



Minnesota State University, Mankato
Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly
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State University, Mankato

Honors Capstone Portfolios

Honors Program

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Rebecca Guss Honors Portfolio

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Minnesota State University, Mankato

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Rebecca Guss

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Welcome!



About Me

Hello and welcome to my e-portfolio! My name is Rebecca Guss and I am a fourth-year honors student at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I am majoring in Communication Sciences and Disorders with a minor in Psychology and I will graduate in May 2021 with a Bachelor's degree. I will be pursuing my education further at MSU to obtain my Master's degree, with the ultimate goal of becoming a Speech-Language Pathologist.

Mission Statement

My mission is to spread my positivity and hope for a better world by encouraging people to find their own voice. As a future speech therapist, I value communication. By giving people the power to say what they want to say, I hope to change their individual worlds, one at a time.

"You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending."

C.S. Lewis

Rebecca Guss

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Background

I was born and raised in Mankato, MN, and have lived in the same house my entire life. My parents (Brad and Pam) raised my two older siblings (Adam and Libby) and I with the utmost love. There has always been at least one dog in our family--Kona and Fitger are currently our two spoiled pups. I was taught to value kindness, respect, and wisdom. I have always had a bubbly personality and am often laughing!

Interests

First and foremost, my favorite food is cheese. I particularly love the color yellow and I think it matches my personality quite well. I'm a huge fan of dogs, and it is a goal of mine to one day own an Australian Shepherd. I have always been fond of Northern Minnesota, specifically the North Shore and Lake Superior. My sock collection is quite large, as well as my collection of terrible jokes/puns.

Hobbies

Whenever I am not busy with schoolwork, I am usually hanging out with friends on campus. I also enjoy reading books and going thrift shopping for said books. I love to go outside, with my favorite outdoor activity being kayaking. When I'm not doing any of the above, I am probably singing at the top of my lungs in my car, lazily watching "Friends" on Netflix, or staring up at the night sky.





The Honors Program

Honors Program Mission Statement:

"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."

Source: <https://www.mnsu.edu/honors/missionsngoals/>

LEADERSHIP

RESEARCH

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Learning Plans:

Each fall, honors students are required to create a learning plan for the upcoming school year to ensure that we are continuously developing each competency. This plan reminds me what I must do in order to achieve my goals for the Honors Program.

[learning_plan_2017.docx](#)
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"Why Honors" Essay:

Throughout my years as a student, I have held high expectations for myself. One of the best decisions I made in regard to my college career was joining the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. This program has pushed me to develop not only as a better student overall, but as a global citizen, researcher, and leader. It has challenged me to reflect on experiences I would normally overlook, which has ultimately helped me grow personally and professionally.

To start, the Honors Program has provided me with a support system I knew I could count on from my very first semester of college. The honors freshmen learning community made my first year a lot less scary and much more meaningful. This diverse group of random strangers quickly became my friends as we navigated the ups and downs of college together. In addition to the formation of numerous peer relationships, I also had the privilege of meeting and working with many faculty members associated with the Honors Program. I quickly realized Ginny and Leah would do just about anything to help honors students succeed. Whenever I started to feel overwhelmed by the demands of college, I knew I could confide in them.

Next, being in the Honors Program has encouraged me to leave my comfort zone and presented me with unique opportunities to do so. I was extremely nervous about fulfilling the three competencies when I originally started, but now I am grateful for the experiences. The competency I was most worried about was research. However, with the support I needed to get started, I was able to join a research team and work on two separate projects, which have contributed towards my passion of speech-language pathology. I was also concerned about leadership, in that I had never considered myself a leader. One specific opportunity available to only honors students is the chance to serve on the Honors Student Body Executive Board, which I have done the past two years. Additionally, I was a leader at the honors fall retreat, took an honors seminar about exploring personal leadership, and served on the board of an RSO founded by one of my friends in the learning community. As I exposed myself to more and more leadership experiences, I started to become more confident in my leadership skills. Finally, the global citizenship competency pushed me to explore cultures besides my own. My trip to Barcelona is still, to this day, the greatest experience of my lifetime. Thanks to the Honors Program, I had the courage to take a leap of faith and immerse myself in the unknown.

