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Honors Capstone Portfolios

Honors Program at Minnesota State University,
Mankato

2019

Aspen Curtis Honors Portfolio

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Minnesota State University, Mankato

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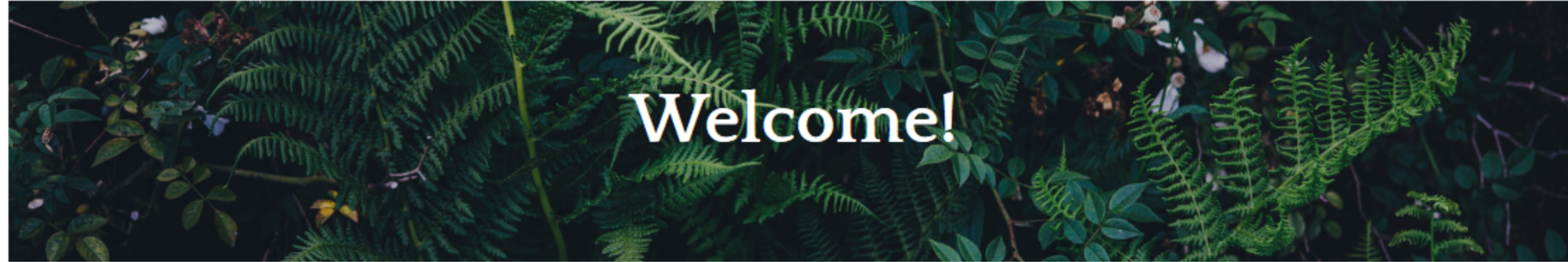
Aspen Curtis

HOME

HONORS PROGRAM

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Welcome to my electronic portfolio!

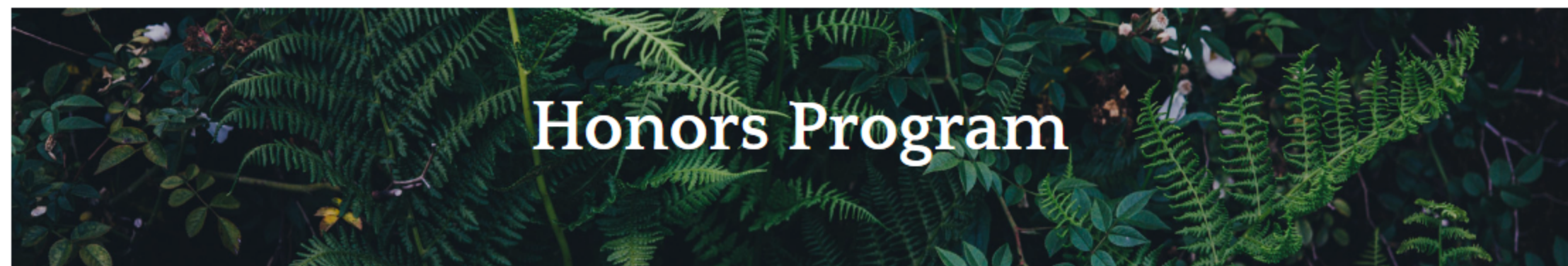
Hello and welcome! Thank you for taking the time to look through my electronic portfolio. I really appreciate it!

I am a senior at Minnesota State University, Mankato, majoring in nursing and minoring in Spanish. I am currently finishing my fourth and final semester of the nursing program at MSU and plan to graduate in May 2019. Being involved in the honors program during my time at MSU has really opened my eyes to the world and gotten me involved in many experiences that changed my life. I have improved my skills as a leader, developed a much deeper understanding of research, and immersed myself in new cultures to develop my global citizenship.

Thanks again for looking through my eFolio!

Mission Statement

I, Aspen Curtis, hope to make a difference in other people's lives. I hope to have a lasting, positive impact on those around me. I also plan to do my best at improving myself in all aspects to become the best person I can be.



Honors Program Mission Statement and Competencies

The mission of the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato is to create future leaders, researchers and global citizens by providing high ability and motivated students with exceptional learning opportunities, mentoring relationships, and a community of scholars that foster their development as future leaders in a global society.

Leadership Competency

Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to utilize personal leadership values and guide groups toward a common goal.

