

William Connor Odom

Honors Student Association President 2021-2022



Intro to Comparative Politics Honors

College Chemistry 1 Honors

Intro to Theatre Honors

Intro to Psychology Honors

World Religions Honors

English Comp 2 Honors

Spring 2022 –

Associate of Arts

Associates of Liberal Arts and Sciences

**“The core of man's spirit comes from new experiences.”**

Considering my experience with the NWACC Honors Program has been somewhat limited due to the pandemic, many of my experiences relate directly to my six honors courses. With mostly online courses and only meeting a handful of teachers face to face, demonstrating engagement, cultivating curiosity, and exploring perspectives was tricky. However, the Honors Program pushed me to connect with the NWACC community through various course-related extracurriculars.



In Chemistry 1 Honors with Lois Chun, we each conducted an EMPACTS project throughout the semester. My pitched idea was selected as the basis for one of the groups- How do blue light emissions impact the quality of sleep? Our group ran a test with around 80 other students to confirm a hypothesis that eliminating blue-light activity (phones, laptops, TVs, tablets, etc.) would improve sleep quality.

However, after some experimenting, we discovered something far more interesting. While many of our test subjects reported better sleep, they also mentioned how much harder it was to fall asleep. This revealed to our group that “before bed” habits, even if they were possibly detrimental to the sleeping “experience” overall, were just as important for our test subjects.

These findings are incredibly helpful for students to be aware of, as it may appear that heading to bed without a phone in your hand could hurt your sleep in the short term, it’s worth it in the long term once your habits readjust. This demonstrated engagement in the greater NWACC community led to useful information for any student who wants it!



In my Introduction to Psychology Honors course, I was able to explore several in-depth topics through video projects. These tested my curiosity and pushed me to dig deeper.

For my mid-term project, I decided to study dreams and how they relate to our subconscious. So, for a week, I wrote down as many notes as I could each morning, documenting the places, people, and problems I interacted with in my dreams. From this “dream journal,” I put together a short film detailing my findings. The experience was fascinating and

really tested the way I could interpret what my subconscious was telling me.

In high school, I may've approached a project like this very passively without really pushing myself to dig deeper. I can thankfully say, now, that this isn't the case and that I'm truly driven by curiosity and discovery.

In my time with Professor Matt Evans, I've been truly pushed to explore perspectives, particularly through my extensive involvement in NWACC's Model UN Club.

During Intro to Comparative Politics with Dr. Evans, I was offered the chance to compete in the Midwest Model United Nations virtual conference. Here, I learned how important it is to learn about the world around you- what countries value, what they don't, and who they're willing to work with to get where they need to.

After winning an Honorable Mention for my role as the Delegate of Ethiopia, I was hooked and strived to participate in the events the following year. This past school year, I participated in MMUN and ACMUN, the Arkansas Collegiate Model United Nation conference. While I didn't place in MMUN 2022, I won Outstanding Delegate for representing China at ACMUN 2021.

These various conferences forced me to learn about new places and new problems. I was challenged to uncover complex solutions to difficult, layered problems for these member states. It was riveting. My favorite aspect, though, was connecting with those around me and learning about everyone's backgrounds. I learned that, when it comes to diplomacy, it's not about the numbers, the semantics, or the politics, it's about the people. Relationships and genuine conversations are critical to exploring new perspectives.

On top of these amazing opportunities, I also...

Produced a poster depicting the LGBTQ+ Rights situation in Sub-Saharan Africa



Created a short documentary on the history of the Ásatrúarfélagið

Directed a lockdown-inspired short film  
starring one of my close friends



**“You have to do everything you can. You have to work your hardest. And if you do, if you stay positive... you have a shot at a silver lining.”**

As President of the Honors Student Association during a school year mostly defined by online learning due to the pandemic, there's two ways to approach the situation... You can be frustrated. You can ponder all the events and on-campus opportunities that you're not able to have. And mostly, you can question whether you're doing the most you can as a leader, given the circumstances.

Or, you press on. Play the hand you've been dealt. And celebrate the victories, even if they're small.

My mission as HSA President was to connect the student body, through whatever means necessary. The pandemic had stifled our relationships and hurt the NWACC community, so it would take a lot of effort and dedication to get it back on track.

We started the semester mostly over Zoom. Chatting between officers about things we could do virtually for students, but nothing seemed to click. Everyone was itching for something in person but with the Delta variant surging, we had to stick to the laptops. During this time, the key lesson was consistency in communication. Sometimes, it's not the first email or the second that get their attention. It may take maximum effort but staying persistent can pay dividends.

