



## **Kelly Smothers**

Graduating Class of 2024  
Associates of Science in Liberal Arts and Sciences STEM

### **Honors Courses:**

Composition II  
Intro to Gender Studies  
College Chemistry I  
American National Government  
Art Appreciation

## Path to Self-Discovery

Starting college at 44 years old is not for the faint of heart. To say I was terrified would be a massive understatement. I started at NWACC in January of 2022 and my Comp I professor recommended me to the honors program at the end of my first semester. I joined honors and started my first honors class in the fall of 2022. While I was happy to join honors, I was nervous as well. I really didn't know if I was "honors" material. In the end, being in honors is what made my college experience memorable and something I will always treasure. I want to share some of my experiences and demonstrate how being an honors student has elevated my college game to a level I never dreamed possible!

### Section 1: Community, Curiosity and Diversity

Finding your "community" is hard when you do not know who that is or what it will look like. I was fortunate to find it quickly in my first two classes with honors in the fall of 2022. I took Honors American National Government with Dr. Matt Evans and Comp II with Dr. Victoria



Moore. Both classes taught me so much about how to create my community. Dr. Evans would go on to be a pivotal player in teaching me to understand the power of my voice and learning how to use it. He was/is so encouraging to each one of his students to really dig in and invest in the issues at hand. His enthusiasm and thirst for teaching comes through and I would be remiss to not acknowledge him as someone who deeply influenced me to start being a leader on campus. Dr. Moore's English Comp II class highlighted my curiosity, she made me find it in me to want to really understand the "why", to ask questions like "what, when, who and where", asking these questions all the time really lend a person to understand their circumstances, to understand those around them and to know how to lead both yourself and others to success. The "Diversity" in honors comes from the people I was surrounded by. Adeola, Leo, Yuliana, Arlo, Maximus,



Braiden, Ally and so many others.

I gained perspective from each of them based off their cultures, their classes, and degree paths. I experienced so many different qualities in them, kindness, caring, charisma, and leadership. I either

served on a board with/or was led by them. I cannot stress enough how important it is to hold yourself high when you are around others because you never know the impact you are going to have on others around you.

Because of these people I was encouraged to lead others, I was the treasure of Honors Student Association (HSA) in the spring of 2023 and in the fall, I became president for the 23-24

school year. When I graduate next month, I will have served for 3 semesters on the board of HSA. It has been such an honor to be in those positions and to be surrounded by amazing people who saw the potential in our honors students like I do. We all worked so hard to be inclusive and impactful. In the end I believe we will have said we were successful. Working along side them have been a wonderful experience and I cannot imagine my experience with NWACC without them. Their support when my mom died this year and picking up the slack for me when I could barely get by really showed me their character and heart. I believe that is what makes our group so special. I can never say enough “Thank You’s” to them and to Sabrina for her continued faith and guidance in me (even when I know I am tough to “guide” at times lol). Do not worry Professor Fox, I have not forgotten you, you are coming up next!!

## **Section 2: Path to Preparedness**

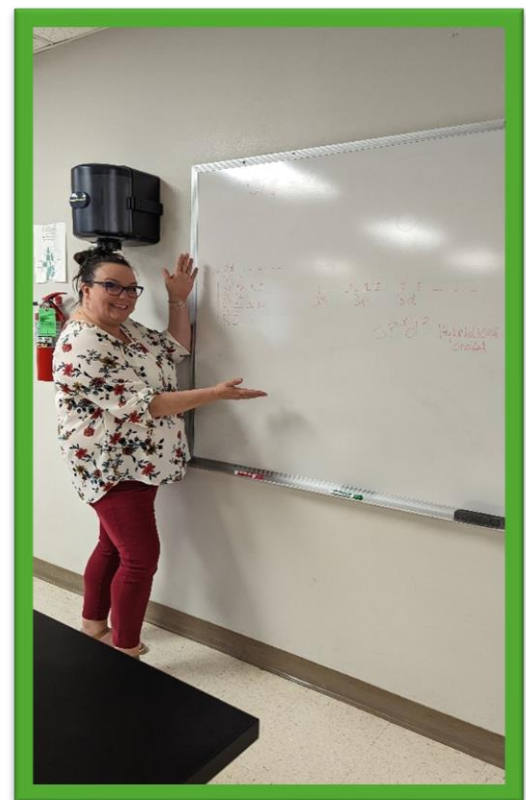
In the spring of 2023, I was privileged to have the opportunity to take ‘Intro to Gender Studies’ with Dean Sharon Fox. This class put me in touch with how to connect with other students, to see them through another lens. I think situations like these are what opened my aperture to see beyond just myself here on campus. This led to me taking a more hands-on approach to student leadership. I appreciate Dean Fox for her unwavering support and belief in, not just me, but all her students. She creates a light that shines on everyone to bring out what makes them unique and gives them a safe space to exist where they are while still being held accountable. Professors like these are what make our honors program special and irreplaceable. Thank you from the bottom of my heart Professor, I will miss you so much!

Being in honors made me see myself in a way that made me push myself outside of my comfort zone, to challenge myself to do more, to say more, to be more. All the professors along with our advisor really buy into us, they lift us up and they push us to see more of the picture. I never minded the extra work because I knew it came from a place where someone was believing in me



and that made me work harder. In the same semester I took a Gender Studies class with Dean Fox, as well as Honors Chemistry I with Dr. Lois Chun. This class pushed me beyond what I thought I was capable of but when I wanted to quit, Dr. Chun was encouraging and really showed me that she believed in my ability to finish and I did with a high B! I do not think I was ever so happy to have a B lol. I think being in honors has elevated my

confidence in myself to see my full potential as a leader. It is ultimately what led me to change my major from engineering to organizational management and leadership. I will be pursuing this degree in the fall at the University of Arkansas. It really is amazing to me just how much being in honors shaped me into being a better student, human, mentor and friend. It propelled me to





join Student Government and become a prominent voice of the student body where I joined various committees on campus. Both HSA and SGA taught me skills like, how to advocate for others, be a loud but effective voice for change, lead others into success and see myself through other people's eyes. I can better understand other people's perspectives because I was able to see the world through a different lens that was often shaded through cultural and societal diversity.

### Section: 3 The Experience of a Lifetime

In the spring of 2023, I also took Intro to Engineering and had to come up with a product that we needed to design and create the physical product. My team and I came up with creating a water filtration system to convert the condensation water to drinking water. I ended up using what I learned in chemistry with Dr. Chun to solve the problem with the water and make it viable for drinking. Being able to apply teachings from one class in another with a real-world problem solidified why I am going to school and the benefits to all of it. I am forever grateful for the help and the belief that Dr. Chun has in me.



### Section 4: Short and Sweet

This is where I say goodbye, truly I am in tears right now writing this. The honors professors and our advisor Dr. Chesne are amazing, and I am grateful for everything they pushed me to do. Thank You! My experiences because of the honors program are not something that can

really be put into words...it's a feeling, an inspiration and a lot of little moments that add up to a mountain of memories that I will cherish for the rest of my life. I feel like I have made friends for life through being in honors. I encourage anyone who thinks they want to shoot for the moon to do it! The worst thing that will happen if you fail, is you will land amongst the stars!