Research Competency

Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to exhibit information literacy skills, synthesize and integrate ideas, produce original research or creative works, and contribute to knowledge.

Global Citizenship Competency

Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to exhibit second language and communication competencies and exhibit cultural competency and awareness.

LEADERSHIP

RESEARCH

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Why Honors?

The Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato has been such a beneficial and rewarding experience for me during my time here. I have been involved in so many organizations, events, and other experiences because being a member of the honors program motivated me to get more involved on campus. Looking for experiences in order to fulfill the competencies helped me get out of my box and try new things that I likely wouldn't have looked into had it not been for the honors program. It has really helped me thrive as a student during my undergraduate career.


Some leadership experiences that I specifically sought out because of the honors program are applying for a job as a community advisor in the residence halls and running for the Student Nurses Association executive board. These are things I likely wouldn't have done otherwise. Learning about leadership and its benefits really motivated me to improve my leadership skills and abilities through experiences on campus, so I applied for the position as a community advisor and worked in Julia Sears for one academic year. This taught me so many things about working on a team and helped me evaluate my own leadership values. After completing that job, I decided I wanted to experience leadership on a different type of team in order to really develop and refine my leadership skills and values, so I ran for the Student Nurses Association executive board and am now the secretary of the organization.


If it weren't for the honors program requiring students to be involved in undergraduate research, I honestly probably wouldn't have taken the time to get involved in it. It never seemed like something that interested me before. However, after starting an original project with another student and a faculty mentor, I realized just how rewarding and beneficial it is. I learned about the research process and how to professionally present my findings. I even got to travel around the country to present my research, and it was such a fun experience that I am so grateful I had. Presenting my research to other students and faculty at different universities in the U.S. helped me practice being professional, communicating, etc.


In order to fulfill the global citizenship competency, I took several Spanish courses and ended up deciding to pursue a minor in Spanish. I also spent four weeks studying abroad in Costa Rica, and it was truly one of the most amazing experiences I've ever had in my life. It is a topic that I am very passionate about because I love sharing this experience with other people. I learned so much about the lifestyle, communication (verbal and nonverbal), and culture of Costa Rica. It was so interesting and rewarding to be fully immersed in their culture and way of living. I've dreamed of going back to that place every day since I left because it was so wonderful. If it weren't for the honors program, I likely wouldn't have decided to pursue this opportunity. I am so thankful for that experience.

As I have explained a little bit throughout this essay, I have had many rewarding experiences due to being a member of the honors program. It has helped me grow both personally and professionally. I have developed many skills and become much more self-aware. I have become more mature and grown so much as a person. These skills and self-awareness that have helped me mature and grow will benefit me professionally because I know how to interact with others, be a good leader, take part in a team, etc. I have a much better understanding of who I am and how my experiences have helped me get where I am today. I am so thankful for everything the honors program has helped me achieve.

Learning Plans

 [2016-2017_learning_plan.docx](#)
Download File

 [2017-2018_learning_plan.docx](#)
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 [2018-2019_learning_plan.docx](#)
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Leadership Competency

I have always been a person who strives to be a great leader and is constantly looking for new leadership experiences to help me grow. This started in high school and has only continued to progress throughout my undergraduate career at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Being a student leader in multiple experiences and organizations during my four years at MSU helped me develop and refine my leadership skills, values, and personal theory to guide my future leadership experiences.

I began identifying and reflecting upon my own personal leadership values and strengths during my first year at MSU. I took the Strengths Finder assessment during my First Year Experience course, which identified my strengths as restorative, discipline, empathy, achiever, and consistency. I then utilized and reflected upon these strengths during my experiences as a **member of the National Residence Hall Honorary** that same academic year. I also began synthesizing and reflecting upon my own leadership values, which I identified as integrity, service, and respect. Through my experiences in the National Residence Hall Honorary, I was able to implement my strengths: for example, I used my discipline, consistency, and achiever attitude to keep everyone on track during meetings in order to be productive. I utilized my empathy by performing acts of service and doing volunteer work with other members of the organization. During this experience, I also began identifying the various roles within a team. I observed the many roles of this organization and began learning that each role is unique but equally as important as the next.

