
HSA Happenings is...

A student-produced monthly newsletter created and distributed by the Honors Student Association. Its purpose is to supplement the West Chester University community’s knowledge of the Honors Student Association’s activities and endeavor.
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Crossing the Bridge
Cassie Tiburcio
Sophomore

In this article, Cassie Tiburcio recounts her experience as part of the Honors Bridge program, designed to create a pathway for second-semester first-year students to join the Honors College Core Program.

I had absolutely no clue what I was getting myself into. None.

“The Honors College isn’t the typical honors college, the classes are nothing like AP classes.”

Hm.. that’s intriguing.

“The Honors College provides so many amazing opportunities.”

That would be helpful…

“The Honors College gets you priority scheduling.”

Ooooh okay…

“The Honors College is more based on Leadership than academics.”

“The Honors College is passionate about serving others.”

“The Honors College has more interesting classes that replace your gen. eds.”

“The Honors College is what you make it.”

I was hooked in, so I took a chance.

My first honors class was Ethics, and if it weren’t for Hayley Sholansky’s kind, familiar face, I would have been even more nervous than I already was on my first day. The professor began by asking us if we had all bought the textbook. All of the unfamiliar faces in the room shook their head to signify they had gotten the textbook.

“Good start, Cassie,” I said to myself. Thankfully I was able to get the text prior to the professor assigning the first reading.

My second honors class was Public Speaking with Professor Wooten. Fortunately, there were many more familiar faces in this class which made it a lot easier to not feel like a legitimate elephant in the room. Also, Professor Wooten went above and beyond to ensure that I was never left out by using inclusive language to both bridge students and the normal students in the classroom. To clarify, there were times he would make recommendations to speak about relatable topics in our speeches so he would suggest HON352 memories, but us bridge students had not taken that class yet, so he would also suggest Lawrence experiences, being something all of us could relate to.

It was all about the little things.

Professor Wooten’s kindness, classmate’s willingness to include me, Dr. Kevin Dean’s kind words of encouragement…

I knew I had made the right decision.

Being able to experience the life of a non-honors student for a semester really opened my eyes to the greatness of the Honors Program. Which is something I am thankful for because it might have been more difficult for me to count my blessings if I had gotten into the Honors College right out of high school. Just by experiencing the two Honors classes I took, I saw the prominent difference between honors classes and gen. ed. classes. The honors classes were a lot more
thought-provoking, which I really valued. Although there was more work involved, I was learning a lot more and was actually engaged in class. Also, being among a group of individuals who were top of their class in high school, which had never been something I could identify with, became a huge motivator. I wanted to prove myself worthy of being amongst these brilliant students, so I gave it my all.

As the semester came to an end, I realized I had built strong relationships with honors students in my classes. At first, I thought this would have been impossible because of their close knit friends built through the combination of the Symposium and living together on the seventh floor.

Before I knew it, it was already Summer 2018 and I was moving into Allegheny Hall, 7th floor. Yet again, I was nervous for what was to come. A whole new group of people I had to prove myself to, and explain why I didn’t start like a normal honors student. Little did I know, the Honors Symposium would turn into one of the most rewarding experiences of my college career. The new students were kind to me, and they were willing to accept me, a bridge student, as one of them. That is when I knew I had crossed the bridge.

Crossing the bridge, as I like to call it, comes with a multitude of benefits. First and foremost, bridge students have the opportunity to bond with two classes of Honors College students, not just one. This allows for not only more friendships to form, but also more people to network with. Second, they have the opportunity to experience life as a non-honors student, which allows for a clear understanding and appreciation for the benefits of the Honors College. Lastly, bridge students are able to develop two very distinct leadership qualities through their experience: following and leading. My first semester as an honors student, I was faced with the task to follow. I was not in a position to lead because I was completely out of the loop and was in need of role models and leaders in my honors classes to show me the way. As soon as I was a second-year honors student in a class full of first years, it was my time to lead by encouraging the first years to get involved, by being there to answer their questions, and by serving as a their role model, like the one I needed when I was new. As I have learned in the honors leadership classes and series, it is important to know how to do both, following and leading.

