation Award for his contributions helping launch Intuit's payments business. He serves on the boards of Barloworld (BAW:SJ) and the Mozilla Corporation, and Hugh is the co-author of *The Intrapreneur's Journey*, a book on how to develop a culture of innovation at large companies. He is passionate about fostering grassroots innovation and giving voice to good ideas wherever those ideas may come from.

This passion was obvious at this year's Undergraduate Symposium on Research and Creative Activity, where Hugh delivered the keynote speech to our participating undergraduate students. During his talk, Hugh elaborated on his experiences in industry while pointing out to attendees that inquiry and research leads to innovation. In fact, Hugh noted that his innovation journey began at Southern Miss with writing his Honors thesis, calling that process a formative experience.

When asked about his experiences in the Honors College, Hugh brought up the significant influence of his Honors thesis advisor, Dr. Kamal Ali. He noted that while everyone currently talks about ChatGPT and how AI will change the world, Dr. Ali was way ahead of his time and knew that neural networks and machine learning were the future of AI. There wasn't much literature on neural networks at the time, so Dr. Ali gave Hugh a biology book to learn how neural networks function in the human body. Ultimately, he inspired Hugh to choose his project, which was to build a parallel processing computer to run neural network algorithms. Hugh says that working on his Honors thesis helped him cultivate an innovation mindset, which he defines as going beyond assigned work and looking at problems with a fresh perspective.

We feel so lucky to have had Hugh return to Hattiesburg to share his experiences and insights with students from all over campus. His dedication to his family, to community, and to innovative thinking is inspiring, and we are proud to call him one of our own.



STUDENT FEATURES

The Honors College is a community of exceptional students who strive for academic excellence, intellectual curiosity, and meaningful engagement with the world around them.

These scholars challenge themselves with rigorous coursework, engage in research and creative projects, and contribute to the community through service and leadership. We are excited to showcase some of the exceptional achievements and experiences of our Honors College students, highlighting their diverse passions, goals, and aspirations. Whether pursuing careers in STEM fields, the humanities, or the arts, our students are poised to make a positive impact on the world, and we are proud to feature their stories!



OLIVER YOUNG (First Year)

Oliver Young III, a Presidential Scholar and kinesiology/exercise science major, is a freshman at Southern Miss, and is involved across campus in organizations such as the Student Alumni Association, Men of Excellence, and the Afro-American Student Organization. Oliver was USM's 2022 Homecoming Freshman Beau, earned a spot on the

President's List for the 2022 fall semester, was an Outstanding Freshman of the Year finalist for 2022-23, received the AASO Member of the Semester for fall 2022, and received the AASO Celebration of Scholastic Excellence Award. His greatest passions are bodybuilding, community service, and culture.

Oliver shares that his most memorable experience in the Honors College was the active learning trip his colloquium class took to Atlanta, Ga., where he was able to tour various parts of the city and visit the Georgia Aquarium, Atlanta Botanical Garden, and The World of Coke.

Since joining the Honors College last year, Oliver has become interested in how advertisements can lead to overconsumption of food and the impact these ads can have on our eating behaviors. After graduating from Southern Miss, Oliver plans to pursue his doctoral degree to become an exercise physiologist. We look forward to seeing what Oliver accomplishes as an Honors Scholar!



This year has been an experience like no other. I was able to interact with individuals who I may never have met and cultivate meaningful experiences. I have learned to appreciate many art styles in my colloquium class, specifically pottery ceramics, and have been able to produce many art pieces. I have also **gone to new places with people who will undoubtedly be long-term friends.** This year has opened my mind to new experiences and has allowed me to become acquainted with the unknown.

JASON ANG (Second Year)

Jason Ang is a second-year international student from Surabaya, Indonesia, studying forensics (biological sciences) with a minor in chemistry. Last year, Jason was an Outstanding Freshman of the Year finalist and was awarded Emerging Leader of 2022. He is an Honors College resident assistant, the public relations and marketing liaison for the Forensic Science Society, and a senator in the Student Government Association. He is also a member of the National Residence Hall Honorary, Delta Delta Epsilon Forensic Honors Society, and the Reformed University Fellowship and Baptist Student Union.