After reflecting upon my strengths and values, I began to observe and critique leadership models within groups. One experience which was really helpful for this was a **nursing job shadow**. Since it was a job shadow and I was not expected to act as a member of the team, it was a very good time for me to sit back and observe the different leadership styles each team member utilized. It helped me identify which styles of leadership I felt would work well for me. I was also able to reflect upon the different roles within this team: I began understanding that when each person's role includes utilizing their strengths, it can make for a very successful team setting. The challenging part of this experience was having to retain everything I learned only through observation without being able to practice utilizing it. I had to remember how I felt about the different styles of leadership so I could implement them in future leadership experiences and evaluate their effectiveness.

Eventually, I was able to begin using my personal theories and values of leadership within a group/organization: I became a **residential life community advisor**. In this experience, I worked with other community advisors to create a welcoming community environment in the residence halls, which fostered academic success, community involvement, and leadership opportunities. I was able to begin trying out the different leadership styles which I had observed previously. I realized through this experience that leaders may have multiple leadership styles which they utilize at different times depending on the situation: one leadership style may not be the most successful in every situation. A good leader is able to adapt depending on the situation and experience in front of them. This experience also allowed me to practice being a member of a group working toward a common goal. I utilized my strengths to play my part while other team members performed different roles, which utilized their own strengths. The fact that we each had different strengths and used them to our benefit helped us create success for our team. One challenge that arose with this is that not all members of the team agreed at all times: this made it difficult to come to an agreement at times. We each had to learn to work together, be respectful, and make compromises in order to make decisions that would best support our community.

Finally, I was able to form and solidify a general leadership philosophy and implement it into a new group setting: I became the **secretary of the Student Nurses Association**. In this experience, I was able to implement everything I had learned about team-based leadership as well as utilize my leadership strengths and values. It was very beneficial to have one final experience where I could test out everything I had learned during my time at MSU, all within one team setting. This helped me develop a better understanding of how to be a good team member while sticking to my own values and being an independent leader within the group. I hope to continue utilizing these skills I have learned and implement my personal philosophy of leadership in my career as a labor and delivery nurse. After learning how to work as an effective team member and forming a strong philosophy of leadership, I hope to be a positive coworker and nurse. I also hope that it will help me have a positive impact on my patients by being honest, being respectful, and doing anything I can to serve and support my patients.

NATIONAL RESIDENCE
HALL HONORARY

NURSING JOB SHADOW

RESIDENTIAL LIFE
COMMUNITY ADVISOR

STUDENT NURSES'
ASSOCIATION -
SECRETARY

Research Competency

Research is something for which I have developed a great passion. It is not something I knew much about prior to my undergraduate career at Minnesota State University, Mankato; it is not something I had really ever considered participating in until I joined the MSU Honors Program. Throughout my undergraduate career, I grew to understand its importance and benefits. I now realize how beneficial research can be to our world and society, and I will utilize evidence-based research to grow and improve in my career as a labor and delivery nurse.

I was first introduced to research during the research unit of my First Year Experience Honors Program course in which I wrote a **research essay** to help further my understanding of information literacy, information synthesis, and research ethics. By writing this essay, I began to develop strategies for accessing and utilizing the scholarly work of others and an understanding of ethical research and how to utilize it. I grew to understand how important it is to be honest and fair/just when conducting research. This essay helped me to form a solid foundation within the research competency that would then support my future growth during other research projects and learning. Having a strong base of knowledge regarding information synthesis and information literacy would later help me find credible sources for future research projects and then synthesize that information for use within those projects.

Having such a solid understanding of how to access scholarly resources was very beneficial to me as a nursing student: research and evidence-based practice are very large pieces of nursing education and nursing practice. Throughout my undergraduate career, I worked on many research papers and projects. During my second year at MSU, I wrote a **research paper discussing the pathophysiology of heart failure** for my pathophysiology course. I utilized my previous experience and knowledge of accessing and utilizing scholarly sources in this experience. By researching the scholarly work of others and synthesizing the information to utilize it in my own research paper, I grew and developed my research competency tremendously. I began to understand how to evaluate sources to select the best ones for my project. Researching sources and information for this paper helped me begin synthesizing scholarly sources and the information within them in order to logically piece together the information from several sources into one paper. I pulled information from several adequate sources after evaluating them and put it all together in order to develop a stronger understanding of the topic.

