

Marsha King

Honors Courses:

- Composition I
- Composition II
- General Psychology
- Public Speaking



Graduation Date: May 11, 2019

Introduction

Being a member of the Honors Program at Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) has granted me the opportunity to connect with a diverse group of students. With many of my classes being confined to one section of campus, I realized most interactions involved others who shared the same degree plan. Stepping out of my designated area and into the realm of the honors lounge and honors classroom broadened my circle of classmates to include those with multiple interests.

Encouraging Community, Curiosity, and Diversity

Our Honors Program has provided multiple opportunities for me to engage in the community. Our members crafted homemade Christmas ornaments and Valentine's Day cards for a local retirement facility. An assortment of compelling supplies in the exclusive study lounge lured me into the activities which quickly became a method to temporarily escape the demands of classes. Light-hearted conversation with other members lent a calming effect as we worked together to fashion the interesting pieces which were later distributed to delighted residents, brightening the holidays for some who may have otherwise felt forgotten.

Another recurring project implemented by honors members, which I enjoyed, was *Blind Date with a Book*. Wrapping books and brainstorming narratives that were captivating without disclosing too much information proved to be delightfully challenging. We were later rewarded with varying displays of emotion: delight, amusement, curiosity, surprise, and appreciation, when we distributed **free** books on campus. Engaging with our fellow students as they dug through the assortment of incognito books was gratifying and at times comical.

Honors classes also encouraged engagement with my peers; limited class size ensured maximum interaction. Additionally, lessons were thoughtfully planned to stimulate creative thinking and curiosity as we discussed current topics. In Composition I, Professor Jeff Jackson regularly incorporated music, movies and even children's cartoons to spark conversation that memorably demonstrated writing techniques. Professor Ashleigh Davis expertly moderated reviews of political debates, instructing students how to analyze political speeches, in her Composition II class. Such examination left us with the power to glean meanings not readily recognized by the untrained.

Public speaking is not only required of politicians, it is also expected in some college classes. Professor Marc Turner actively demonstrated how to deliver effective speeches in his Public Speaking class. He inspired us to dig deeply into our everyday lives by assigning topics that affected us personally. For example: a debate speech, discussing the allowance of concealed weapons on campus, forced us to examine the pros and cons of a new law that affected everyone at NWACC. This cultivated curiosity: How did I feel about the new law? Additionally, I was encouraged to explore the perspectives of others: What did our NWACC police officers think of the new law?

The debate unraveled many diverse viewpoints. Some students felt more at ease with the new law in place, others felt fear. Professor Turner allowed members of our NWACC police staff to attend the debate and share what the new law meant for them. Listening to students from varying backgrounds, along with multiple staff members, express their feelings on the hot topic was enlightening and renewed my desire to always consider and appreciate differing opinions.

Preparation for (in my case 're-entering') Entering a Workplace

Writing skills acquired in my Composition classes will be an asset no matter where life takes me. With a desire to work in the Website Design/Development field, understanding how to listen to what others want and put that into written, understandable context is imperative.

Honors classes and activities strengthened my communication skills. As a non-traditional student, my primary interaction with younger adults had previously been limited to parent/child and teacher/student relationships. This became apparent as I noticed an overwhelming desire to check up on fellow students. Were they attending classes regularly? Completing homework? Getting plenty to eat? General Psychology, taught by Professor Deirdre Slavik, provoked me to examine my own behaviors and look for areas that should be modified. Interaction with other, younger honors students, who tend to be self-motivated, supported my efforts to accept the fact that I can view the younger generation as peers and even friends. Such cooperation will be beneficial when seeking employment in an area which will likely be dominated by a younger crowd.

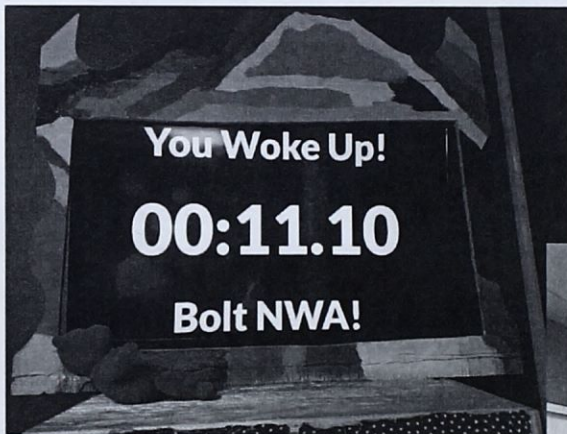
Additionally, being a member of the NWACC Honors Program has developed a desire to collaborate with others. Being mainly self-sufficient, I have always gravitated toward working alone. Collaborating with peers on projects demonstrated benefits of group effort. Together, we were able to accomplish more than I could alone, and the camaraderie was refreshing.

Shareable Experience

Anything fun, especially coupled with an edgy vibe, attracts me. I noticed a sign-up sheet in the honors lounge for an escape room experience at Bolt. The possibility of 'robbing a bank' beckoned to me. No, I am not a bank robber and have no desire to rob a bank, but

the prospect of acting the part was too good to pass up. Although normally reserved when it comes to group activities, along with a fear of being locked inside a room, I wasted no time in signing the form to join my peers in a criminally minded game. Unfortunately, by the time we gathered enough victims to go on the adventure, robbing a bank was no longer an option. We settled for an Alice in Wonderland experience.

Alice in Wonderland did not disappoint. For starters, my fear of being locked in a room was quickly dispelled when I learned that 'in the event of an emergency' (I just *knew* I would need to go to the bathroom before we got out), there was an unlocked door we could use. With the worry of being locked in a room with no place to 'go' out of the way, the fun began. After all, I was with a group of **Honor Students**, we certainly would have no trouble cracking the code to unlock the door. Would we? Well . . . maybe. After using our allotment of free clues, and with only moments left on the clock, I began to wonder about our abilities in that Wonderland. However, no need to fear: NWACC Honors Students (and their fearless leader, Professor Sabrina Chesne) are Wonder-ful! We escaped!



Advice for New Members

Go for it! Being part of NWACC's Honors Program is an experience like no other. You are special; honors classes are designed to provide individuals like you an opportunity to gain substance for the effort you give. Each assignment is carefully prepared to optimize learning, not just fill your time with meaningless busywork. Additionally, projects and activities reinforce skills that will be useful later in life. Even though life seems hectic for

you right now, find time to engage in the program as much as possible, doing so will benefit both you and your community.

Conclusion

The advantages of being a member of the Honors Program are numerous and vary from person to person. For me, the structure of honors classes allowed me to stretch the bounds of my education to include ideas and perspectives that were out of the ordinary. As a member, I felt like I belonged to an exceptional group of people who encouraged me to be more involved in the world around me. Knowing that I could run to the honors lounge for a quick cup of coffee was an added perk.