

Olivia Amoussou Guenou

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Hello and welcome to my e-portfolio!

My name is Olivia Amoussou Guenou. I am currently a senior and Honors Student at Minnesota State University of Mankato. Throughout my journey at MNSU, I have summarized and documented my progress in the Honors Competencies Leadership, Research and Intercultural Engagement. Enjoy!

Mission Statement

"My mission is to become a passionate Food Scientist by improving the overall quality, safety, wholesomeness and availability of Food. While I continue my education, I am determined to strengthen my skills as I seek to be efficient in my field and to inspire others."

Get to Know me!

Background

I am originally from Benin West Africa. I came to the USA in 2012 to establish myself. I love science in general and had the opportunity to work in the food setting for few years. This experience encouraged me to pursue my degree in Food Science Technology. I am a proud mother of two boys, seven, and three and fortunate to share my everyday life with my fiancé and my mother.

"If we did all the things we are capable of, we would literally astound ourselves"

Thomas Edison

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About Me

Where I am

Built up experience from Hormel Foods Corporation and earning my AS degree in Food Science Technology at Riverland Community College in spring 2019 led me to Minnesota State University, Mankato where I am working toward my BS in Food Science Technology and minors in Agriculture Science and Chemistry. Excepted to graduate in spring 2023, I am excited to bring my skills and experiences to the Food Industry.

Professional Resume



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Why Honors?

I like to say that I love challenges, and this is the main reason why I chose to join the Honors Program. The Honors Program changed me I would say in many ways. I learned that we have values, and we must live and respect each other values. I learned about the different competencies and this gave me the opportunity to reflect on my journey during my time at MNSU.

The Program helped me identified through series of questions, my top 5 strengths that I didn't know much about before joining. I learned that I can easily outdo certain things because of the skills I have. For example, learner is one of my 5 top skills, I'm open to explore and get more experience in the Honor Program. I also use on the daily basis many of these skills to overcome different challenges in my professional and personal life. For example, I like to have healthy relationships guided by Harmony which is one of my top 5 strengths. I also love consistency in everything I do. This aspect allows me to be reliable in my professional life.

The Honors Program through its requirements is motivating me to study hard to maintain a GPA above 3.30. With the Honors Program, I'm improving my strength and get better at other skills. Seeing myself build this portfolio from scratch is a surprising achievement because I had to develop and use innovation and creativity skills to keep everything organized and appealing.

I will continue to use my current skills, develop many others, and document my progress so this portfolio can serve as record keeping, self-evaluation, career growth plan, as well as personality identity based on Leadership, Research, and Intercultural Engagement.

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Many factors such as my education and life experiences taught me to consider leadership as a combination of skills and values, I would develop over time that will hoist me to be in the best position in my career. That changed as I joined the Honor Program because I realized it was not just about me, and that people have many ways to lead by excellence with different leadership styles.

During my time at Hormel, I was able to thrive by learning the job I was entitled to with consistency and positivity. I also developed training and communication skills helping me to teach others from different backgrounds to perform the job. These skills reinforced our teamwork for success. I continue to value teamwork when at SevitaHealth. Since I always seek responsible positions, I had to use my leadership strengths to maintain a pleasant work environment. I was able to train, coach, divide tasks and support my team with my presence to be a good leader who must perform the same effort as others with positivity. I was able to investigate and solve issues among us and bring peace with my restorative and harmonious strengths.

Finally, taking the Clifton Strengths Finder Assessment helped me understand that my devotion to work, the ease I have interacting with others, and the peace I instill around me are all tied to my specific leadership talents and strengths. When I go to a work environment I am in the consistent research of learning and progressing. I am also very open minded and ask questions when I don't fully understand a task. I love to share my positive vibe to keep me going and have others follow me for the common goal which is success. Also, working with others helped me understand that I can't be always right and so, I learned to validate my team opinion to promote a better teamwork environment.

In my future career, I will use these skills I already have to show my work ethic and stay open-minded to develop other skills based on the team goals. I will also be vulnerable to recognizing my weaknesses and working hard to improve myself to better support my team.

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From a very young age, all the schools I attended always had dedicated programs and learnings around research. It was things as easy as field trips where we were asked to analyze data and reflect on our findings. Since those experiences were all associated with numbers, I always thought that research was just tied to science. Throughout the years, I performed without knowing the importance of research and why it must be part of our journey to success.

As research is one of the competencies in the Honors Program, when I joined the program, I understood that research can be done in any field. I understood that research is used to generate, and expand knowledge, provide useful information, build critical thinking skills, hone problem-solving skills, help in decision making, and challenge us in new ways.