After having experiences researching information and sharing my findings, I then began to further develop my research competency by utilizing research findings to create implications for nursing practice and helped nurses understand how to utilize these findings and how the information may impact nursing practice. During my first year of the nursing program, I was enrolled in a course titled **NURS 363: Critical Inquiry in Nursing**, which focused on the research process and evidence-based practice in nursing practice. In this course, I participated in an evidence-based practice research process in which I worked with others to research a topic and utilize the information found to create an evidence-based practice guideline for nurses to utilize. This helped piece together information from several sources in order to show a larger picture of the topic to help develop a better understanding of it. Having such a solid foundation and understanding of how to synthesize articles and sources from my previous research experiences, helped me with this project because I knew how to get started and how to utilize the information I found. My group then utilized the information and new understanding from our researching and synthesis in order to develop a thesis statement (the guidelines) for nursing practice. This will help nurses in the future to have a stronger understanding of the topic and how to best work with the population studied in this project. It was challenging to work with a large group on a project because we had to work together and compromise at times; this experience helped me get a good understanding of how to work with a research team, which would later help me in my original undergraduate research study.

Finally, I participated in an **original undergraduate research project titled “Persons with Recently Diagnosed Alzheimer’s Disease: An Exploration Comparing Quality of Life Indicators Across Three Time Points,”** in which I worked with a professor and a student to utilize information from surveys and analyze it in order to develop a better understanding of the quality of life of those living with Alzheimer’s disease and/or dementia. After building such a solid base of my research competency through research essays and a nursing research course, I felt very confident about my abilities to participate in this original research project. This project helped further my own as well as others’ understanding of the quality of life and mental health for patients living with Alzheimer’s disease. I utilized my previous knowledge and experience of conducting ethical research in this project: I gave credit where credit was due, I was honest in my results, and I was fair/just throughout the process. It was challenging to work on such a large project outside of my coursework: nursing school is a busy time, so I had to be dedicated to my research and ensure I had the time to complete my tasks for the project. It was also challenging to work on this project with another student because we each worked on different aspects of the project and had to mesh our different pieces together to form our comprehensive research project: I worked more on the background information and literature review. My partner worked with all the data and numbers in order to create an understanding of quality of life for those with Alzheimer’s disease: we utilized these numbers and information to create implications for nursing practice.

After developing this project, I was able to present it at several conferences and discuss my findings with other nursing scholars. Presenting this project at both national and regional conferences allowed me to communicate with professionals and share my knowledge. I was also able to receive feedback from these nursing professionals about my research. At times, I was asked questions which I was unable to answer; this gave me new ideas to further research within this topic. Being involved in this project and presenting it at conferences solidified my knowledge and understanding of research and how important it is to our world. Research can have a large impact on society and help us continue to grow and improve in so many aspects. Specifically, in nursing, research can help us implement evidence-based practice in order to provide the best care for patients. My hope is to continue utilizing research to grow my understanding of implementing evidence-based practice so I can provide safe and high quality care for my patients as a labor and delivery nurse.

[FYEX RESEARCH ESSAY](#)[HEART FAILURE RESEARCH PAPER](#)[NURS 363: CRITICAL INQUIRY IN NURSING](#)[UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROJECT](#)

Global Citizenship Competency

Global citizenship is something I have grown to value more and more throughout my four years at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Learning about and developing my global citizenship competency has helped me grow and mature as a person and as a future nurse. I had many opportunities to develop this competency during my undergraduate career, and those experiences have been some of the most eye-opening, life changing experiences I have ever had.