Jason states that his most memorable experience in the Honors College was the active learning trip to Disney World with Dr. Inman's colloquium class.

When asked about his passions, Jason mentioned that he obviously loves true crimes and is interested in technology, graphic design, photography, videography, as well as cars and automobiles. While his colloquium and seminar interests range from etiquette and Disney's cross-cultural adaptation to archival research and games, Jason is thinking about looking into the usability and accuracy of iPhone LiDAR sensor to 3D scan a crime scene for his Honors thesis.



After graduating, Jason plans to work professionally as a forensic scientist in a law enforcement agency. Long-term, he hopes to make a change in the criminal justice system in his home country, Indonesia, especially in the utilization of forensic science to solve violent crimes.



When I first arrived at USM, I felt proud of being a part of the Honors College, yet I still did not know exactly what I was getting myself into. Despite my uncertainty and concern about my reading and writing ability as an international student, my colloquium professor's continuous mentorship and guidance allowed me to grow tremendously, not only in the things above, but ultimately in the ability to ask critical questions and discuss them productively with my peers while considering various viewpoints and questioning my own beliefs. In other words, the competent teachers, as well as supportive classmates who belong to a community of scholars that live together in **the Honors living-learning community, helped me grow both academically and personally** through my Honors experience.

KENNING BRIDGES (Third Year)

Major: Political Science (Pre-Law)

Awards: Kappa Delta Pledge Class 2020 Model Pledge, Student Government Association 2020 Outstanding Freshman Associate, USM Homecoming 2021 Sophomore Maid

Passions: State and local government, Child advocacy, Mississippi, event planning, building community, and travel

Involvement: Luckyday Scholars Program, Freshman Servant Leadership Seminar peer instructor; Kappa Delta Sorority, former vice president of events and programming, where I oversaw all philanthropic endeavors and community service (our chapter raised over \$55,000 for Prevent Child Abuse America and Kids Hub Child Advocacy Center, and we also won the FSL Outstanding Chapter in Community Service for completing over 1,000 hours of community service!); College Panhellenic Council, vice president of community engagement; Office of Admissions, Eagle Connection, campus tour guide; Office of Orientation and Transition Programs, Southern Style '22 (Orientation leader and campus ambassador)

Tell us about your experience in the Honors College: As an Honors Scholar at The University of Southern Mississippi, I have been encouraged to explore my full potential as a student, leader, and individual, and I have been supported while doing all three! The Honors College has provided me with numerous opportunities to connect to scholars around me, research my academic interests, and hone in on my academic abilities (researching, writing, editing.)

What is your most memorable experience in the Honors College?

My freshman colloquium class will always have a special place in my heart and memory! During a year of so much uncertainty and confusion (2020), Dr. Inman's colloquium class quickly became my favorite! For the first time, I was treated as a writer rather than just a student. Having a professor who saw and believed in my potential and taught me how to improve my work simply by valuing its importance had an immense impact on me and the type of student I now am! I am forever grateful for all the growth that happened as a result of that class!

What is your plan after graduating? Though I intend to attend law school, I have recently been considering the idea of graduate school for communication studies. Eventually, I hope to work in the state legislative realm in some capacity!

Special Note/Quote: "It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice!"

Fun Fact: I worked as an intern for the Lt. Governor of Mississippi the entire summer after my freshman year of college. During this time, my love for the legislative process grew, and I also became very familiar with our state's history regarding the legalization of medical marijuana. This is when I became fascinated and knew it would be included in my thesis work.



