



# Introducing Vanessa Kotek

## An Honors Student at Minnesota State University, Mankato

Hello, my name is Vanessa Kotek and I am a senior honors student here at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I am majoring in Exercise Science with an emphasis in Pre-Physical Therapy and a minor in Sports Medicine. After graduating from MNSU I plan on attending graduate school for my Physical Therapy doctorate. Thank you for taking the time to look at my electronic portfolio!

Honors

Contact



## About Me

I was born and raised in Faribault, MN. A bit about me is that I graduated high school from Bethlehem Academy in Faribault and danced for the Faribault Emerald Dance Team. Currently, I am a junior at MNSU, Mankato. I enjoy spending time with family and friends, along with exploring and adventuring around Minnesota. I am majoring in Exercise Science with an emphasis in Pre-Physical Therapy and minoring in sports medicine! My goal in life is to be able to help those who are struggling with their recovery and guide them on the right track through physical therapy.

I used to see a physical therapist and chiropractor for all four years of my varsity dance career. I had gotten injured and needed help strengthening my hip and thigh muscles so I could dance again. Without their help, I would not have been able to get back on that floor and dance to my best ability. From that experience, I knew I always wanted to help people like those that have helped me.

## My Mission Statement

I will continue to learn and push myself so I can achieve my career and personal goals. By pushing myself I will be able to grow as a person from the experiences I have had. I will work hard so that I can obtain my doctorate and be able to work as a physical therapist. Being a physical therapist will help me make an impact on the lives of those who need rehabilitation so that they may return back to their passions without having disruptions.