I first began to learn about global citizenship during the **global citizenship unit of my Honors first year experience course**. Through this experience I began to learn and understand more about what culture is and how it relates to one's identity, which helped me begin to understand my own cultural story/identity. I began to recognize how important one's culture can be to their identity and story because it is often a big piece of what shapes them into the person they are today. It also prompted me to begin asking questions and looking into other cultures and their ways of life. Specifically, I started looking into my own ancestry and researching the cultures from which my ancestors originated. Upon completing this experience, I decided to find an experience which would allow me to personally interact with people of other cultures. This led me to begin volunteering as a **tutor at the Intensive English Language Institute** on campus. Through these tutoring sessions, I was able to work with international students in order to help them improve their English language competency. During this time, we had conversations about our cultures and the differences between them. I gained a better understanding of the differing values and beliefs of other cultures as well as how different the lifestyles can be amongst cultures. I began to understand culture does not necessarily refer to a group of people from a specific country; it can be any group of people who share values/beliefs. For example, I belonged to several different campus organizations, and I believe each organization had its own culture. Having discussions with the students I tutored about the beliefs and values within our own cultures also began to help me recognize my own personal biases: I learned that it is important to recognize our own biases and remain open-minded and non-judgmental toward those with differing values/beliefs. These experiences helped me grow and have a better understanding of other cultures: in the future, this will help me be open-minded when interacting with people from other cultures and understand that it's okay to have differing beliefs and values.

The previous experiences gave me a very solid foundation for understanding other cultures and a better understanding of myself as a global citizen. This solid foundation helped me while I worked on my **cultural project and research paper** for my Spanish 310 course. That foundation was extremely important because this cultural project brought on new challenges for me as a developing global citizen. I was learning a lot about a new culture, and I did so through an interview in which we spoke Spanish. One big challenge for me was realizing that while researching a culture can give some important information, it is not always the lived experience of everyone in that culture. This is something my interviewee really focused on during our interview for the project. During the interview, I really noticed some differences, both verbally and non-verbally, between Spanish-speaking and English-speaking cultures. For example, one verbal difference is that Spanish has differing verb conjugations when speaking in formal versus informal situations. An example of a non-verbal difference is the importance of personal space: in English-speaking cultures, people do not typically feel comfortable being very close to one another, however, in Spanish-speaking cultures I have found it is much more common for them to be less concerned about personal space. Knowing and understanding all of these different aspects of global citizenship will help me be a better nurse for my future patients because I will be able to interact with them without being judgmental or discriminatory. Having an understanding of how different other cultures can be from my own will help me be a culturally competent nurse who can provide culturally competent care for her patients.

All of these experiences helped me grow and develop my global citizenship competency, and prepared me to **study abroad in Costa Rica** for four weeks where I was immersed in a new culture and took history and literature courses in Spanish. Through this experience, I became much more self-aware. I began to really understand the differences in values between my own culture and this new culture in which I was living. One of the big differences was time. In Costa Rica, nobody is rushed, people are frequently late, and nobody really minds. They take life slow. This is so much different in the United States, where everything is focused on timing and life is rushed. This made it difficult for me to be understanding of people showing up late or taking a while to be ready for something we had planned. It was very eye-opening to live in a different culture; it really helped me notice the differing values/beliefs. These differences were very intriguing to me, so I was constantly asking questions about the culture. I wanted to make the most of my experience by getting a true understanding of the culture while I was living in it.

My study abroad experience also really helped me understand how much language and culture contribute to personality; the way of life, beliefs, values, etc. all impact the personality of those who are raised or live in that culture. Often, language and culture are a very important piece of one's identity, and are things of which people are typically very proud. Understanding other cultures and the importance they hold within a people's identities is very beneficial on many levels. It can help create more understanding and acceptance of others. The lessons and experiences that studying abroad brought to me were life changing, and I feel so fortunate to have been able to be part of that culture even if for only four weeks. It was the perfect way to solidify my understanding and awareness of global citizenship. All of these different experiences which contributed to the development of my global citizenship competency will help me in the future as a nurse. Knowing that other cultures have different values and beliefs from my own and understanding my own personal biases will help me provide culturally competent care for my patients. I will be able to be open-minded and understanding when they share their differing values or make decisions different from those that I would make in the situation. This will allow me to provide the best possible care for my patients.

