

FREDERIK MEIJER HONORS COLLEGE
ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2024



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Student Highlights

University Awards. Since 2015, 13 of the 19 undergraduate winners of the university's top annual award, the prestigious Glenn A. Niemeyer Award, which recognizes well-rounded students who demonstrate excellence in both the classroom and extra-curricular activities that enrich their lives and the lives of others, have been Honors students—a tribute both to the quality of students we attract and to the growth our students experience while in the program.

This year, one of our graduating seniors, Accounting and Finance double-major **Aseel Ayesh**, scored a double honor when she took home two of the four university-wide student awards. She was one of two undergraduates to win the Niemeyer Award, and she also earned the Kenneth R. Venderbush Award for her blend of academic achievement and campus leadership.



Aseel Ayesh

Aseel, who graduated with her double-major in just three years, crammed a lot of service and experience in her time at Grand Valley. She served as a fellow in the Cook Leadership Academy and a mentor in the Seidman Mentorship Program.



Minnat-Allah Abdel-Moemen

In summer 2022, she served as a teaching assistant in several elementary-level classrooms in Palestine. She completed a corporate tax internship at Corewell Health, and she participated in the Plante Moran TRACK Leadership program. Aseel herself considered her most valuable contribution to be her work in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, helping low-income families and individuals with their tax needs.

In February at the President's Ball, third-year Honors student **Minnat-Allah Abdel-Moemen** was presented with the student Laker of the Year Award. Minnat double-majors in Finance and Legal Studies, with the goal of becoming an attorney in the field of business law. This past year she interned with Steelcase, and she is also the president of GVSU's Law Society and, like Aseel, a fellow in the Cook Leadership Academy.

In addition to these university-wide awards, each academic department in the university names one “Excellence-in-a-Discipline” awardee, and again this year many Honors students were so honored:

Katie Rain Auberle, Theatre

Jonathan Bajko, Chemistry

Abigail Carr, International Business

Isabella Grunwaldt, Public and Nonprofit Administration

Leah Hanacek, Finance

Quinn Hefferan Nordlund, German

Alaina Hogan, Dance

Ruhi Khanna, Global Studies

Natalie Kline, Computer Science

Matthew Koren, Pedagogical Content

Hannah Krebs, History

Jonathan McCabe, Biomedical Sciences

Kelly Morgan, Art History

Logan Nommensen, Cybersecurity

Elizabeth Schanz, Journalism, Broadcasting, and Digital Media

Madelyn Scheese, Accounting

Madeline Schubert, Mechanical Engineering

Zoe Schultz, Psychology

Megan Singer, Behavioral Neuroscience

Julia Smolinski, International Relations

Matthew Streeter, Economics

Mitchell Tiell, Allied Health Sciences

Natalie Kline, a double-major in Computer Science and Music, served on the PCEC Dean’s Student Advisory Council and the executive boards of Women in Computing and the Computing Club. She participated in two study abroad programs, a music program in Austria and the Czech Republic, and a cultural program in Switzerland. She interned as a software developer at Auto-Owners Insurance, and she was part of the inaugural team at Blue Nucleus, an initiative of GVSU’s Applied Computing Institute to create a full-stack iOS application to enable parents and children to connect easily.



Besides being named outstanding student in the Theatre program, Katie Rain Auberle served as president of the Phi Beta chapter of the National Theatre Honors Society. She worked as actor, costume designer, assistant director, and director in over 20 GVSU theatre productions. In Fall 2023, she directed Paula Vogel’s play The Baltimore Waltz and created a comprehensive study guide for the dramaturgical elements of the play.





Hannah Krebs, a History major, worked as an Honors mentor, participated in the Library Summer Scholars Program, and studied abroad in Vietnam. She served as an archives intern for the Troy Historic Village and as a website intern for the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council. Hannah also completed a practicum with the Grand Rapids Public Museum, researching local women scientists involved in the development of the Whooping Cough vaccine. In her Honors Senior Project, she explored conversations within the Dutch Reformed community about Christian faith and gay rights. She plans to attend graduate school in museum studies.



A double-major in Multimedia Journalism and Dance with a minor in History, Elizabeth Schanz served for two years as an Honors mentor and worked her way from Arts & Entertainment Editor to Editor in Chief of the Lanthorn, GVSU's weekly student-run newspaper. She studied abroad in Florence, Italy, where she took an editing and publishing class and wrote an article on the Florence Dance Festival. Elizabeth interned with the Oakland County Times and is currently working as a business reporting intern with Crain's Detroit Business.