Eventually, we transitioned to the spring semester, and it seemed as though on-campus events were a possibility. It was during this time that my Vice President, Eric Halsell, moved on the University of Arkansas and the new Co-VP's, Nicole Peterson and Stephanie Palacios, stepped in. These women have been incredibly helpful with coordinating events and projects across HSA. They deeply care about the program and want to expand its outreach as much as possible. Working with them confirmed the value in trusting your team and being willing to let others lead even when you're the one "in charge." Insecure leadership leads to an ineffective company/group/etc. every single time. Relying on those around you and even propping up others is the key to success.



After months of back and forth with the officer core, we finally began hosting events. Cleaning up J street, hosting a trivia night, and setting up an in-person Honors Gala! Each of these provided students the opportunity to connect with each other and really fulfill my mission from the beginning of facilitating student connections. It was powerful to see these events in person and know that my persistence had paid off.

It's these internal, mental skills that I will really take with me after graduating from NWACC.

**“Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.”**

You never know what project or paper will define your semester, so take every opportunity you can to slow down and give it everything you've got.

My biggest assignment for English Composition 2 Honors with Professor Jim Laughton was an Argumentative Research Paper. As I began scanning topics, a real-world event grabbed my attention—a potential union strike in the film industry.

As a filmmaker myself, I understand many facets of Hollywood, including the hierarchical system of movie sets. While most of us think about actors and directors working behind the scenes, the real “blue collar” of the industry is made up of lighting technicians, camera assistants, hair and make-up stylists, etc. These incredible designers and artists are the foundation of how movies are made. Unfortunately, they are often not treated as such. Low and inconsistent payrates and 12-14 hour shooting days permeated this field for decades. Then, the recent rise in streaming platforms and, as a result, more executive-friendly pay structures sent this group over the edge.

On the cusp of new contract negotiations for IATSE, or the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, union president Matthew Loeb heard the cries of the nearly 150,000 members and

threatened an industry-wide strike. This would shut down hundreds of productions instantly and send studios/streamers into a tailspin.

Weeks later, an agreement was reached that met many of IATSE's demands, including stronger pay, more reasonable production schedules, and the recognition of weekends and holidays. Also, more transparency on the dollars being sent to streaming and how all crew members could receive a piece of the pie. Many union members still had some qualms with the deal, but Loeb stated that these issues would be addressed during the next round of negotiations.

All in all, a fascinating tale of the little guys taking on the big ones and succeeding! The story also shines a light on the most "unseen" aspect of filmmaking and what goes into your favorite shows and movies.



Seeing the potential, I crafted a detailed paper showcasing each side of the potential strike favorably, eventually offering my own diplomatic solution. The paper came out excellent. So much so that Professor Laughton implored me to submit the paper to the Great Plains Honors Council Conference. The event was to be held in Wichita, Kansas and would allow undergraduates from across the Midwest to exhibit research posters or present PowerPoint presentations. I went with the latter, acknowledging the potential the paper had in a TED talk-esque setting.

After some preparation, it was off to Wichita. I, Tarun Eisen, and Maria Tapia each represented NWACC. Both Tarun and Maria presented posters that each won awards and I was our only PowerPoint presentation. On Saturday, I gave a 10-minute talk on my subject, complete with images, stats, and crowd interaction. The presentation went excellent, and I was able to engage with dozens of other students.

I've got to say, what followed was the cherry on top. Instead of heading back to Rogers, Tarun and I decided to stay an extra night and take part in some of the festivities around the Conference. I won't get into everything but fancy dinner, hot tubs, pool halls, and exploring downtown Wichita made up an unforgettable evening. Most importantly, I had the chance to form relationships with a handful of other honors students from schools like UT-Tyler and Tulsa Community College.

I'm grateful that I listened to Professor Laughton and took this project the extra mile.

**Section 4: Considering all you have written for the above, what advice do you have for new members? This answer should be “short and sweet.”**

You don't know what's out there until you go looking.

On the surface, NWACC may appear to be your typical, by-the-numbers community college. It's so much more than that. The professors are life-changing, the courses are challenging, and the opportunities are impactful. Can you attend NWACC and get nothing out of it except for some credits? Yep. Can you dig deeper, express your passions, and challenge what you thought you were capable of? Oh yeah. There's no better place than the Honors Program to cultivate this. Sign up and see what's out there. You'll be surprised what you might find.