

NEWS & NOTES



Ball State University Honors College

In Bloom

Spring || 2025

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EDITORIAL



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Spring symbolizes growth, renewal, and endless possibilities, much like the experience of honors students. Denoting our theme “In Bloom,” as scholars, leaders, and innovators, we are constantly “in bloom,” thriving in an environment that fosters the best curiosity, ambition, and achievement ideals.

From research grants to study abroad programs, leadership roles to interdisciplinary collaborations, the Honors College is a garden of opportunity. Students cultivate knowledge in challenging courses, blossom through community engagement, and harvest success in competitive internships and career paths.

This season of growth isn’t just a metaphor; it’s our reality.

News & Notes has given me so many opportunities from winning first place in NCHC after my first year, to now running the publication in addition to managing our online presence.

The Honors College did not just open doors for me; it planted seeds of potential that will continue to bloom long after my graduation. As I close the book on my time in News & Notes just before my senior year, I can confidently say this program is what truly helps all who enter embrace opportunities, take root in passion, and continue to fly. I see my future now, as bright as a field in full bloom.



Making It Their Own

how students are creating a unique experience through the Honors Signature Experience

One of the benefits often promoted by the Honors College is the opportunity to have a close-knit community built on a shared residence hall and honors-exclusive classes. This year, some students were able to take that a step further by joining the new Honors Signature Experience program. Students who participated in the Signature Experience were guaranteed space in Dehority Complex as well as access to exclusive sections of honors classes, where students were able to make their experience unique to them.

The classes that students in the Signature Experience take follow two different pathways. The first pathway, Art and Design, had sections that were taught by Professor Elizabeth Dalton, while the second pathway, Health and Wellness, was taught by Dr. James Buss for the fall semester and Dr. Bridget Lester for the spring semester.

According to Dr. Lester, one of the things that makes the Signature Experience sections unique is the fact that her class makes connections between STEM and other topics, such as literature.

“We use the story of Frankenstein, the first novel of science

fiction, about the responsibility that comes with scientific innovation,” Dr. Lester said. “We draw similarities from the story for what we’ve seen in the past as well as what we currently see and what we might see in the future.”

In addition to discussing unique perspective in class, students are also given the opportunity to explore how the topics discussed in class uniquely relate to their lives. One of the topics discussed in Dr. Lester’s class was how scientific and medical innovations helped to increase human longevity, and involved the students creating and displaying posters that describe how a specific invention acted as their “invisible shield” by improving their own health and wellness. One of these posters, created by Ashlynn Hulette, showed the history of antibiotics and how they have improved both their own life and the lives of others.



According to Professor Dalton, the sense of community built by having sections exclusive to the Signature Experience also helped improve the discussions held in class.

"[The students] feel pretty comfortable with each other," Professor Dalton said. "We just had an interesting discussion about using AI in the classroom, and I think they felt comfortable talking about how they use it. It was really nice to be able to do that with them."

The Signature Experience also includes a trip to Chicago at the end of March, where the students will have a tour of the city before visiting a museum. Students in the Art and Design path will visit the Art Institute of Chicago, while students in the Health and Wellness path will visit either the Museum of Science and Industry or the International Museum of Surgical Science.

According to Dr. Lester, the students in her class will help to decide which museum to visit. "I narrowed it down to two museums that I thought would be very unique and would bring science and society elements that we have been having in our discussions into play," Dr. Lester said. "I offered it to the students and said that we would have a vote and see what the majority wants to do."

With the Signature Experience being a new program, combined with the changes being made to the current

Honors College curriculum, some changes to the Signature Experience are to be expected.

According to Professor Dalton, one change that could be made to the Signature Experience would be to promote opportunities for students to participate in CHIRPS Week. "My students seem excited [for CHIRPS Week]. If I had thought about it earlier, I would have built it into the experience early on," Professor Dalton said. "I think CHIRPS is really important, and I think it's good for our students to show off the work they are doing for their classes."

Professor Dalton also noted that encouraging students to participate in CHIRPS Week was an idea that was shared with Dr. Lester as they both encourage students to share their work, and some of Professor Dalton's students have expressed their excitement to participate in the event.

A New Chapter in Honors Education:

Dr. Galit Gertsenzon's latest publication

Dr. Galit Gertsenzon, an Assistant Teaching Professor for the Honors College, recently published a chapter in Advancing Honors Education for Today and Tomorrow, a book centering around the future of honors education. Published in August 2024 by Cambridge Scholars Publishing and edited by Graeme Harper, this book seeks to find “ways for honors practitioners to envision how we continue educating honor students, each through our field of research,” Dr. Gertsenzon explained.