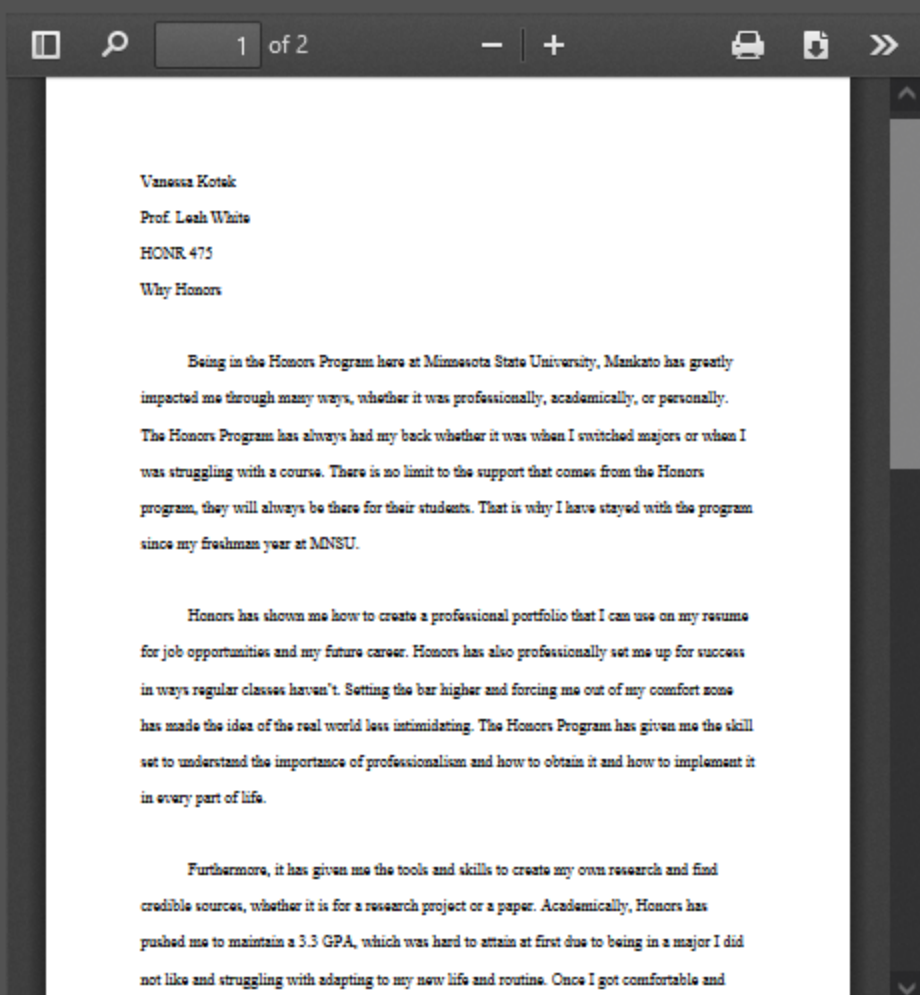


# Honors Program at MSU, Mankato

## 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.

## Why Did I Join Honors?



## Competency Log

**HONORS PORTFOLIO**  
Competency Experience Log

*Not all of the experiences you include on the log will make it into your portfolio. This is a way to keep track of all the experiences you do throughout the year and aid in the planning of future competency development.*

Name: Vanessa Kotek

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES			
Experience	Date Completed (month/year)	Experience Level (development or application)	Brief Description of experience and what you learned.
Completed Experiences			
PTOT Club member	May 2020	development pt. 2	In my Orientation to PT, OT, AT (PT 245) course, the PTOT club was recruited for students wanting to join a club specifically related to their pre-professional program. I immediately joined the club after hearing about it and got accepted in. In this club there are meetings every other week. In each meeting is a different topic related to PT or OT. Some topics have been to be prepared for them. Along with how the club positions me for meetings. Each position had their own duty and responsibilities. I think the president of the club has the meeting and takes and minutes to the other positions when they were needed such as treasurer for short money, volunteer chairs for volunteer opportunities, and vice president for additional comments.
Off-campus job	PT	application	I was offered a position as an assistant full head coach for the Northfield Juggling Dance Team. The position only ranges during the fall from August to mid-October. During my time with the other coaches and team, we worked on team bonding, skills, routines, and physical fitness. The coaches and I ran the practices and made sure the girls were getting the most out of each practice. Whether it was just warming through and cleaning the floors or setting a skill, teaching me, and refining my skills. After cleaning the floors and making sure the girls were performing at their best, they performed the dance at our high school's football field. I learned a lot about what it takes to be a coach and more about the coaching style. I was so used to being one of the dancers and it was eye-opening to see dance through the coach's time. I learned more about how to lead a team and run practices alongside other coaches and by myself. It takes a lot of work and preparation and responsibility.
Strength Finder	May 2020	development pt. 1	During my SACS-CO 2015 course we took part in the Strength Finder test to see what our top 5 strengths are. The Strength Finder test was a series of questions that we had to answer to the best of our ability of our

## Competencies + Experiences



Leadership

[Click Here](#)



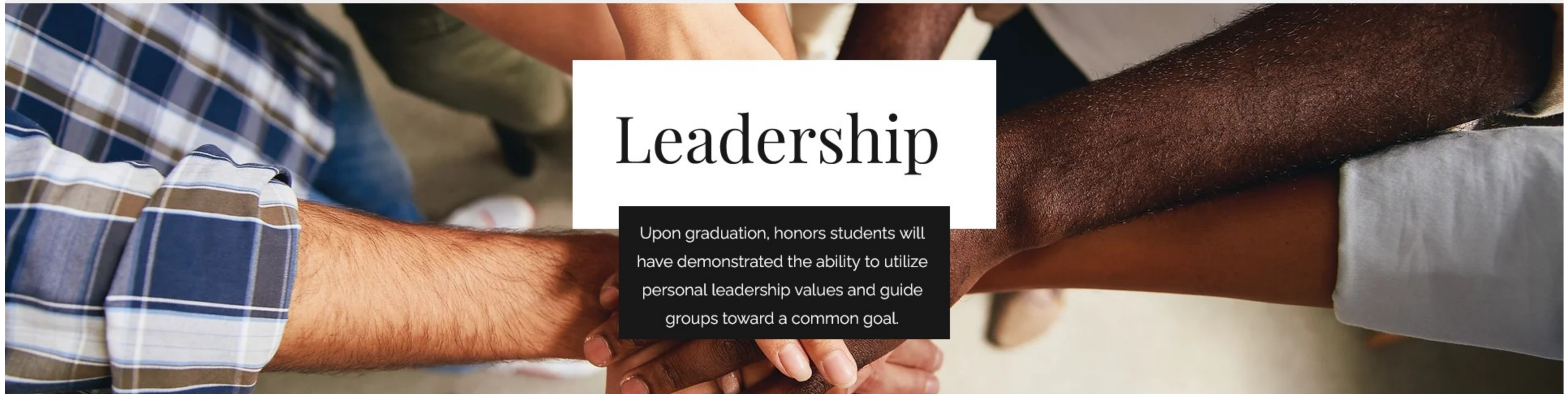
Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activity