Chemistry major Jonathan Bajko served as a tutor in mathematics, chemistry, and physics. As a Snyder Scholar in summer 2023, he conducted research on Suicide Gene Therapy cancer treatment and N7-Methyltransferase inhibitor research at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. For his Honors Senior Project, Jonathan designed and synthesized potential novel Tuberculosis antibiotics. He will attend the University of Illinois to pursue a Ph.D. in Chemistry.

Honors Awards. At our April 2024 senior recognition ceremony, the Honors faculty were pleased to present Honors-specific awards to two outstanding graduates.

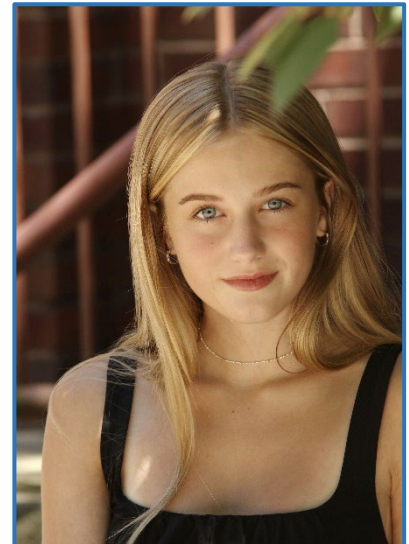
Jonathan McCabe, a Biomedical Sciences and Philosophy double-major, was named Outstanding Senior—the Honors College “Excellence-in-a-Discipline” awardee. He also won the award in the BMS program. During his time at Grand Valley, Jonathan founded Club Connect, co-founded GVSU’s Partners in Health Engage team, founded and organized two week-long “Young PI” summer science camps for high schoolers, served in the Cook Leadership Academy, studied abroad in Costa Rica, interned with GVSU’s Office of Research Compliance and Integrity and with the Ottawa County Department of Public Health, served as student chair of the Corewell Health Ethics Committee, and took a job with GVSU’s Regional Science and Math Center. During his gap year between GVSU and medical school, Jonathan will pursue a master’s degree in Bioethics at Harvard Medical School.



The 2024 award for Outstanding Leadership and Service in Honors went to **Abigail Palmiter**, an Allied Health Sciences major. Abigail served as president of the pre-PT Club and a member of the GVSU Stars for Make-a-Wish Club. She also volunteered at the Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital. In Honors, she served as a mentor, a teaching assistant in the HNR 201 course, and a member of the Honors Student Council, where she led the effort to plan and organize the summer Honors Overnights for incoming students. Abigail also co-founded and served as vice-president of the Professional Society for Minorities in Honors, a local chapter of the National Society for Minorities in Honors. This student organization is devoted to providing a supportive community for Honors students who identify as part of any marginalized group.

Honors Scholarships. Nearly all first-year Honors students earn either the Laker Scholarship, the Award for Excellence Scholarship, the Faculty Scholarship, or the Presidential Scholarship—as well as other more narrowly defined scholarships. In addition, we have a handful of Honors-specific scholarships: the Frederik Meijer First Generation Honors College Student Scholarship, the Donna K. Brooks Presidential Scholarship, the Arend D. and Nancy Lubbers University Honors College Scholarship, the Zukaitis Honors Scholarship, the Ruth Chamberlain Global Issues Scholarship, the Jonathan and Marcia White Honors College Scholarship, and the Jeff “Dr. J” Chamberlain Honors Scholarship. Here’s what four of this year’s students accomplished with the support of these scholarships:

Leah Hughes, a Marketing major, earned the Frederik Meijer First Generation Honors College Student Scholarship as an entering student in Fall 2023. She absolutely loved her first-year Honors sequence, “The Making of Meaning,” with Professors Cimitile, Fitzpatrick, Greer, and Pentecost, saying it widened her perspective on the world and helped make her a more thoughtful student in all her classes. This summer, Leah is completing an internship in a medical sonography clinic, working with doctors to send patients to their medical imaging facility.



Leah Hughes

Erika Collier, a double-major in Finance and Accounting, earned the Arend D. and Nancy Lubbers University Honors College Scholarship as an entering student in Fall 2022. She took the “Sound of Ethics” first-year Honors sequence with Professors Gilles and Vélez Ortiz. On campus, Erika has served as president of the Aspiras Foundation, senior analyst with the Seidman Investment Portfolio Organization, and membership officer for Women in Business. She’s also volunteered for VITA as a tax preparation assistant for low-income individuals.