ROBBIE MCDONALD (Fourth Year)

Major: Interior Design with a minor in French

Awards: Freshman of the Year finalist; Silver ASID Design Excellence Award - South Central Chapter, Midtown Dental Clinic; Anderson Retail Endowed Student Scholarship

Passions: Educational and corporate design in relation to student/employee mental well-being, multicultural studies, and increasing awareness to the multifaceted role of interior designers in today's society

Involvement: American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), president; International Interior Design Association (IIDA); Honors College; USM School of Music Concert Choir

Tell us about your experience in the Honors College: I started the Honors College in the Keystone Program, and I hit the ground running. I never believed that I would be able to be in a program like this because I grew up in an educational system that said that my standardized testing scores weren't good enough to be in an accelerated or more advanced curriculum. Even throughout high school, I believed that I would never be able to show people what I can do academically because I was a bad test taker. Being in the Honors College has taught me to have confidence in my ability and has helped me prove to myself that I am capable of doing whatever I put my mind to.

What is your most memorable experience in the Honors College? My most memorable experience would be being able to present the plan for my thesis at one of the School of Marketing's "Coffee and Convos." Here, I was able to present to faculty, staff, and fellow students about what I wanted to explore in my thesis and how. This gave me the opportunity to get good feedback and inspire professors from around campus to take a second look at how they view educational environments. This also helped me prove to myself that I was in the right place with the most supportive people. It was a very warm, fuzzy kind of feeling.

If you have received an Honors College or DCUR grant, please describe how it has benefitted you:

I recently received a SPUR Grant that helped me travel to South Carolina for the Annual AMTP Conference. This conference was a great opportunity to network and present my thesis to even more professors from around the world. I love being able to spread awareness about what interior designers can do and spread awareness about the work that USM students are capable of.

What is your plan after graduating? After graduating, I plan to move to Atlanta and work for a large commercial A&D firm. Atlanta has always been a childhood place for me, and I would love to move there, especially since I already have family there. I also hope to

travel and continue in my research while I am working. I eventually hope to pursue an MBA through USM's online program. Working at a larger A&D firm would allow me to work on large-scale projects that have a big impact on the built environment, such as corporate offices, advanced medical facilities, and inclusive educational spaces.

Special Note/Quote: I always love a good Maya Angelou quote: "You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it."



TRAVEL

PATRICK TYSON in Peru

My name is Patrick Tyson, and I am a junior majoring in anthropology, sociology, and Spanish. I love traveling, exercising, and electronic music; I also write poetry and practice photography/videography. My campus involvement has been limited due to COVID-19 and spending semesters in both Europe and Latin America. When I have been on campus, however, I've served as a language partner with USM's English Language Institute and a member of campus Spanish and psychology clubs. I'm planning to pursue a European master's degree in film production after my May 2024 graduation.

As mentioned above, my time as a USM student has included two semesters abroad. The first semester (Fall 2021) came through USM's Semester in Spain program in Cádiz, Spain. The second semester (Fall 2022) was an exchange program in Lima, Peru, where I took anthropology and sociology courses. Both Spain and Peru left great impacts on me; however, the individual nature of my Peruvian exchange pushed me in ways I had never experienced before. I swam in two of the world's most unique water bodies: the 46.4°F/8°C waters of the 13,123 ft./4,000 m Lake Titicaca and the gargantuan Amazon River. I tried alpaca, cuy (guinea pig), and other Peruvian kitchen staples while meeting and becoming friends with incredible people. Most importantly, I grew as a student and as a person. This growth didn't come without challenges, however. Specialized courses in another language, plus working within a different academic system, tested my academic abilities, with additional personal matters leading to many tears being shed while in Peru. Political instability from a presidential coup also resulted in regional airport closures, which trapped me in the city of Cusco with protests and tensions flaring.

I won't lie, the highs and lows of my Peru exchange were difficult to navigate through. However, I think my time as an Honors College student helped me piece my exchange semester together. My Honors Colloquium courses forced me to reframe my vision of academic writing, encouraging me to be more critical of both what I produced and the sources I used to support my work. Furthermore, my spring Honors Seminar class – which happened to focus on Latin America – helped produce an inquisitively oriented cultural background from which I could process everything around me while in Peru. Together, my colloquium and seminar takeaways not only made me a more resilient student but also helped me connect more genuinely with the people, places, and things/ideas I encountered while exchanging. I truly feel that my semesters abroad would not have imprinted themselves so intimately in my heart and memory without being flexible and being open to connection, two qualities that the USM Honors College helped me improve.