Dr. Gertsenzon's contribution to this book, “Becoming Culturally Responsive: Music Pedagogies in Honors Curricula,” focuses on teaching music in an honors curriculum.

“When I started teaching at the Honors College here, there were very few publications about music in honors education,” she stated. “What inspired me to write this was to provide more help to colleagues around the country on how to approach music in honors.”

One piece of advice from Dr. John Emert, a former Dean of Ball State University's Honors College, that continues to motivate Dr. Gertsenzon is to write down everything she does in

her studies so that it can be shared with others.

“That was kind of like a guiding light for me,” Dr. Gertsenzon said. “It's important to document what we are doing so that, as honors education evolves and becomes more inclusive to many students who did not even know they had this opportunity, we learn the skills of how to be better educators.”

Music has always played an important part in Dr. Gertsenzon's life. She started playing the piano at the age of eight and quickly fell in love with the instrument, describing how she “loved the ability to sit at the piano and not worry about anything else and just transcend to another world.” She later decided to study piano performance and musicology, saying she “could not live without it,” and earned her doctorate of musical arts in piano performance in 2012. Dr. Gertsenzon notes, “I can't see myself doing anything else aside from music, whether it's writing about music or performing or teaching.”

Dr. Gertsenzon joined the Honors College back in 2018. When asked about her time with the Honors College, she described her love for her students and fellow colleagues.

“I think that the very first time I came into the Honors House, I was just captured by the energy in that place,” Dr. Gertsenzon said. Teaching Honors College students especially brings her joy due to their curious nature and motivation to learn about the world around them. “It's the students that really motivate me to bring them timely, relevant information and to engage them in the things that I'm passionate about,” Gertsenzon believes. “I just love being among my colleagues and students here.”



Partners in Peace

a new opportunity for honors students

Last semester, the Honors College offered a new spin on HONR 199, Inquiries in Contemporary American Civilization. Dr. Robin Blom taught the inaugural course on the history, influence, and future of the famous Nobel Peace Prize. This course was the beginning of Ball State University's membership with the Partners in Peace cohort. The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) and the Nobel Peace Center established the Partners in Peace cohort to both honor and also encourage the efforts of honors organizations to educate students on the legacy of Alfred Nobel, the founder of the Nobel Prizes, and the influence of the Nobel Peace Prize. In this class, students read about the life and beliefs of Alfred Nobel and discovered that, similar to the other brainchild of Nobel (dynamite), the Peace Prize has great potential to both help and hurt humanity. Nobel's criteria for deciding who should be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize have been followed by the Nobel Committee to various extents throughout its history.

Students first built a foundation of knowledge about the prize and its founder, then they studied previous laureates, writing numerous reflections comparing them both to each other and also the standards set by Nobel's will. This critical analysis translated naturally to the culmination of the course: the class had to choose their own nominee, one who would be nominated by Dr. Robin Blom during the next nomination period. In pursuit of this goal, students compiled about one hundred

candidates for nomination, developed their own criteria for selection based on those set by Nobel, and went through several rounds of presentations and eliminations until they arrived at their final decision for nominee: Zainab Salbi and her organization, Women for Women International.

By going through the process of selecting nominees, students gained insight into the choices made by the Nobel Committee and how they are influenced by past decisions, as well as societal and political relationships. The insight into peacework that students gained through the lens of the Nobel Peace Prize is important: just as the prize is complicated, peace is also complicated, and the more students are able to understand the intricacies of peace, the better they will be able to play a part in its cultivation. The empowerment of students in the quest for peace is what the NCHC and the Nobel Peace Center are promoting through the Partners in Peace cohort, and as an inaugural member, Ball State University will be among the first universities in the country to graduate students from this program and into the world with both a greater appreciation for peace and also a greater potential to achieve it.



Partners in Peace cohort designees, photo provided by Dr. Blom



1. A Rhesus Macaque sits on a motor bike holding a banana in the city of Delhi. These monkeys are common throughout many cities in India, and they are known for being mischevious.

2. Sarah Olsen (author), Bridget Johnson, and Ryan Steinke in front of the Baby Taj, located in the city of Agra. Foot coverings must be worn when walking on the marble.