I will forever be thankful to those who sat down with me and encouraged me to apply to the Honors College. Without their guidance, I would have missed out on one of West Chester University’s biggest gems.
A South Africa Story

Michael Moriarty Jr.
Graduate Assistant

South Africa was the first stamp in my passport, and then two years later it became my second. Obviously Honors has an intimate connection to South Africa, through leadership and through service, but what goes unsaid is the plethora of stories any honors student has experienced while abroad. For me, I was fortunate enough to travel to this beautiful country twice and hold true to my promises of coming back to visit.

Perhaps one of the most beautiful stories began on the Honors South Africa trip in 2016, I was a Junior Communications Student and one of the few Seminar students with the cohort. Our purpose in 2016 was to partake in ethnographic research to discover if a post-apartheid culture still existed in South Africa. We learned through the narrative of locals, it was still present in communities. I had the opportunity to meet a wonderful girl named Marchy (standing to my right in the pink hoodie).

She was so shy on our interview day, and I was just trying to make her feel more comfortable around us. We had the opportunity to relax and share lunch with these students, community style. This is where Marchy took the opportunity to really teach me the language, writing out simple words in Afrikaans. I valued that afternoon, Marchy truly seemed to open up. Before we knew it, it was time for us to leave and we were whisked away.

Fast forward to May 25th, 2018. I am now a Graduate Assistant working with the Honors College and figured there is unfinished business abroad. So I applied to be a part of the 2018 cohort. Through the powers of social media, Marchy and I remained connected, as friends. While abroad, Dr. Peter Loedel and I were driven to Koinonia the youth community center where our interview day began in 2016. Upon our arrival, there was Marchy and two more friends who I met in 2016! Dr. Loedel and I presented the findings from our 2016 Honors research, and the afternoon was spent recalling memories from two years prior.

Marchy recalled a short phrase I had apparently told her that interview day in 2016: “be yourself.” She mentioned that provided her with plenty of confidence to be the woman she had always wanted to be. Despite the obstacles she faces living in a post-apartheid era, Marchy chooses to live by the motto “enjoy the little things in life.” The second picture is of her and I on the exact porch where we met in 2016.

“To be Honorable is to Serve” can mean a number of things, and we should always be mindful of the little things in life, to be yourself, and to always help others in our community. 🌟
A Message from the First Vice President

Ollie DeSarno
Junior

I became a part of the Honors College and Honors Student Association as a bridge student after the Fall of my freshman year. Since then I have been a dedicated member of HSA and decided I wanted to step-up into a more hands on role this year in order to give back and help progress the community which made me finally feel like I found my home at West Chester University. Just a few months into my first semester as Vice President, I can honestly say working with the members of our organization inspires me on a daily basis.

The rest of the executive board and I have had a great time planning the meetings and events for this semester. Two main goals of mine as specifically as Vice President for this year are to establish more regulated service projects and to renovate the back of the Honors House. As the chair of the Sustainability Committee, I have been working closely with our wonderful Community Service director, Alyssa Harvey, in order to set up bi-weekly projects in the Honors yard in order to reach those goals.

Another aspect I hope to build upon within HSA throughout the rest of this semester and continue into the spring is the community of HSA as a whole, both intrinsically and externally among the campus community. My fellow executive board members and I believe retention is important, and we can improve retention by improving the sense of community. We want HSA to be a place where students across all different years and majors can come together collectively as friends to succeed and serve together. With that said, presence matters; both at our general assembly meetings, but also at other student organizations events in order to show our support. As student leaders within the campus community, it is important for our organization to support other organizations who share similar goals and values. These relationships we aspire to nurture and create with other student organizations allow the Honors Student Association to gain recognition as the dedicated, caring, and involved organization that we are and represent.

