

Le Nori Nguyen

Major: Associate of STEM

Honor Courses



Hello,

My name is Le Nguyen, and I'm pursuing an Associate in Liberal Arts and science of STEM here at NWACC. My academic journey did not follow a traditional path. As a first-generation student, I arrived at NWACC unsure of myself, carrying the hopes of my family and my own quiet doubts. I started late and began with what I thought would be an easy start, simply testing whether college was even possible for someone like me. What I discovered through the honors

programs was not just that I belonged, but that I could thrive, lead, and ultimately transform my tentative steps into a determined chase toward a STEM degree and a dream I finally allowed myself to pursue.

Section 1: In what ways did the Program help you “demonstrate engagement,” “cultivate curiosity,” and “explore perspectives”?

The Honors Program fundamentally reshaped how I engage with my education. It demonstrated engagement by pushing me to apply classroom learning to real-world leadership. As SGA Treasurer and Treasurer of Sigma Kappa Delta, I managed budgets, advocated for students, and learned that being a STEM major meant nothing if I couldn't communicate and lead effectively. The program cultivated my curiosity by surrounding me with peers from diverse disciplines. Conversations with honors of students studying humanities and social sciences reminded me that science does not exist in a vacuum, it serves a broader human purpose. This interdisciplinary environment also helped me explore perspectives I had never considered. As a first-gen student, my worldview was relatively narrow. Engaging with students from different cultural and academic backgrounds taught me that the most complex problems require multiple viewpoints to solve.

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chemical engineering will always have human consequences, and curiosity about those consequences is just as important as technical knowledge.

This interdisciplinary environment also helped me explore perspectives I had never considered. As a first-generation student, my worldview was relatively narrow. Engaging with students from different cultural, economic, and academic backgrounds taught me that the most complex problems require multiple viewpoints to solve. Whether debating renewable energy policy with a political science major or discussing sustainable agriculture with a sociology student, I learned to listen first then synthesize. The Honors Program did not just give me knowledge; it gave me the humility to seek out perspectives that challenge my own.

Section 2: How did this program prepare you for a university (or for a workplace, if you aren't transferring at this point)? What hard or soft skills will you take with you?

As I prepare to transfer and complete my Chemical Engineering with Finance and Mathematics minor; I recognize how thoroughly the Honors Program has equipped me for the next chapter. I gained hard skills that will serve me well in any university lab or professional setting. Serving as treasurer for two organizations gave me practical experience in financial management, budgeting, and data analysis. I learned to track expenses, prepare financial reports, and present budget proposals to faculty advisors. These are not abstract exercises; they are the same skills I will use when managing research grants or corporate budgets in my engineering career.

My Honors courses demanded rigorous writing with critical thinking, preparing me for the advanced coursework and lab reports I will soon encounter. I learned to write clearly about

complex topics, to defend my arguments with evidence, and to revise based on constructive criticism. One Honors professor returned my first research paper covered in comments, not to discourage me, but to push me toward excellence. That paper eventually became a presentation I gave at a student research symposium. The process taught me that hard skills are built through persistence, not talent.

The soft skills I developed are equally valuable. Balancing a demanding STEM schedule with leadership roles in SGA, SKD, and Gamma Beta Phi taught me time management and adaptability. There were weeks when I had to study for an organic chemistry exam, finalize the SGA budget, and plan an SKD induction ceremony all at once. I learned to prioritize, delegate, and to ask for help when needed. Most importantly, I gained confidence. I no longer see myself as the student who started behind me. I see myself as a scholar ready for university.

Through SKD and SGA, I had the opportunity to visit the **United States Capitol in Washington, D.C.** and the **St. Louis Cathedral in the French Quarter of New Orleans**. These trips were not just sightseeing. In D.C., I sat in on a legislative briefing and saw how policy and advocacy shape education funding. In New Orleans, I learned about the intersection of history, culture, and community resilience. Both experiences reinforced that leadership extends beyond campus; it is about showing up, listening, and representing the people who put their trust in you.



From SKD and

SGA events –United States Capitol Office in Washington D.C. and St. Louis Cathedral in French Quarter of New Orleans.

Section 3: What is one experience you had while a member that you'd like to share?

The Gamma Beta Phi induction ceremony remains my most powerful memory. Standing in that room surrounded by fellow honorees, I felt an overwhelming sense of belonging I had never experienced before. My family watched from the audience; their faces filled with pride. They did not fully understand the honor society or the Honors Program, but they understood the significance of the moment. Their first-generation college student was being recognized for academic excellence. In that moment, my journey became more than just me. It became proof that a late start does not prevent a strong finish, and that my family's sacrifices were leading somewhere meaningful.

Section 4: Considering all you have written for the above, what advice do you have for new members?

To new Honors Program members, my advice is: immerse yourself completely. Do not simply be a member on paper, but attend events, join organizations like Gamma Beta Phi, and consider running leadership positions. Say yes to opportunities that intimidate you. Say yes to opportunities that intimidate you whether that is presenting at a symposium, traveling to a conference, or speaking up in a seminar discussion. The moments that scared me the most ended up teaching me the most.

If you are a first-generation student or someone who started later than your peers, do not let that hold you back. Your unique perspective enriches this community. You bring lived experience that traditional students may lack resilience, resourcefulness, and a deep appreciation for every opportunity. The Honors Program will show you capabilities you never knew you had, but only if you step forward and engage. Finally, remember why you started. On difficult days, when you are tired, overwhelmed, or doubting yourself and think about the people who believe in you. Think about the version of yourself that dreamed of this moment. Then keep going. It is never too late to find your people, your purpose, and your dream.