Erika Collier

Last summer, she interned with Nexteer Automotive, and this summer she’s interning with Dow Chemical. And she’s already got her Summer 2025 internship lined up with Deloitte! Halfway through her undergraduate career, Erika has earned a perfect 4.0 GPA.

Mia Cichowlas, a Nursing major with an Applied Statistics minor, earned the Arend D. and Nancy Lubbers University Honors College Scholarship as an entering student in Fall 2021. That first year, she took the “American Voices & Visions” sequence with Professors Ellenberger, Franciosi, and Tripp. After starting as an Engineering major, Mia switched to Nursing during her second year and has become active in the Student Nurses Association as well as the Grand Valley Dance Troupe, Campus Activities Board, and Stars for Make-a-Wish.

Calle Faerber, who double-majored in Computer Science & Arts for Teaching and Special Education, earned the Arend D. and Nancy Lubbers University Honors College Scholarship as an entering student in Fall 2020. Even with the teacher certification, she managed to graduate in just four years, and last year she won the Excellence-in-a-Discipline Award from the Special Education program. Calle served on the student board of the Michigan Council for Exceptional Children and as vice-president of Grand Valley’s Student Council for Exceptional Children. As a teacher in training, she interned or assisted at Northern Trails 5/6 in the Forest Hills Public Schools, Sibley Elementary in the Grand Rapids Public Schools, Pine Grove Learning Center in the Kent Intermediate School District, and Challenger Elementary in the Kentwood Public Schools.



Calle Faerber

Past Scholarship Recipients. Our Honors-specific scholarships have been benefiting students for many years. Here’s an update on some recent graduates:

Gloria LaCourse graduated from Honors in 2017 with a degree in Accounting. She won the “Excellence-in-a-Discipline” award from both Accounting and Honors. She went on to earn her Master of Accounting degree from Ohio State’s Fisher College of Business, and she currently works as a Technical Accounting manager for Chainalysis in New York City. Here’s what Gloria has to say about her path:



Gloria LaCourse in 2017

“My Meijer First Generation Scholarship completely changed my life. The day I got my scholarship letter was one of the best days of my life. I grew up in poverty with an alcoholic mother, and I was certain college was my way out, but had no idea how I was going to pull it off. While I still had to work during my time at GVSU to supplement, the scholarship took so much of the stress of off surviving and let me focus on being the best student I could so I could lay a sturdy foundation while dismantling the trauma of my past. I absolutely would not be where I am today without the scholarship and it made me feel worthy for one of the first times of my life, allowing my passion and drive to go towards building a better future.”

“Today I live in Manhattan and help guide the leading startup companies through the process of preparing for an IPO. I am a Technical Accounting manager that works with companies to improve their financial reporting, technical accounting, and internal accounting processes to be on par with the best and brightest public companies and allow for easier transitions to the public company landscape.”



Gloria today



Katrina Maynes, another past recipient of the Meijer First Generation scholarship, graduated from GVSU in 2014 with a double-major in History and International Relations before earning her master's degree in Medieval History from the University of Cambridge. She worked in Human Resources with Plante Moran for five years, and for the past three years she's been working with Deloitte Consulting in Detroit as an HR Transformation Senior Consultant.



Brody Cragg also earned the Meijer First Generation scholarship. He graduated in 2018 with majors in Economics and Environmental Studies. He won the Excellence-in-a-Discipline Award from the Economics department. While at Grand Valley he also studied abroad at Linnaeus University in Växjö, Sweden. After graduating, Brody worked as a Cloud Operations Engineer for Khoros in Austin, Texas, and he is now a Site Reliability Engineer III at Blue Origin in Tucson, Arizona.



Makayla Sanchez, another Meijer First Generation scholarship recipient, graduated first in 2018 with degrees in Psychology and Behavioral Neuroscience, and after working several years as a Pharmacy Technician with Meijer, she returned to GVSU to earn a second degree in Nursing in 2023. Makayla now works as a Registered Nurse at Corewell Health.

Unity in Diversity



Graduating senior **Elora Ferrie** served for two years as the founding president of our Professional Society for Minorities in Honors. She was also captain of the GVSU lacrosse team. Elora graduated with a major in Electrical Engineering and a minor in Management. She completed a three-semester Engineering co-op internship with Twistthink in Grand Rapids. She plans to pursue work in the field of renewable energy management.