Lastly, as Assistant Director of Aid to South Africa, I hope to spread the word and excitement about our awesome philanthropy! The fundraising events leading up to the carnival itself such as Trivia Night and the Date Auction are super fun and serve as important fundraisers which benefit our beneficiaries. I have no doubt that with the help of my incredible peers on the executive board, along with the leadership, passion, and involvement from our members as a whole, our organization can reach and surpass its goals for the year ahead of us. Thank you all for all that you do! ☝

Interested in doing community service? Contact Alyssa Harvey AH893678@wcupa.edu.
The Scoop on the HSA Choir

Jacqueline Griffith
First-year Student

As a first-year student, juggling a new, more intense academic workload while trying to get involved and make new friends, has been a process, to say the least. I have been lucky enough to find a handful of wonderful organizations that make both West Chester and The Honors College feel like a home. HSA as a whole has been a fantastic organization, as the meetings and committees are fun, engaging, and meaningful, but my favorite part of HSA has got to be the HSA Choir.

The HSA Choir is open to all members of HSA, regardless of musical ability. Having been heavily involved in performing arts in high school, this choir is a perfect way for me to continue singing, while having a ton of fun. We rehearse Sunday nights in the Allegheny 7th floor, performing both traditional choral arrangements, such as Earth Song composed by Frank Ticheli, as well as unconventional choir pieces, such as the West Chester alma mater and a choral arrangement of Africa by Toto. This year, we have performed at the President’s Picnic and the ODK induction ceremony, and will be performing at the Veteran’s Day Ceremony this November.

I had an opportunity to ask the director of the choir, junior Nicole Faiola, a music education major with a vocal concentration, a few interview questions.

Q. What is your favorite part of directing the HSA Choir?

A. My favorite parts of directing the HSA choir is getting experience in my field of study and getting to know other honors students that I otherwise wouldn’t know.

Q. How does it compare to classroom experience?

A. Directing the HSA choir is different from a classroom experience primarily because it’s not required for the singers to come to practice or performances, so sometimes attendance can be a challenge. On the other hand, since it’s not in a school, I don’t have a ton of restrictions on me, and I like having that free rein to set practice times and run rehearsals the way I want to run them.

Q. What are you most looking forward to?

A. I’m most looking forward to the senior banquet in the Spring. I’m hoping to perform a new song that I think will be really awesome and I will always love “For Good,” so I’m excited to have the choir sing that again. It’s also a sentimental event since it’s at the end of the year and as a junior this year, I know basically all the seniors graduating, so that will be even cooler!

I also took the opportunity to ask some other members for their input as well. Junior Nick Marcil, Early Grades Preparation major, says he “enjoys honors choir for numerous reasons. First, I enjoy the community it builds within honors. It is a great activity to continue in your time in the honors college, because it’s a way to spend time with friends while participating...”
in HSA. It builds a community of singers who enjoy singing for fun, rather than pre professionally. As well, it is a good way for me to destress, since I enjoy singing. Life at college can be fun, but very stressful between classes and other extra curriculars. The HSA Choir is less formal, making it a de-stressing environment. Finally, I love performing for others. I performed often in high school, in school wide and select choir ensembles, as well as musicals, and in an acapella group. This brings me back to my love of singing, and performing for others. Seeing the joy that music brings to people’s faces makes me want to continue performing, even beyond my time at West Chester.”

Additionally, first-year student Erica Belovich, Communications major, states “HSA choir has given me a relaxed, stress-free environment to meet other honors students that share my passion for singing! I was really disappointed when University choir didn’t fit into my schedule, and I was so grateful to find HSA choir.”

If you are interested in joining the HSA Choir, contact Nicole Faiola nf8633498@wcupa.edu.