In conclusion, the Honors Program greatly enhanced my time spent at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The skills I developed as a researcher, global citizen, and leader can be applied to all aspects of life, especially in my future career as a speech therapist. I have learned how to work well with others, remain ethical in my practices, what my strengths are as a leader, and to continue asking questions. By seeking discomfort and taking the time to reflect, I believe I am prepared to start my next journey as a professional in the real world.



Leadership

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

Source: <https://www.mnsu.edu/honors/missionsgoals/>

Growing up, I never considered myself a leader. I was always the quiet one who would let others take charge because I was afraid of speaking up. However, as soon as I started college and joined the Honors Program, I knew that had to change. In order to get the most out of my college experience and beyond, I had to pursue opportunities outside of my comfort zone.

I first started thinking about what it meant to be a good leader through my job at **Barnes and Noble**. Though I personally did not hold an important leadership position in the store as a cashier, I was able to observe the managers and their variety of both effective and ineffective leadership styles. After determining the kind of leader I look up to, I was able to put my own skills into practice by helping with the **Honors Fall Retreat**, which was an event to introduce freshmen to the Honors Program. This was the first chance I got to apply my knowledge of what it takes to be a good leader and practice working towards a common goal. Some of my strengths include maintaining energy to keep others engaged, inclusion, and communication. So, as part of the energizer team, I had the chance to maximize my strengths by leading icebreakers and other activities.

Helping with the fall retreat provided me with the confidence to hold a more permanent leadership position. I was a member of an RSO called **ForGE** during my first two years of college, but I knew pursuing a role on the board would help me develop even more as a leader. Serving as Vice President throughout my junior year gave me an insight into what it takes to successfully run an organization. There is a lot of behind-the-scenes actions such as budgeting, planning for meetings, and promoting the organization. Similarly, serving as a **class representative** during my junior and senior years for the Honors Student Body allowed me to understand the importance of each role on a team. Both of these experiences required multiple people to collaborate with each other, so as to host events, fundraise, and educate others.

Having the experience of working in groups, I wanted to focus more on my individual leadership qualities. I took **HONR 401: Exploring Personal Leadership** in the spring of my third year. As part of a community engagement project, I was a reading buddy with a kindergartener for the entire semester. This project solidified my values, strengths, and weaknesses as a leader. Despite my strengths of inclusion and communication, I still struggle with managing others. However, my values of respect and compassion encourage me to continue to seek connection.

Finally, I was able to utilize the lessons learned from all the previous experiences to develop my personal leadership philosophy. Working at **ACES**, an after-school/summer program for kids in elementary school, allowed me to practice what kind of leader I want to be in my future career as a speech-language pathologist. I intend to establish a foundation of trust with clients, lead by example, and be as supportive as possible. By doing so, my clients will be able to get the most out of each therapy session. However, I have not yet learned everything it takes to be a good leader. As I become a professional in the real world, I need to uphold my values, apply my knowledge, and remain dedicated to bettering myself and others.

Experiences:

ACES

FORGE

HSB REPRESENTATIVE

HONR 401: EXPLORING PERSONAL LEADERSHIP

BARNES AND NOBLE

HONORS FALL RETREAT



Research

"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."

Source: <https://www.mnsu.edu/honors/missionsgoals/>

When I first joined the Honors Program, I was absolutely intimidated by the research competency. I had no idea how I was going to fulfill it as an undecided major. However, as I started to learn more about the possible options and became passionate about a career path, I realized research is much more than just the stereotypical scientist analyzing samples in a lab.

My first experience with research occurred in **ENG 101**. Our main focus for the semester was on a multigenre research project, in which we were to choose a region of the world, identify a problem they are facing, and come up with solutions to the problem. Writing this essay provided me with a strategy to evaluate potential sources, where I determine their currency, authority, bias, level, and exploration. I was also able to better understand how to organize others' ideas, which helped me to create my own thesis statement for the essay.

Another class that allowed me to develop my information literacy and synthesis skills was PSYC 101. Throughout the semester, we studied what affects the academic success of college students. We were then able to complete the **Learn project**. I decided to base my project on anxiety and concentration, two areas with which I personally struggle. The professor introduced us to MavScholar and Google Scholar, which are two resources that I still use to effectively gather information. She also showed us how to properly cite information in APA format, in order to promote the ethical use of information. I also realized it is important to maintain an open mind when researching because people may have different perspectives on a certain topic.