Maisha Marriott and **Delacia Harrison**, student leaders of our newest affinity group, Young, Gifted, and Black, joined Honors advisor **Kary Wickham** at a university recruitment event.



Trenton Estrada (in gray), vice-president of Honors Familia, and faculty advisor **Melba Vélez Ortiz** (in blue), met with business sponsor **Sara Ocampo** of State Farm Insurance (in red). Director **Roger Gilles** also tagged along. Ms. Ocampo purchased tee-shirts for the student organization and also supported the Aquí Estamos event (see p. 10).

¡Aquí Estamos!

On March 21, Honors Familia held a lively event featuring food, music, and dancing in the Chamberlain Multipurpose Room in the Niemeyer Learning and Living Center. The group had generous support from Jesse Bernal, VP of Inclusion & Equity; Thalia Guerra-Flores, Assistant Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs; Sara Ocampo, owner of the Sara Ocampo State Farm Insurance Agency; and Gabriela Hill of *El Vocero Hispano*, West Michigan's Hispanic newspaper.



Above: Honors Familia treasurer Melania Hernandez is interviewed on El Vocero television.

Right: Members of Baile Folklorico, a GVSU student dance group, take over the floor,

Below: Honors Familia faculty advisor Melba Velez Ortiz dances with David Arrellano, student member of GVSU's Laker Familia.



Meijer Lectures

Again this year, the Meijer Lecture Series joined up with the Hauenstein Center for Presidential Studies and its “Wheelhouse Talks” series to offer two outstanding lectures, one in fall and one in winter. The Meijer Lecture Series welcomes regional and national business leaders to speak on issues of leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurship.



Faye Richardson-Green. On September 29, newly appointed Meijer Endowed Chair in Entrepreneurship and Innovation Faye Richardson-Green shared her personal and professional journey through a handful of engaging stories and lessons. Faye spent 33 years at Steelcase, finishing her career there as Director of Global Learning & Development. From 2016 to 2019, she served as Interim Executive Director at Partners for a Racism-Free Community.

Faye has received many distinguished local awards, including, in 2006, the Raymond Tardy Community Service “Giant” award presented by the Woodrick Diversity Learning Center at Grand Rapids Community College. In 2013, she received the Diversity Visionary Award from the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce. Here in Honors, she is teaching HNR 350 “Leading Others in an Othering World.”

Khalilah Burt Gaston. A trained urban planner and passionate advocate for equitable communities, Khalilah Burt Gaston is the founding Executive Director of the Song Foundation, shepherding its efforts to invest in ideas, people, and organizations that amplify equity, power, prosperity, and joy in Southeast Michigan and beyond. On February 16, Khalilah sat down with Stacy Stout, inaugural director of Family-Centered Philanthropy at the Steelcase Foundation and former Director of Equity and Engagement with the City of Grand Rapids, to discuss organizational health in all its facets.



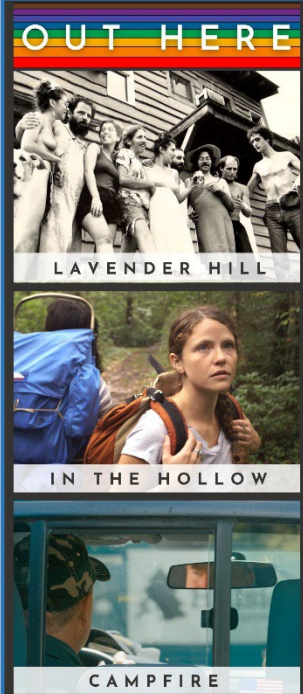
Honors Events

HNR 201 Events. As we've reported the past couple years, our HNR 201 Live. Learn. Lead. course gets our students out into the campus community and beyond, attending concerts, lectures, art shows, plays, and film screenings. We had another full and exciting slate of events in 2023-24. One we'd like to highlight is a film screening we sponsored on October 5 featuring three short films by former GVSU professor **Austin Bunn**, who now teaches at Cornell University. These three very different films, which combine archival footage, dramatic re-enactments, fictionalized scenes, and interviews, focus in various ways on LGBT life in rural settings. After the screening, **DL McKinney**, Director of GVSU's Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center, moderated a discussion between Austin and the audience.

Endeavor Elementary School Visit. On May 1, the Honors College joined the Office of Multicultural Affairs in hosting 30 fourth- and fifth-grade students from Endeavor Elementary, part of Kentwood Public Schools, for a day of fun and learning. The visit was prompted by a call to the Honors office from the students' teacher, Honors alumna **Lauren Graham**. After a "scavenger hunt" tour of campus led by five Honors mentors—**Claire Flynn, Sofia Magán, Rachel Maude, Ali Marsh, Avery Meachum, and Lily Marshall**—the




Endeavor Elementary students experiment with river flow and erosion.