Photo Credit: Jacqueline Griffith

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**Upcoming HSA Events**

**Courtney Purdy and Mary Parkes**

**Sophomores**

**1. Nurturing Relationships Seminar - November 1, 2018 (Merion 113)**

Come out from 8:00-9:00 pm to see a presentation by the Humanities Resilience Project and learn how to get the most out of all of your relationships and taking care of yourself at the same time.

**2. Adopt-a-Block - November 4, 2018 & November 12, 2018**

Help clean up the streets of West Chester at 9:00 am (meet in Sykes 115) on November 4, 2018 or from 2:00-3:00 pm (meet in Allegheny lobby) on November 12, 2018 to get some service hours!

**3. Trivia Night - November 7, 2018 (Merion 112)**

Test your trivia skills at 8:00 pm and enjoy some raffles and food as well! It costs $2 per teammate, and all proceeds go to the resource pantry.

**4. HSA Thanksgiving - November 11, 2018 (Sykes 10A)**

Join your friends from 3:30-6:30 pm to enjoy a Thanksgiving meal! See Michael Nangle’s weekly update to RSVP.
Smile and the World Smiles with You

Allison Moyer
First-year Student

Smiling is the key to happiness. Without a smile, people cannot laugh and experience the joys in life. Caitlin Smiles, a non profit organization shares smiles and laughter all over the United States for children battling chronic and life-threatening diseases. Therefore, the organization needs your smiles to spread joy and hope to children through cards and gifts. Each month a children receives a Bag of Smiles.

At the Honors Students Association on the seventh floor of Allegheny, we delivered smiles to those children’s faces. The club members decorated cards using creativity. Any card you could think of was constructed. Cards were transformed into stars, crowns, and animals to bring children hope and peace of mind. The cards contained hilarious jokes and loads of color. I cracked up hearing: “What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire?”

Answer: “Frostbite” and “What do you call a pig that knows karate?” Answer: “Pork chop.”

Not only did designing the cards allow kids to smiles, but the designers of the cards smiled too. The laughs surrounded the room of Allegheny and anyone could hear the laughs from miles away. Anyone who participated in the activity, had an amazing day afterwards because they put smiles on children’s faces.

So why not decorate the cards? You reduce stress during the hectic college life and you give back to your community. You let the kids know you are thinking about them and that they belong. Most importantly you are bringing laughs to children. Therefore, decorate your own card and brighten the day of a child in need. Remember, smiling is contagious.

***Tip: Decorate with friends.

Your experience will be transformed and you will gain a better experience. ☺
Hello, Honors Community! My name is Steve Savage and I graduated from the Honors College in 2010. I live in Chesterbrook with my lovely wife, Liz, and I currently work in West Chester at a financial services company called Voya. I have been working at Voya Financial since July of 2010, when my friend Dan Moran (Honors College class of 2009) helped get my resume on top of the proverbial pile. I can still remember my interviews; I met with 5 people throughout the day and they all wanted to speak with me about 2 “standout” resume items: my time as Rammy the mascot (yes, I was Rammy for 3 years, and they only dry-cleaned that costume once a year, so it probably still smells like me), and my Honors College Capstone project.

Discussing my capstone project allowed me to provide concrete examples of my leadership, teamwork, and organizational skills, which impressed enough people to get me hired! During my 8 years at Voya I have had various roles involving annuity and life insurance product technical support, product development, and interest crediting. I credit my time in the Honors College for not only providing me with the technical and soft skills required to succeed in these roles, but also for providing me with a robust network of talented individuals who are happily willing to support one another, just as Dan was able to do for me.

The Honors College of the mid 2000s looked different from the Honors College of today. In fact, when I was a first year student at West Chester, the Honors “College” was not even called the Honors College; it was called the Honors Program. First year students still lived on the top floor, but not of Allegheny Hall, which only existed on blueprint paper. Instead, we called Killinger Hall home, and despite the fluorescent lighting and the shared bathrooms, most people seemed to enjoy their experience. Behind Killinger, (where Allegheny now stands) was Hollinger field, which served as the perfect location for pick-up Ultimate games, particularly at night, and especially when it snowed.