BRENNA AND LAURA RENFROE: Seoul Sisters



Brenna and Laura Renfroe are sisters at The University of Southern Mississippi, where they are both members of the Honors College. Brenna, a senior majoring in English with a history minor, hopes to work as a screenwriter or a publisher/editor after graduating in the spring. Her younger sister, Laura, a freshman double-majoring in art and digital journalism, plans to become a graphic designer or a creative writer. Both Brenna and Laura have landed spots on the President's List and have been influenced by their time in the Honors College. Laura states, "The Honors College has impacted me by teaching me the importance of creativity, individuality, and stepping out of your comfort zone," while Brenna feels that she has been taught the value of being inquisitive and pursuing the kind of research and questions that fascinate her. When the sisters found an opportunity where they could study abroad together, a once in a lifetime experience, they knew they had to do everything in their power to make it a reality.

It is a big step out of our comfort zone to move from Mississippi and fly all the way across the world to reside in a city of 9+ million people for four months. We thought Seoul would be a good choice for us to experience city life together and adjust to a foreign culture, one that we were already a little familiar with and interested in.

We are learning that trying to adjust to foreign customs and ways of life can be hard, especially with unexpected culture shocks. For example, public transportation is always quiet; talking on a subway is considered rude! Additionally, it is respectful to receive things with two hands, especially money. The language barrier is also intimidating. It is sometimes challenging to gain the confidence to speak the language, but locals are almost always accommodating and appreciate us trying. There are plenty of embarrassing moments, but when we finally get things right, it feels so rewarding!

One of the highlights so far has been our excursion to the Korean Folk Village, a blend of pre-modern and modern Korea. This village is a living history museum that contains architecture, food, and traditions of the Joseon Dynasty, the last dynasty of Korea, which lasted from 1392-1910. To get to play traditional games such as Ddakji (딱지) and Yut Nori (윷놀이) was fascinating since these games are still made popular to this day through South Korean entertainment (think Squid Game). We also got to make a hard, sugary candy called Dalgona (달고나), see a traditional dance and music performance, and enjoy the natural beauty of the mountains, lake, and streams of the village.

We have only been in Seoul for one month so far, and we will be here for roughly three more. We can already tell that it will be hard to say goodbye to all the wonderful memories and places we have already experienced. It is hard to pick just a couple highlights to share, even at this early stage in our journey. We can say that it is the little, unexpected moments that are especially memorable. Grabbing a warm hotteok (호떡), a cinnamon and honey-filled pancake, from the street market in Myeongdong or stumbling across the first cherry blossom blooms, a hint of the beauty that comes when Seoul inches closer to spring, are just a couple of the magical, little moments.

It is hard to put a finger on how this trip has impacted us so far, but we are so excited to see how much we continue to grow as individuals, as thinkers, and as global citizens during our time here in the lively, beautiful city of Seoul, South Korea.



It's a Small World After All: COLLOQUIUM ACTIVE- LEARNING TRIPS

Honors College Colloquium is the first class our Honors Scholars choose each fall. Before they sign up for biology, calculus, or English, they have the opportunity to rank the Colloquium classes being offered, and we work hard to ensure that every student receives one of their top three classes. When the fall semester begins, these classes are off to a running start with rigorous reading, writing, and discussion relevant to the year's Colloquium theme, and come October, each class is traveling to a different destination that their professor has chosen for the ways it will enhance learning and engagement.