3. The Hawa Mahal, a palace in the city of Jaipur. Jaipur is known as the Pink City, since all the buildings in the city are the same bright pink.

4. Jalebi, a popular South Asian dessert. Batter is fried in ghee and then soaked in syrup.

5. The HONR 390: Kaleidoscope to India class in front of the Taj Mahal, located in the city of Agra. From left to right, back to front: Ryan Steinke, Bridget Johnson, Sarah Olsen (author), Kathryn Rockwood, Professor Diana Saiki, Leah Sodo, Jessika Jackson, Brooklyn Morgan, Carly Brown, Logan Gard, and Gianna Rivas.

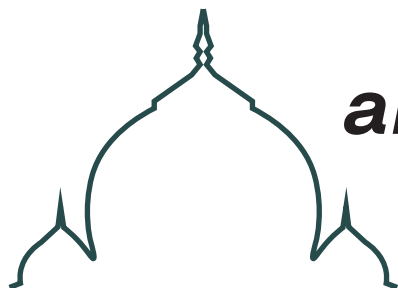
6. Carly Brown holds a baby goat during a break on a cycling tour through Dhula Bagh village. The village is an hour outside of the city of Jaipur.

7. Leah Sodo shows her binoculars to a group of local boys in Deer Park, located in the city of Delhi.

8. Flowers and reflecting pool in front of the Taj Mahal, located in the city of Agra. The Taj was built by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan as a mausoleum for his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Upon his death, Jahan was laid to rest there as well.

Reflections from India

an Honors College journey



Multi-hour-long plane rides, nauseating jet lag, confusing currency exchanges, and vast language gaps aside, I would still say that exploring the world is absolutely, undeniably, one hundred percent worth it.

Most recently, I had the opportunity to go to India for 10 days on a field study, which was a component of the Honors 390 class: Kaleidoscope of India, taught by Professor Diana Saiki. There, with the help of the travel company G Adventures and our steadfast guide Raghu Rathore, we journeyed through what is colloquially referred to as the “Golden Triangle,” an area in northern India that includes the cities of Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur, which are all known for their rich cultural history. And golden it was.

We had many stops as we navigated the three cities, among them Lodhi Gardens, Jama Masjid, Fatehpur Sikri, the Taj Mahal, Baby Taj, Abhaneri Stepwell, and Jaipur City Palace. However, these beautiful places, full of palpable history, spirituality, and power, were not the highlights of the trip. Don’t get me wrong, to gaze upon the Taj Mahal or wander through Lodhi Gardens is to walk back in time and feel the intense pulse of India’s heartbeat alongside your own — but there was something I loved even more.

To my fellow travelers Logan Gard, Leah Sodo, Gianna Rivas, Brooklyn Morgan,

Carly Brown, Kathryn Rockwood, Jessika Jackson, Ryan Steinke, and Bridget Johnson: When I close my eyes, I see us biking through a village on the outskirts of Jaipur, taking turns cradling a baby goat a little boy brought for us to hold. I remember being bowled over with laughter as we learned the steps to and performed a Bollywood dance. With ease, I can recall that first lunch we had together at Naivedyam, where the waiters taught us how to pronounce “bisi bele bath,” a dish so rich I could only eat four bites.

As Raghu said in his final message to us: “What truly made this expedition extraordinary was the friendships we cultivated along the way.”

Indeed, had it not been for the lilt of Carly’s laugh, Bridget’s unwavering support, or Logan’s whimsical jokes, my time in India would not have been near as life changing as it proved to be. I am and will always be remarkably impressed by this group’s unyielding intelligence, maturity, patience, and perseverance in the face of hardship. And so, I extend my biggest thank you to my new friends, in addition to the forever generous Ball State Honors College and the Rinker Center for Global Affairs. The lessons I learned from this experience will be with me until the day I die.

Finally: Dhanyavaad, Bhaarat – thank you, India.



President Mearns at Chirps Week 2024. Photo acquired from the Office of Immersive Learning.

All in One Week

student-centered event furthers commitment to interdisciplinary excellence

From April 15th to April 19th, 2024, Ball State University hosted its inaugural CHIRPS (Creative works, High-Impact Practices, Research Projects, and Scholarship) Week. The event gave students an outlet to show their work to peers and mentors while hearing from speakers within and outside of their academic discipline. Among its contributors was Dr. Emily Rutter, Associate Dean of the Honors College and Professor of English, who sees the value of CHIRPS Week in both advancing Ball State's strategic imperative of High-Impact Practices and enhancing the student experience.