HSA was still thriving, even with only 8 committees, and meetings were held monthly in the basement of Killinger, which boasted a big screen television, a ping pong table, and a few vending machines.
Before meetings, older students would pass down generational wisdom about such things like:

1. if you unscrewed the vent of the janitor’s closet you can climb the ladder and open the hatch to the roof or
2. if you found someone with long arms, you could reach the bottom row of those vending machines. I’ll leave it up to you to decide if those tips were ever acted on.

Because of my continued involvement as an alumnus, I’ve had the privilege of seeing the Honors College grow and evolve since my time as a student, but despite all of the changes, a few core values have stayed the same. **First is the Honors College’s commitment to service.** I can still remember my first adopt-a-block, and the realization that we were picking up trash and somehow having fun doing it. HSA has won Organization of the Year a few times since then, and every time it is because of the impressive dedication to service from students in the Honors College.

**Additionally, leadership is a staple of the Honors College today,** just as it was then, as former Honors students continue to succeed and excel in their graduate programs and professional lives. **And then there’s the most enduring and (in my opinion) important underlying value of the Honors College: the community.** Since my first official experience with the Honors College, I could tell that best part about the program were the people. From its director’s enthusiasm and its professors’ dedication, to its students’ empathy, talents, and charisma, the Honors College separates itself because of its members. Yes, the Honors College will help build your resume. Yes, the Honors College will give you the leadership skills required to succeed after you graduate.

**But most importantly, if you’re willing to let it, the Honors College will give you shared experiences with life-long friends, and memories that you’ll cherish forever.**

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**Want to write for HSA Happenings?**

**Here is what you can do....**

**Contact us:** Courtney Purdy (cp883006@wcupa.edu), Mary (Molly) Parkes (mp884889@wcupa.edu), Alexander Kuhn (ak893568@wcupa.edu)

HSA Happenings will be published the first Thursday of every month, so get your submissions in at least 1 week prior to the release date!

Write articles relevant to HSA, whether it be an experience you had volunteering or an interview with an upperclassman that went to South Africa, we would love to read them!
Why I Chose and Stuck with HSA

Hunter Trzeciak
First-year Student

Senior year of high school, known as one of the most enjoyable, yet also stressful years of your life to date. The fall of senior year is full of college applications and the beginning of all your “last firsts.” Personally, I decided on applying to four schools for their Biology (pre-medical) majors: Slippery Rock University, West Virginia University, West Chester University, and University of Pittsburgh. To my surprise all granted me admission.

Deciding where to go ultimately became my next endeavor. I was almost certain I wanted to attend University of Pittsburgh, but Dr. Dean sold me on the Honors College program West Chester had to offer. I knew that University of Pittsburgh was no longer even on my radar and West Chester was the place I wanted to spend the next four years of my life.

The amount of benefits HSA has to offer is unmatched. From the one on one advising, to the peer mentors, to the service projects, to, of course, South Africa. Service has always been important to me, especially growing up in an underprivileged area. Honors provides opportunities I would not be getting otherwise.

West Chester provides me a home away from home, but HSA provides me a family away from home. The meaningful friendships I have created in these past couple months are unreal. I always know there is a whole support system of people behind me. The positive atmosphere HSA creates for everyone involved is something I hope to continue being a part of for the next four years. ☽

Be sure to follow HSA on Social Media!