The theme for the Colloquium 2022-23 cohort was "resistance," and our classes explored this theme across the United States! This year, classes traveled to Detroit, Montgomery, Houston, New Orleans, Atlanta, Birmingham, Orlando, and there was even a class that traveled all over the state of Mississippi. Students had the opportunity to explore museums, theme parks, art studios, and performances that enhanced their understanding of the many ways we see resistance happening in our everyday lives.

Dr. Don Yee's Colloquium class made a 14-hour drive to Detroit, Michigan, as part of Yee's plan to expand students' horizons, help them meet new people, and expose them to new ideas. Yee explains that students had the opportunity to "visit art, transportation, and shipping museums, tour the oldest aquarium in the nation, attend a symphony performance, learn the history of Motown records, eat at a historic Polish restaurant, and drink cider at a 160-year-old cider mill." According to Yee, these experiences encouraged students to develop new perspectives on resistance and to think about resistance through varied lenses. Ramsey McManus, a student in Yee's class, noted that in addition to experiencing a new city and leaving the South for the first time, this outside of the classroom learning environment enabled her to bond with her classmates in unexpected ways and had a significant influence on the ways the class has learned together since they returned to Hattiesburg.



*Dr. Yee's Colloquium class
in Detroit, Michigan*



HONORS ABROAD in Germany

The Honors College began offering Honors Abroad seminars in 2019, and this year, Honors Abroad traveled to Germany. Andrew Haley, Sabine Heinhorst, and Joyce Inman traveled with 18 Honors Scholars to visit locations across northern Germany: Dr. Heinhorst's hometown, Hamburg; Lübeck and the Baltic Sea; the German capital, Berlin; and Potsdam, home to Friedrich the Great's Sanssouci Palace.

Among the many sites we visited, the church of St. Nikolai in Hamburg stood out because of our interactions with members of the St. Nikolai parish. Upon arrival, we were greeted warmly by Frau Pastorin Schack and by several parishioners who are members of the local Stolpersteine group. Stolpersteine, or "stumbling stones," are commemorative brass plaques designed by artist Gunter Demnig to remember victims of the Holocaust. The class received an introduction to the international Stolpersteine Initiative from Mr. Haag, and we visited a few of the many Stolpersteine that have been laid throughout German and European cities to commemorate and give names to the victims.

Our class made a donation that not only covered the lecture and tour but also funded two more Stolpersteine, which will be laid in Hamburg, Germany this summer. USM's sponsored Stolpersteine will be placed at the last known residences of Hilde Fanny Weinreich and Margaret Herwig.

This experience made each Stolperstein we crossed during our explorations of Germany that much more meaningful. Demnig cites the Talmud saying that "a person is only forgotten when his or her name is forgotten." Southern Miss Honors faculty and students were honored and humbled to play a small part in ensuring that these two women will be acknowledged and remembered.



Dr. Joyce Inman's Colloquium class studied what it means to embrace or resist stories we encounter, as well as storytelling and retelling as a form of resistance. The course began with the stories that have shaped most individuals whether they realize it or not—Disney stories. The class active-learning trip involved two days in Disney theme parks and an immersive storytelling workshop at Hollywood Studios, where students learned about Walt Disney's beliefs when it came to storytelling, as well as the Disney Imagineers' guidelines for immersive storytelling techniques in theme parks.

"The class trip was the highlight of my first semester," explains Honors Scholar, Gia Vainisi. Vainisi also noted that the workshop reinforced the ways corporations use storytelling to further their goals, a point that Inman hoped students would take away from the opportunity. "In this year's class, I wanted students to question and think about the stories that influence how we participate in

the world and to begin to interrogate what it means that one company has so much sway in the stories that are produced and circulated in our society. Students are always surprised at the enormous reach Disney has in our culture, and I think this experience encouraged them to think about Disney through a critical lens."

Honors Colloquium is the first course in the Honors curriculum, and this class is where students "find their people" and begin to develop as emerging scholars. The active-learning trips are important to student bonding and to encouraging students to learn and explore outside of the classroom. Dean of the Honors College, Dr. Sabine Heinhorst, reminds us that "education happens everywhere, and we want Honors Scholars to have the opportunity to embrace learning in every way possible."