With these previously developed skills, I felt confident enough to seek out an internship with **HealthForce MN** the summer after freshmen year. This internship required me to implement my researching abilities in a real-world experience in order to accomplish a specific goal. Two other interns and I worked together on a Senior Care Career Awareness campaign, in which we created a toolkit that could be distributed to schools and nursing homes that would assist them in educating students about senior care careers through an intergenerational partnership. With the added pressure of the project being public, I made sure to use the strategies from my other research experiences to ensure effective and ethical use of information.

I did not feel like I had really started to understand the research process until I completed an original research project during my junior year. Working with Dr. Megan Mahowald and a few other undergraduate students, we were able to identify and develop an original research question after transcribing and analyzing **language samples**. I learned about some venues for dissemination, including the Undergraduate Research Symposium at MSU and the Minnesota Speech-Language-Hearing Association convention. I also learned how to successfully write and submit an abstract to share our work, which was unfortunately unable to be completed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With a new spark of interest for original research, I decided to work with Dr. Mahowald once again during my senior year. I was able to explore how duration and mode of delivery impacted outcomes of literacy intervention using data from **Camp Maverick** at MSU. Completing this project gave me the chance to conduct and exhibit research that extends knowledge of the Communication Sciences and Disorders discipline, which can also be applied to any other fields that have utilized virtual formats due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Having developed valuable research skills that are applicable to everyday situations, I need to remain committed to expanding my knowledge within the speech-language pathology field in order to achieve evidence-based practice.

Experiences:

CAMP MAVERICK

HEALTHFORCE MN INTERNSHIP

LANGUAGE SAMPLES

ENG 101 ESSAY

LEARN PROJECT



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

Source: <https://www.mnsu.edu/honors/missionsgoals/>

I have always been intrigued by other cultures and the idea of traveling the world, but I never knew what it really meant to be a global citizen. I did not realize that global citizenship can actually be developed right in your own community. Out of the three competencies, global citizenship excited me the most because I love learning about other people.

One fantastic way to learn more about other cultures is by surrounding yourself with people who are different from you. Joining the honors freshmen **learning community** was one of the best decisions of my college career because it gave me so many wonderful opportunities to ask questions about people's beliefs, values, and background. Hearing their answers also inspired me to learn more about my own identity and background.

After becoming more comfortable with asking questions, I was presented with the chance to get to know someone from an extremely different culture. My family was partnered up with Mohammed, an international student from Saudi Arabia, through the **Friendship Family Program**. Our discussions about family, traditions, values, and more gave me a new perspective of our cultural differences and influenced my own worldview. These conversations made me realize how despite our differences, we are all still human.

During my first year of college, I decided to continue learning the second language I studied in high school and took **Spanish 202**. I was very nervous because the professor rarely spoke in English. However, this challenging class taught me a lot about the differences between cultures and their languages. Both verbal and nonverbal communication vary between languages, so it is important to understand cultural norms. Learning a second language was difficult but rewarding because I now appreciate the value of a language. This formed the basis of going out of my comfort zone to volunteer in **Barcelona** for two weeks. Not only did I get to practice my Spanish outside of the classroom, but I also got to immerse myself in a unique culture. Learning about Catalonia and their fight for independence further strengthened my appreciation for language because it is the heart of a culture. I was also able to reflect on how cultural differences may make me uncomfortable, yet it is necessary to be open to new experiences so as to better understand people of all backgrounds. Everyone has a different perspective about the issues in society, but the more you understand about a person, the more you can relate and empathize with them.

Even though it is an amazing experience to travel abroad, it is crucial to learn more about the social issues within your own community. Attending the **"It's Time to Talk" forum** really opened my eyes to how prevalent racial inequality is even in Mankato. I reflected on my privileged background, recognized new perspectives about race, and committed to fighting for systemic change. Although I have already had many opportunities to explore other cultures, I must continue to ask questions, be open-minded, and promote inclusion and diversity both in the workplace and my everyday life.

Experiences:

"IT'S TIME TO TALK" FORUM

LEARNING COMMUNITY

BARCELONA

SPANISH 202

FRIENDSHIP FAMILY PROGRAM

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If you have any comments, questions, or suggestions, please let me know!

** Indicates required field*

Name *

First

Last

Email *

Comment *

SUBMIT