Instagram: hsawcu

Twitter: @HSAWCU

Facebook: West Chester University Honors Student Association

Picture Credit: Hunter Trzeciak
Reflections Regarding Mental Health in the Music Industry

Ben Pessognelli
First-year Student

A recent survey conducted towards reporters and event organizers regarding mental health issues in the music industry exemplifies the sheer amount of suffering professionals in the industry endure. As an example, a rather substantial percentage—40%, specifically—of those surveyed reported that industry professionals they support suffer from depression (Cummings). There exists a multitude of factors that contribute to the intense feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression that become fostered into employees working in the music industry. As a musician, it would be remiss of me to pretend as if every moment spent making music is blissful. In reality, stress overlays me as I strive for perfection in every solo piece, audition excerpt, and other musical repertoire that I play. Stress also overlays as a member of HSA and the Honors College, and I am certain that many individuals who are members of these organization also experience the stresses.

A quote from the article that is highly relatable to the circumstances I sometimes find myself in with music reads, “Anxiety and stress are just part and parcel of the job – it’s sad but true (Cummings).” When I weigh in my head the process of auditioning, I realize all of the anxious points of auditions. The fact that others who audition might be better than me becomes one of the scariest thoughts conjured during an audition. What I have learned from combating these performance-inhibiting thoughts is that I am auditioning for something with the intent of showcasing my strengths, and not the strengths of others. The anxieties and stresses of an audition are healthy at an appropriate minimum; in other words, a little bit of an on-edge feeling may serve as motivating. However, if these anxieties and stresses overcome, than the performance suffers. Hard to manage and sometimes unmanageable for individuals in the music industry, these feelings are real and important to consider.

To address HSA and the Honors College, stress accumulates within the programs in similar forms in which professionals in the music industry face, and similarly to my stress within music. My biggest piece of advice relates to the means in which I have seen organization members suppress their feelings of stress and anxiety. Prolonged feelings of stress and anxiety unaccounted for by the individual with a “GO GO GO” mentality will strike in huge bouts. As a musician, the occurrence of such a phenomenon becomes common with large quantities of music to prepare. As a member of HSA and the Honors College, neglection of deadlines and big service projects to complete represent the stressors. No matter the discipline, stress will overlay. Taking care of one another and one’s self becomes crucial in times of stress, and HSA and the Honors College will collectively experience stress someday. No major or discipline is spared from stress! With that in mind, seeking out healthy techniques to eliminate stress goes a long way in staying mentally healthy, and such techniques apply to all. A walk around campus, time for self-reflection, maintaining a journal, etc...represents a step in the right direction to obtaining peace at mind.

“What makes a good life? What does it mean to live a flourishing life? What does leadership have to do with a life well lived? These are difficult questions that require intellectual muscles many of us have left untrained; we need one another’s help to ask and answer them.

**HON 382: Leadership and the Good Life** explores these questions by engaging with various philosophical and spiritual traditions, featuring visits from contemporary practitioners who aim to shape their lives by some of the traditions in question.

Along the way, the class dives into texts from some of the great thinkers specifically related to leadership and the role of a leader in cultivating a good life for one’s individual benefit as well as for the sake of a community.

Most often, the course draws upon the broad fields of philosophy, literature, and leadership studies. The course pays special attention to issues of: religious privilege, inter-tradition (and non-tradition) dialogue, and spiritual expression and influence.”

This year, the class included a retreat! Picture it: You. Your professor. 22 of your classmates. A campground. 24 hours. This was the reality for the students of HON 382: Leadership & the Good Life. Taught by Professor Zach Wooten and modelled after a course at Yale University, the survey course encourages students to look within and beyond to discover a life well lived.

During the 24 hour retreat, students gathered to discuss what a life worth living is. Can a life be hard and still be worth living? How have past deeds shaped current circumstances? Will the way you’re currently living give way to the future you seek? Those questions and more were pondered in Camp Innabah’s various meeting rooms, porch swings, and creekside docks.

The students returned to West Chester University with fresh perspectives on philosophy and each other, ready to spend the rest of the semester learning more about themselves, world philosophy, and what exactly it means to lead a “good” life.

This seminar will be offered again in Fall 2019 T/R 12:30 - 1:45 p.m. Don’t miss it! ☑️

1 From HON 382 Course Policy Sheet
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