"At Ball State, the core four High-Impact Practices we focus on are undergraduate research, study abroad and study away, immersive learning, and diverse perspectives," said Dr. Rutter. "CHIRPS allows for courses that have those components—specifically undergraduate research, immersive learning, and diverse perspectives—to have a public forum to present their work."

Predating CHIRPS Week by 28 years, the Student Symposium has long been a vital platform for undergraduate research. Hosted in the Worthen Arena Concourse, the symposium gives student researchers an opportunity to showcase their research via

posters to students and faculty in an environment aimed at facilitating constructive feedback and interdisciplinary discourse. Unique to CHIRPS Week, however, is the option for students to present their research in the form of oral presentations. "A lot of disciplines don't really focus on posters as a mode of presentation [...] So [the oral presentations] really allow us to spotlight all of the disciplines on the Ball State Campus."

In addition to sharing their work, students who participated in the symposium or gave an oral presentation have the opportunity to be recognized for their excellence through awards given by faculty

judges. Last year, award-winning entries ranged from a case study on a North African drought to an investigation into insecure attachment in adult psychology.

Along with platforming student research, CHIRPS Week's programming extends beyond the strictly academic. Included in the CHIRPS 2025 itinerary are two productions from the Department of Theater and Dance: Blood Wedding and Stages. Stages specifically invites student artists of all mediums to collaborate, expanding CHIRPS Week's interdisciplinary focus to the creative works.

In addition to the student performances, Indianapolis poet educators Too Black and Chantel Massey will lead "The Power of the Word" event, in which they will both showcase their own work and discuss their perspectives on the

relationship between art and social change.

"It's really helpful for students, faculty, and staff to see the full range of creative work and the way that creativity and research is in conversation. It's also helpful to know—especially since Too Black is an alum—you can be doing [spoken word poetry] or whatever your creative endeavor is and stay in the area and be giving back in that way," said Dr. Rutter.

As CHIRPS Week reaches its second year of existence, its programming continues to expand. Taking place on April 14th to the 18th, CHIRPS Week 2025 hosted speakers from the fields of architecture, biology, and literature; a public history exhibit on Hoosier automotive history; and a

curated selection of photographs from the David Owsley Museum of Art, among other events. The present and ongoing aim of CHIRPS Week is to showcase interdisciplinary work and promote a more holistic view of the student experience.

On the value of CHIRPS Week for Ball State students, Dr. Rutter remarks how, "As a community, we make the promise to our students that we're going to prepare them for fulfilling careers and meaningful lives, and we need to do both of those things. Having the opportunity to see what it means to integrate creativity and art into your daily experience is an important way to get students thinking about all of the above."



Student giving an oral presentation at CHIRPS Week 2024. Photo by Samantha Blankenship acquired from the Ball State Photo Shelter.



Researcher giving a poster presentation at CHIRPS Week 2024. Photo by Samantha Blankenship acquired from the Ball State Photo Shelter.



To see a video from the Sponsored Projects Administration about last year's CHIRPS Week, scan this QR code.

Roll Call!

introducing new Honors College faculty and staff

Kelsey Timmerman

What do you like about the Honors College?

I love learning from Honors College students. They keep me younger, humble, and curious.

Favorite hobby: Tending to the woods, trails, garden, and farm animals at our home place.

Favorite way to relax: A full day of bike rides, basketball, tennis, volleyball, and campfires with my wife and two kids.

Favorite book: The Unsettling of America by Wendell Berry



James Rankin

What do you like about the Honors College?

My favorite thing thus far has been the community of students/staff/faculty interconnected with the local area with a strong passion for learning and translating that knowledge into the communities.

Favorite hobby: At the moment, snakes. I keep four hognose snakes (a small species) and am obsessed with them and their silly personalities.

Favorite way to relax: Playing board games with friends, especially social deduction games, though I also love longer complex strategy games (like Dune Imperium or Scythe).

Favorite song: "Rational Gaze" by Meshuggah.





Jon Treadway

What do you like about the Honors College?

The people! I adore my advisees and all the wonderful faculty and staff that I get to work with in the Honors College.

Favorite hobby: I have a passion for teaching (and making) music, going to antique malls and secondhand stores, and I love to write.

Favorite way to relax: Playing board and card games. Right now, my favorite games to play are Hues and Clues, Skyjo, and Telestrations.

