

Presli Sickels



Early College Experience Program (ECE)

Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts non-STEM

Graduation Year: 2026

Honors Courses:

American National Government, Art Appreciation,

Exploring the Humanities, History of the American People since 1877.

Section 1: Community, Curiosity, and Diversity

Being a member of the NWACC Honors Program changed the way I applied myself in my education. Although what inspired me to join the program was the recognition I would receive at graduation, I ended up staying for the many factors Honors has to offer. During

my time in the NWACC Honors Program, I formed new relationships, engaged in key discussions, and learned new information that I would have missed if I hadn't joined. One trait that I grew in because of the Honors Program was my curiosity. My curiosity grew in relationships, in learning, and in my future.

I am a member of the Early College Experience, meaning that I am a student in high school who is dual-enrolled in classes at NWACC. I started this program as a junior in high school, and I remember my counselors and peers telling me that being on a different campus would make it difficult to stay plugged in and involved. Although they ended up being right, they weren't right for very long. After my first semester at NWACC, I began receiving invites to join the Honors Program. When I read through the invites, I realized that the NWACC Honors Program was just the community I was looking for. This program has provided me with the opportunity to grow in relationships with my peers. I have met some of my close friends through various NWACC Honors courses. Picture below is the seniors in the ECE program, some of them being my honors classmates.



The NWACC Honors Program also provided me with a strong sense of curiosity. I took honors courses as a way to challenge myself. I have always been a fan of challenging myself, and that was one of the main reasons I joined the Early College Experience. I took

my first honors course in my second semester at NWACC. In my first semester, I took General History of the American People to 1877, which ended up being my favorite class that semester. I loved how passionate my professor, Dr. Vinzant was about history. I grew excited to learn the content, probably as much as he was to teach it to us. I wanted more of this curiosity, and that was when I took Dr. Vinzant's Honors History of the American People since 1877. My experience in this class wasn't too different from the general course, in that the main differences were that I found honors to be more discussion-based. The honors section was a smaller class, which helped me to be more comfortable. I was never afraid to add to the conversation, which was something I struggled with before. This honors course taught me the importance of getting out of my shell.

My favorite project we completed in this course was my service-learning project. Before completing my service-learning project, we were taught the importance of community and giving back to it. I chose to give back to the women of my community by volunteering at Beautiful Lives Bentonville. Beautiful Lives is an upscale thrift boutique with the mission of lifting women and mending our community. Although I volunteered at Beautiful Lives as a part of my grade, I ended up falling in love with their mission. Even after I completed my twenty hours of service, I have continued to serve there ever since. My service-learning project allowed me to engage with classmates also volunteering, other volunteers and employees, as well as many women across NWA. The simple task of steaming clothes unlocked so much more. I truly found an uplifting community that I have stayed with for even months after. This service-learning project also showed me the importance of diversity. I met so many women from different backgrounds that I might not have engaged with, without this project.

My first honors course truly sparked curiosity and a longing for more. I ended up taking three more courses because of my first course with Dr. Vinzant. My third semester at NWACC, I took two more honors courses, Honors Art Appreciation and Honors Exploring the Humanities.

Art Appreciation taught me the importance of flexibility. I had to adapt to a variety of learning techniques. Whether it was solo projects, essays, group projects, or even class discussions, I practiced the key values of community, curiosity, and diversity. My art appreciation class had about thirteen students, and since day one, we became a close-knit group. Every class, we would engage in a classroom discussion over our conversations in small groups. This class helped me continue to break out of my shell. Since my first honors course sparked curiosity about history, I wanted to keep it going, which is why I took honors art appreciation. I had little to no prior knowledge of art appreciation, but I had this hunger and curiosity for more. The discussions in this class further added to my appreciation for art as my peers brought insightful views and opinions. Not only did this class help grow my knowledge, but I also found the course as a whole exciting.

In that same semester, I took Honors Exploring the Humanities with Professor King. This honors course was my first integrated honors class. Going from two other courses with about fifteen students to a class with only two other honors classmates was a weird adjustment for me. This adjustment was just what I needed because it brought me a new perspective on my education. Honors didn't mean I was smarter or better than anyone; it truly was just a different way of learning. One main difference in this class was creating my final project. I decided to get out of my comfort zone and make an art piece. I made a self-portrait made from scrapbook paper. Scrapbooking was a new hobby I picked up in my senior year of high school. Senior year has been very sentimental to me, as I am nearing the end of my childhood, and that is exactly what inspired my self-portrait. I depicted myself surrounded by clouds of thoughts, as I am being pulled in many different directions. The three clouds I drew were a book symbolizing education, a razorback symbolizing my future college path, and a fish symbolizing trying new things.

Section 2: Preparing for What's Next

The NWACC Honors Program has helped me in more ways than I expected. I went into the program expecting to get out with academic knowledge, but I grew in other ways. I became a better team player, speaker, and student. The Honors Program has taught me the

importance of being a leader and engaging in my community as well. I believe these are all traits that will help me not only in my future in academics but in a career as well. I will be attending the University of Arkansas in the fall, and I plan on taking these skills with me.

Section 3: Experiences

One of my many experiences being a member of the NWACC Honors Program was leading my class in my Humanities course. Although creating the art piece was fun, my favorite part of this project was when I led an activity with the other honors students for our entire class. As a class, we made a collage of individual art pieces. I think this collage truly symbolizes the diversity aspect of NWACC Honors. I loved getting to be a leader for my class and sharing what Honors has taught me with them. Pictured below are my humanities classmates when we presented our final project!



Section 4: Advice for New Members

My main piece of advice that I have for new members is to truly get out of your comfort zone and not be afraid to try new things. With this comes not being afraid to mess up. I know all of these are easier said than done and take practice, but NWACC Honors is the perfect

space for this practice. Push yourself in engaging in discussions, make those new friends, and most importantly, have fun doing it. I know this all might sound cliché, but I feel like I am a perfect example of it. Without NWACC Honors, I believe my path at NWACC would have been very different, which would have altered me as well. Joining the honors program will truly show you your potential and how bright your future is.