Dr. Inman's Colloquium class at Disney World



MISSISSIPPI HONORS CONFERENCE

In February 2023, six Honors scholars attended the Mississippi Honors Conference (MHC), organized by and held at Itawamba Community College in Fulton, Miss. Aiden Leise (Chemistry BS), Angel Walker (Biological Sciences BS), Megan Hansen (Chemistry BS), Anabelle Vallecillo Bustos (Kinesiology BS), Charlsie Wilson (Marine Biology BS), and Madisyn Killough (Elementary Education BS) presented their research at the conference, along with Honors College staff member, Kyle Ethridge. For some of these students, this conference is the first that they have attended as presenters, so it was an excellent way both to share their research and gain experience with an academic conference. Madisyn, who earned second place in the humanities and social sciences oral presentation category, said that the conference “was the first time that I have ever been able to do this, so this opportunity is super special to me.” Along with Madisyn earning second place, Aiden Leise earned second place in the STEM/health sciences poster presentation category.

With topics ranging from tier II intervention supports to public health, our Honors Scholars showcased their research through both poster and oral presentations. Charlsie, who presented her research involving seagrass, said, “It was such a wonderful experience to see what my peers were researching and such an enriching opportunity to see research from other Honors colleges and programs.” Similarly, Anabelle noted that she “was able to connect with other Honors students from college campuses all around Mississippi and learn about their research endeavors!” Connecting our scholars to others in their field and facilitating community in research is at the heart of the Honors College's mission, and we are happy to see our students so thoroughly engaging with other students and their scholarship and research.

The Mississippi Honors Conference provided all its attendees with the opportunity to practice and perfect their presentation skills and hone their knowledge of their own research. On the trip to the conference and even in the hotel lobby, our scholars were practicing and tweaking their presentations and collaborating with one another on how to best present their work. Megan, who presented on copper concentrations in the western Mississippi Sound, says, “Above all, I feel more confident about both presenting my own work and engaging with professionals in my field after attending MCH!” As many of these scholars prepare to graduate and transition either into graduate school or the workforce, this conference provided them with the chance to connect and network with their peers in preparation for their bright futures after graduating from USM and the Honors College.

The Gilman Scholarship

ACCORDING TO LILLIAN PHAM

The Gilman Scholarship is a Nationally Competitive Program that supports students who may not otherwise have an opportunity to study abroad. Multiple Honors College students received Gilman Scholarships this academic year, including Lillian Pham, a senior biological sciences (biomedical sciences) major. When asked about her decision to apply for the Gilman Scholarship, she explains, “I firmly believe in the power of international education to broaden perspectives, develop intercultural competencies, and foster global connections. The Gilman Scholarship offers a unique opportunity to access financial support that enables students, like me, to pursue experiential learning experiences that may have otherwise been out of reach.” This belief in the value of global learning is at the heart of the Gilman Scholarship program.

Lillian also recognized the program's dedication to making international education more inclusive: “I was particularly drawn to the program's commitment to increasing representation in international education, as I am passionate about the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

Applying for the Gilman Scholarship is a rigorous process, but Lillian found it to be incredibly rewarding. She notes, “Crafting a strong application required me to ponder deeply about my academic and professional goals, as well as the qualities and experiences that make me a unique candidate. The process has truly been an excellent exercise in self-improvement and self-awareness.”

With the support of the Gilman Scholarship, Lillian spent the spring semester participating in an international exchange program at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom, where she immersed herself in the field of biosciences. Lillian reflects on this experience and states, “Embarking on a journey to explore new places and cultures has proven to be a catalyst for personal growth, as it challenges me to step outside my comfort zone and foster self-discovery.” This sense of discovery and wonder is a hallmark of global citizenship, and these experiences will be invaluable in a rapidly changing world.

Receiving a Gilman Scholarship is a prestigious honor, and we are incredibly proud of our Honors students who have received one.





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