FYEX GLOBAL
CITIZENSHIP UNIT

INTENSIVE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE INSTITUTE
TUTOR

SPAN 310 CULTURE
PROJECT AND RESEARCH
PAPER

STUDY ABROAD IN COSTA
RICA

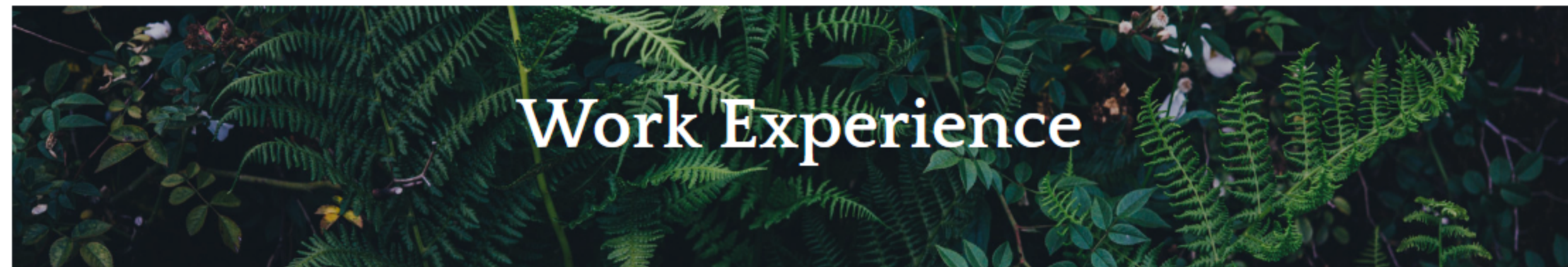
Aspen Curtis

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Work Experience

Ski Instructor at Mount Kato

At Mount Kato, located in Mankato, MN, I gave ski lessons to people of all ages who were interested in learning to ski. I started with the very basic skills and helped them work their way up to skiing independently and safely. This improved my communication skills because I had to learn how to communicate with people of many different ages. There were times when I taught 4 year old children, and there were times when I taught adults in their 40's. I worked here from December 2015 through March 2016.

Host/Server at Rib Crib

I mainly a server when I worked at Rib Crib in Mason City, IA. I worked there May 2016 through August 2016 and during the month of December in 2016. As a host, my duties were to greet customers, assign tables to the servers, and clean the tables after customers left. As a server, I greeted customers, got them drinks, took their orders, gave them their food, and gave them the check. I also checked back occasionally to see if they needed anything else. This improved my customer service, organization, and communication skills.

Community Advisor at MNSU

During my second year at MNSU (2016-2017 academic year), I worked as a community advisor through residential life on campus. I lived in the dorms, and I was the community advisor for 37 residents. I planned programs for residents to attend both on my floor and for the entire building. I served as a resource for residents: if a resident had any questions or concerns, they were able to come to me for help. I had confrontational situations in which I had to confront residents if they broke policy. I was the advisor of my floor's community council: I allowed the floor president to run the biweekly meetings, but I made sure things ran smoothly and remained productive. This experience improved my independent leadership skills, but I also improved my teams-based leadership skills by working with my fellow community advisors in my building. We had to rely on each other to help one another. We helped one another with confrontations, planned programs together, supported one another in hard times, encouraged one another to keep pushing, and critiqued one another so we could all improve and be our best.

Front Desk Worker in Julia Sears Residence Community

I worked at the front desk in the Julia Sears Residence Community on the MNSU campus during the 2016-2017 school year. I answered questions for residents, checked items out to residents (like cooking supplies, cleaning supplies, outdoor games, board games, etc.), and fulfilled the hourly tasks (such as filling the printer with paper or emailing residents who had overdue checkout items). This was a good experience for working on customer service skills.

Aspen Curtis

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Personal Info

Physical Activity

I really enjoy being active, whether it's biking, skiing, running, or even just a simple walk. Anything that involves getting up and moving makes me feel really good and puts me in a better mood!

Background

I grew up in Clear Lake, IA, which is a smaller town in the northern part of Iowa. I graduated with 107 students in my class from Clear Lake High School. During high school, I was very involved in cheerleading, track, figure skating, hockey, and band.

Free Time

In my free time, I enjoy reading books. Fiction and novels are my favorites. I also really enjoy drawing. My favorite thing to do in my free time is spend time with either my friends, my family, or my dog.

Contact Info

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