[Click Here](#)



Intercultural Engagement

[Click Here](#)



# Leadership

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

## Experiences

[Strengths Finder](#)

[Off-Campus Job](#)

[PT/OT Club](#)

Growing up I was considered the respectful shy kid who did what they were told and followed all the rules. I would never speak up or voice my opinions. All I wanted to do was stay unnoticed and not draw any attention. Once I reached high school, I started to become more aware of my influence on others and how I could use it to better not only myself but those around me as well. I became more involved in school activities, clubs, and dance practices. I never knew what my leadership strengths were until I took HONR 201 (Introduction to Honors) in the spring of 2020. In that class, I was able to solidify my strengths and weaknesses as not only a leader but as a person through the [Clifton Strengths Finder](#) quiz. Because I figured out my leadership values and what each strength meant for me, I was able to change the way I not only viewed myself but my leadership capabilities. The strengths became advantages to me, and I could utilize them in every aspect of my life.

These strengths were further explored as I become an [assistant fall coach](#) for the Northfield Hilliner Dance Team in 2021. During my time at the practices, I worked alongside coaches with different leadership styles than I. I was able to learn, adapt, and build off the other coaches to create a cohesive coaching panel. Our different styles were able to mesh and prove beneficial in how they each worked. Learning my own strengths from HONR 201 has helped me become an efficient coach and showed me where my weaknesses lie. It has also educated me on the different leadership strengths others may have and how to create a uniform team. I aim to express my strengths and skills as a leader to better myself and those around me. As well as continue to learn, grow, and adapt to other strengths to create a uniform bond amongst the people I meet. Coaching has taught me how to mesh and modify my own strengths with other coaches to effectively lead and organize a team without disarray.

By experiencing different leadership styles, I have also had the chance to experience different leadership roles. In the [PT/OT Club](#) at MNSU, I do not hold a leadership position, instead, I am an active participant in the meetings. I have been able to witness the different roles in a club and how each position is using different leadership styles. Each of these board positions contributes to the overall functioning of the club because, without one of the roles, the club would not flow and function successfully. I have also been able to use my strengths called learner and restorative from HONR 201 in this club. That is because when I am at the meetings, I am quiet, I observe, I learn from those around me, and think of ideas and solutions.

I want to continuously improve myself and gain knowledge based on experiences those around me have had. Learning my leadership style and strengths has been valuable to me as I am working towards my career of being a licensed physical therapist. I need to be able to speak up, hold my own ground, and lead patients toward rehabilitation. A physical therapist needs to be confident in themselves, their knowledge, and their skills to become a skilled leader. As in my leadership philosophy, I hope to convert my weaknesses into positive strengths and keep developing as a leader to not only improve myself but those I encounter.

# Research, Scholarly, & Creative Activity

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.

## Experiences

[HONR 401](#)

[SCAN 150W](#)

[Undergraduate Research](#)

Since completing my first research paper in a composition class during my sophomore year of high school, I have been captivated by conducting research. I find writing research papers to be entertaining as I am expanding my knowledge on topics, finding different ways to access credible sources, and knowing what journals or websites will give me the best information.

While at MNSU, I was able to further my searching skills through my [HONR 401](#) course about the Maya, Inca, & Aztecs. For our paper, we were instructed to find sources based on certain criteria such as the date the article was published. In that class, I learned different skills for finding what sources I require and how to narrow the material down more precisely. Additionally, I learned more about finding sources that related to my thesis and how to integrate the content more accurately and smoothly.

My [SCAN 150W](#) course on Nordic Countries helped me to practice and strengthen my information integration skills. I learned about the different ways to add quotes to the paper (i.e., block quotes) and the supporting sentences before and after a quote. I also learned gained more in-depth knowledge about evaluating and synthesizing the information from the sources.