As a Food Science major, I used my previous skills in data collection to gather information for my group to create a new product from scratch that could be launched for my [Research and Development class in 2017](#). That experience helped me learn the different steps essential in creating a new product. I got some experience building nutritional facts scientifically and can now create labels when I decide to launch a product in the future. I learned to work independently as well as with my team allowing me to value other opinions and share my point of view on the project.

This year, as I am completing my [Internship at Seneca Foods Corporation](#), I can connect what I have learned over the years in theory with field practice. It includes how the microbe works, proper laboratory techniques, protocols, and requirements. I interpret results and proceed to corrective action as needed. Among all other skills, I learned to plan and prioritize duties. I also had a chance to work with a great team, therefore, mastering my teamwork skills as they relate to a research environment. Communicating with others is very pleasant and fluid making my work environment neat and special. It allows us to be efficient as we split duties, set daily goals, and meet them.

As a successful STEM major, I will continue to work on finding essential information from reliable sources, collecting data, and analyzing them. Proceed to corrective action based on results and feedback. I will develop more critical thinking and creativity skills to challenge myself and come up with new ideas that will solve many issues in my field.

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Born and raised in Benin West Africa, I am from a country where traditions, religions, and cultural diversities shaped my identity. Benin is a country where multiple languages (more than 63 spoken dialects) are used to communicate. Each side of the country has its identity based on ethnicity, languages, cultures, religion, food, and behaviors. I grew up and lived in the south of the country, so I am well familiar with the region's ways and realities marked by verbal, cues, and nonverbal communication, multigenerational living, with a high context culture.

When I arrived in the U.S., I thought my integration would be easier due to my cultural diversity background, but I was wrong. I had to learn to live in my new environment and face different realities. This includes learning English, the language spoken by the majority to communicate, learning how to communicate efficiently, living by myself, and learning the socio-economic and political context in which I am now living. I learned to perform cross-cultural analysis to evaluate and compare my two identities to find myself in the community.

In that perpetual need to define my intercultural engagement in my new environment, I took Introduction to Anthropology, where I learned to view the human being as a whole person in all aspects of life, marked by evolution. I learned that the society we live in is structured, guided by specific principles, of people sharing the same culture, social structures, and social institutions affecting human behaviors, and actions. This understanding allowed me to respect the complexity of diversity and inclusion and better communicate across cultural differences.

I also had the opportunity to take HONR 401 Seminar: Food Politics. This course taught me how policies/laws impact the food system and are used as tools to create unfair conditions between communities. Also, I learned about how based on culture, foodways can connect people and help others find themselves in society. In the meantime, I also learned to become a food advocate determined to impact the food system by prioritizing food quality and food safety for citizens.

From all these experiences, I am more delicate and attentive to my environment. I am more compassionate, resilient, and determined to continue to learn about human nature as well as the society in which I live. This engagement allows me to connect myself to others, accept and face the challenges and realities and communicate and share my culture to others so they learn to know and validate me.

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The Dakota war

Originally from Benin West Africa (multicultural diversity country), I migrate into the USA as a permanent resident on November 18th, 2012, and lived in Chicago for six months, then came to Minnesota, where I established myself. I went to Riverland Community College, where I graduated with my AS degree and now continuing my education at the Minnesota State University of Mankato. Thru the Honor Program at MNSU and as a citizen of Minnesota, I was so pleased to learn about global citizenship and, most importantly, to gain knowledge on the deadliest massacre in Minnesota history: The Dakota War of 1862. Sad story but historically relevant, I learned that Native Americans were the first landowners of the state but happened to be expelled from their land by white settlers due to resource conflict. The Native American preferred to fight for their land than negotiating with the settlers since the deal made for them to have their lands was not at first fair. The settlers retaliated by hanging thirty-eight of the Dakotas and by ejecting them from the state. I learned that most Minnesotans in their 50s never heard of that dark moment of Minnesota history, but now in elementary school, it is required to share that story with the young generation, so they know.

In my home country, we do have similar stories in our culture. The stories are so related just because the ideas behind it are almost the same. White settlers coming to our land offering modernization (farming, gun, pieces of jewelry) putting landowners in debt and requiring landowners to either pay them by taking their lands in the case of Dakotas in "Little War on the Prairie" or paying them by doing the slave trade in African countries like Benin. To view click [here](#) and [here](#).

With the Honor Program at MNSU, I learned a lot about the three key competencies which are Leadership, Research, and Global Citizenship. I am honored to learn about the darkest era of Minnesota history, and I honestly never imagined that such a thing could have happened, and so John Biewen's documentary is proof related to it. I learned that global citizenship is not only related to Food. Because of what I learned and became passionate about, I decided to take the introduction to anthropology in the spring semester to blend myself with more knowledge on human evolution and cultural diversity to fulfill my goal 8 in MNSU.

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