Three Short Films About Rural LGBT Life

**October 5th
7:30 PM
Kirkhof Center
Grand River Room**



Written and directed by Austin Bunn, Associate Professor at Cornell University and former GVSU faculty

Sponsored By:



students worked through a series of hands-on Geology stations set up by Honors Professor **Peter Wampler**. Then everyone enjoyed a pizza lunch back in Niemeyer. The whole day was great fun, and we hope to do it again next year!

The Young PI Summer Science

Camp. For the second time, the Honors College hosted a weeklong science camp for high school students. The tireless Jonathan McCabe once again persuaded faculty from Biomedical Sciences, Cell and Molecular Biology, Chemistry, and Physics to offer half-day labs for the students, recruited a handful of current Honors students to serve as mentors, arranged a trip downtown—this time to BAMF Health—gathered sponsors to pay for and present information at lunch each day, and dozens of smaller things,

like ordering lab goggles for the students, buying tee-shirts, and reserving rooms for poster-making and the final poster presentations at the end of the week.

In the end, with support from the American Chemical Society, the Cook Leadership Academy, the Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholarship, and the Meijer Honors College, as well as the work of student mentors **Brianna Hipple**, **Nick Mulder**, **Gabriella Palombo**, and **Lillie Waldron**, and faculty members **Dan Bergman**, **Matthew Christians**, **Laura Hawk**, and **Mary Jo Smith**, the second annual Young PI science camp attracted 23 eager students from across Michigan. The week culminated Friday night in a closing ceremony in the Niemeyer MPR, when the students and their families enjoyed a pizza dinner with the mentors, and the students shared their research posters. Special thanks, again, to **Jonathan McCabe**, who created the camp last year and ran it this year even after he'd officially graduated. We look forward to continuing the camp in future years with the help of some of this year's mentors.



A student prepares planaria for one of the week's lab experiments.



Professor Dan Bergman of the Biomedical Sciences department explains heart function in frogs.

And a Faculty Honor

Like our students, Honors College faculty are marked by their enthusiasm and engagement, their interest in open-ended exploration, and their commitment to active learning. And like our student Aseel Ayesh, Professor Peter Wampler was named a winner of the 2024 Glenn A. Niemeyer Award, in his case the faculty version. Here's the official announcement from the GVSU website:

Peter Wampler, Ph.D.
Professor of Geology, Frederik Meijer Honors College
Joined Grand Valley State University in 2004



While it may be difficult to prepare for effective teaching sessions in a temperature-controlled indoor classroom, it's quite another thing to get students ready to learn in a muddy ravine, in a marsh, in rural Haiti, or the coastline of Ghana. Peter Wampler's track record of getting students in the field to apply sciences in interdisciplinary ways on important problems is perhaps his greatest talent. His service accomplishments are numerous, from creating and leading the Making Waves initiative, to his successes with the Geological Society of America. He is an accomplished scholar, publishing countless articles and technical reports across several decades. Many students and alumni of the Frederik Meijer Honors College and across the university remember their classroom as wet, wild, and wonderful.

Peter teaches in the “Making Waves” and “Earth Matters” first-year sequences, and he's also developed project-based learning courses and integrative seminars that explore the causes and impacts of natural disasters, the political and environmental scene in Haiti, and the various ways data is collected and shaped to influence how we experience the world. In all his courses, Peter gets his students up and out of their seats and very often out of the building to explore campus, the local ravines, the Grand River, and the Lake Michigan shoreline. Because of Peter, our students—not just his, but other students as well—have kayaked the Grand River, both for fun and to pick up literally tons of trash along its banks, and learned about its history on the Grand Lady Riverboat. For the past two years, his students have presented at the Reach Higher Showcase on their water-quality research along the river. Peter has taken students to Ghana and Haiti, and most recently he and his colleague Peter Riemersma developed the Water in the West program that we featured in last year's annual report. He also makes water a central part of his own scholarship: for example, he presented a session on wicked water resource problems at the Geological Society of America meeting and published, with Rod Morgan of the Biology Department, an article on making simple and effective groundwater wells in Haiti in the *IMPACT* water resources journal. He's also published related articles in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* and the journal *Hydrogeology*, among others.