Having had some experience writing literature reviews, I was able to take part in undergraduate research. My partner Kacey and I decided we would do our research project on the Physical Therapy Use Among Collegiate Athletes. While doing [undergraduate research](#), I learned how to use my citation skills from past courses to accurately find credible sources and cite them within a presentation. I learned more about what it takes to work one-on-one with a partner and under a professor. I also learned how to curate a survey that professionally represents MNSU research, specifically how to find the information that was needed for the multiple-choice questions we utilized in our infographic.

Through the undergraduate research experience, my partner and I were able to apply for the [Undergraduate Research Center Grant](#) to fund our time spent researching. In that process, I learned what it takes to submit a professional proposal that included a literature review, significance, methods, timeline, and references for our project. Having experience with research papers, credible sources, and using databases, the literature review and references went smoothly. My partner and I were awarded the URC grant for our research in 2022.

I found all research experiences to be rewarding, as I am fond of creating and conducting research. At first, I had a hard time understanding how to smoothly integrate sources and how to find credible ones. Over time, and with the help of other classes continuously instructing me, I have been able to grow and strengthen my research skills. I believe that my undergraduate research project is one of my bigger successful projects as it took the most time and dedication. I hope to continue researching to develop my abilities further to create higher quality papers or projects. As a physical therapist, I will need these skills to be knowledgeable about current medical treatments and techniques to provide the best possible care to my patients.



## Experiences

### Language Partners Program

### Dual Virtual Immersion Project

Growing up in a private catholic school setting, I did not get to experience many cultural similarities and differences. The primary ethnicity of the school was Caucasian with very few percentages of minorities. I was, however, able to partake in learning about the cultures of South America in the Spanish classes I took throughout my freshman, sophomore, and junior years of high school. There I learned about the different countries in the continent including, agriculture, architecture, lifestyles, history, and education. I ended up not taking a Spanish class my senior year as I had other required classes to take in its place.

Entering college at Minnesota State University, Mankato, the honors program required its students to take language courses to fulfill its required, at the time, language proficiency. I figured since I had already started my Spanish studies, continuing it was the best option. I took SPAN 102 (Elementary Spanish II) in my freshman year of college and SPAN 201 (Intermediate Spanish I) in my sophomore year of college. In those classes, I was able to not only learn more in-depth about Mexico and Spain but also verbally communicate with University of Mexico students through Zoom. Having the opportunity to meet other students like me, but with a plethora of differences from me was fascinating. We were able to compare and contrast our daily lives, family life, nutrition, culture, and lifestyles. The people I met were so kind and helped me with my Spanish pronunciation and grammar skills. In return, I worked with the University of Mexico students on their English-speaking skills. That is the reason that the project in SPAN 201 was called a [Dual Immersion Project](#), as both university students shared their native language with each other and worked on improving their second language.

In the spring of 2021, my junior year of college, I signed up to be part of the [Language Partners Program](#). Initially, I had heard of this program my freshman year in my Introduction to Honors (HONR 201) course. During my freshman year, I did not have enough time and energy to dedicate, so I decided to check it out again during my junior year when I had more free time. In the program, they pair up degree-seeking MNSU students with students in the Intensive English Program (IEP) through like interests. I was matched with a student from Japan named Natsumi due to our common love for dance. Through this program, I was able to learn and experience a culture different from the ones I previously learned about (Mexico and Spain). We spent two hours a week exploring and sharing each other's cultures. We would ask questions about different topics (i.e., holidays, traditions, family life, music, television interests, etc.) to see just how similar and different we were. Natsumi became my first international friend and taught me how special that bond could be. I enjoyed spending two hours a week with her, and I cherish the memories we made.

Having both these intercultural engagement experiences has opened the door to creating a connection with different cultures. Sometimes it is hard for me to branch out and make friends with those not similar to me. I tend to unintentionally befriend those that have the same background, interests, or mannerisms/traits as I do. I love the people around me now, but I want to be able to experience stories and cultures that I did not grow up around. I hope to be more aware and versatile when it comes to acknowledging and learning from cultural differences. As well as continue to immerse myself in cultures other than my own and learn more about the different languages.



## Get in Touch!

Thank you so much for reading through my electronic portfolio!

If there are any questions or comments, feel free to reach out using either the form here or by email.

Have a wonderful day!

Name
Email
Subject
Type your message here...

[Submit](#)

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