Favorite music: Artists ranging from Schubert to ABBA to Prokofiev to Joni Mitchell to Sondheim to Lana Del Rey



Alison Kerch

What do you like about the Honors College?

I cannot wait to get to know all the students! The privilege of being able to give back to and invest in honors students gives me a lot of joy and I am incredibly excited about being here!

Favorite hobby: Cross stitching! It is a wonderful creative outlet.

Favorite way to relax: Reading a great book with a nice English breakfast tea, cross stitching, or cuddling with my two cats - Luna and Toulouse.

Favorite book: Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl





The Council for the Community

a peek into the lives of the Dehority Hall

Council

The Dehority Hall Council takes charge of organizing monthly events within the Dehority Complex. Their events range from holiday parties to craft nights. For the 2024-2025 school year, the council mainly consists of first year students.

However, the council still has taken on ambitious events and worked hard for the community of the Dehority Complex.

At the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year, applications for the Dehority Hall Council opened to the residents of Dehority, and students could choose which role they wished

to fulfill within the Hall Council. The students took this seriously, and they campaigned within Dehority by hanging up posters for their positions and why they would be a great fit for the role. Then, the residents of Dehority got to vote for who they thought would best represent each role. The voting was open to all of Dehority, including non-Honors College students who can now live in the residence hall.

Even though there are leadership roles within the council, anyone who is a resident of Dehority can join the council as a general member. General members can attend meetings and help with any of the events the Hall Council plans. This way, all residents can be a part

of helping represent their community even if they do not want to have a direct role within the council.

There are many reasons why students join the Hall Council and enjoy serving as members. Hunter Broomall is a first year CAP student who is President of the Dehority Hall Council. President Broomall said that, “[the] Dehority Hall Council is fun to be involved with, and I enjoy being its President. My council varies in personality and major, which makes it a fun group to be a part of. To me, being President of the council simulates career leadership in managing projects [and] event planning. It was a bit awkward running the first few meetings, but we became more communicative as time went on.”

The Hall Council has been rolling out events nonstop for the residents of the Dehority Complex. Olivia Hunter, a first-year student majoring in Elementary Education, is the Vice President of the Dehority Hall Council. Vice President Hunter recalled that, “I think my favorite event to have hosted this year was our Halloween party. It was great seeing our residents all come together for something, and I’m glad to have helped

facilitate that. For me, one of the best things of being on Hall Council has always been connecting with our residents.” President Broomall had similar



President Hunter Broomall

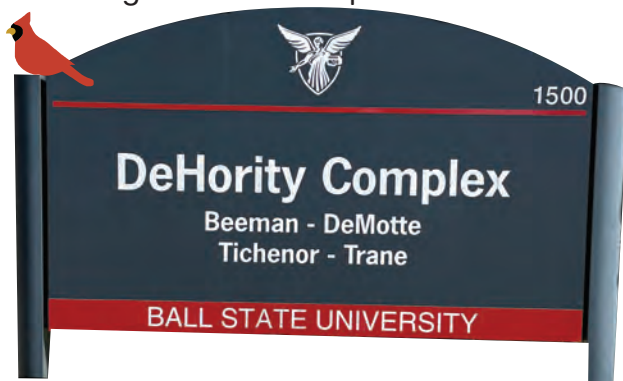
feelings. He declared that, “The Halloween Mash event we held late October really sticks out to me as it was the first time we were in a group setting outside of a meeting. It was much easier getting to know the others during the event rather than in a more ‘work’ like setting. Our events benefit the Dehority community by bringing people closer together. People who wouldn’t interact in a typical setting may find themselves together, and this interaction is essential in community building.” The Halloween Mash consisted of a costume party where residents could vote on who had the best costume, pumpkins were painted, and had Halloween themed movies played during

the event.

Zoe Cockrum, a first year Elementary Education student, is a resident in Dehority who is not a part of the Hall Council. Cockrum remembered that, “My favorite event was the Valentine’s Day Party. I enjoyed the arts and crafts and getting to make a Valentine’s bag. I think the council is a very cool idea and they are really good at putting out events. Every event I attend, I feel welcomed and included in the community and ready to make new friends and meet new people who live in my dorm. At the Valentine’s Day event, I got to write my friends candy grams and talk to new people while crafting. I loved how hands-on the event was. I see how much work they put in and I know that they are all hard-working people who are good at their jobs. I just love the Hall Council!” The Hall Council has a wonderful impact on the community and plans on serving its residents for the rest of the year.



Vice President Olivia Hunter



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