

The Pride Post

A newsletter from The Honors College at East Texas A&M University



Honors College

EAST TEXAS A&M

Welcome!

The Honors College at East Texas A&M University transforms lives and we are thrilled to show it! This newsletter is student-produced and highlights the incredible individuals that make up the Honors College community. We hope you follow us along as we Connect, Create, and Contribute!



Connect.

Honors College students are challenged to connect with their peers, campus community, and future careers.

On March 1, Honors students connected with future Lions at Pride Preview Day and showcased their honors experience. Kudos to Daisy R., Gabriela C., Emma S., and Clover B.!

Create.

A cornerstone of Honors education is creating new knowledge through programs like the Student Transformative Learning Award Competition.

The STLA provides undergraduate students opportunity to pursue creative projects and innovative research. The STLA is a partnership between the Honors College and the Office of the Provost, six inspired students were selected for their proposals in research, community-engaged learning, and study away. See more on page 2!

Contribute.

Honors course work and volunteer activities challenge students to practice what it means to live one's life in a way that contributes to the greater good.

Making a positive impact on the local and campus community is a pillar of HC 302 Applied Leadership, which helps students prepare for their internship capstone. Fall 2024 HC 302 students partnered with a local assisted living facility, and this semester students are partnering with the Commerce animal shelter. These projects allow students to work as a team and address community-identified needs.

Student Spotlight

Meet our student spotlight, Alicia! Alicia is a Liberal Studies major with an emphasis on storytelling through different mediums. Alicia serves as a Resident Assistant in Phase II as well as the lead singer and songwriter for the local band Maychange! In her free time, she enjoys spending time with family, indulging in the world of music, and writing poetry and stories. After graduation, she aspires to pursue a job in higher education as a community director. On behalf of the Honors College, we wish Alicia the best of luck with her future endeavors!





Student Transformative Learning Award Projects

Four Honors students were selected to receive funding for their projects as well as two students conducting research outside of the Honors College.

Congratulations to all who earned this prestigious award! A huge thank you to our faculty reviewers, Dr. Lucy Pickering, Dr. Maggie Salem, and Dr. Asli Ogunc!

- Jahmad Banks under the supervision of Dr. DeMarquis Hayes - *The Family Spectrum*
- Mykah Gallaher under the supervision of Dr. Pedro Chavarria - *Fence Line Effects on Elk Migration in the Valles Caldera*
- Vanessa Luviano under the supervision of Dr. Pedro Chavarria - *Ectoparasite Presence Patterns in San Clemente Island: A Study on Island Foxes*
- Collin Callagher under the supervision of Dr. Venu Cheriya - *Title Unavailable*
- Kamiah Long under the supervision of Dr. Mehmet Celik - *Dissecting the Disproof of Merten's Function (Merten's Conjecture)*
- Kilee Lasiter under the supervision of Dr. Ben Jang - *Heavy Metal Removal from Wastewater Via Chlorella Biosorption, Followed by HTC for Waste Reutilization*



To learn more about their projects, please attend the East Texas A&M Annual Research Symposium on April 16 in the Sam Rayburn Student Center.

Partners In Peace

The Honors College at East Texas A&M University was accepted to the National Collegiate Honors Council Partners in Peace program. This initiative is a collaboration between NCHC and the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo, Norway to enable students, faculty, and institutions to study and implement practices by Nobel Peace Laureates to achieve harmony and collaboration between individuals.

To satisfy this initiative, the Honors College will take students abroad this summer to Oslo, Norway and Helsinki, Finland, to study "The Pursuit of Peace and Happiness". Upon completion of the trip and submission of a final report, East Texas A&M University will be designated as a Partners in Peace institution with formal acknowledgement through the Nobel Peace Center. Institutions recognized by this distinction have shown a great dedication to humanity by their participation in and study towards peace.



Faculty Spotlight

Meet our Faculty Spotlight, Dr. Kurtis Williams, Professor and Head of the Department of Physics and Astronomy at East Texas A&M University. This semester, Dr. Williams is teaching an honors-level course titled Stars and the Universe. In his course, he explores stars and galaxies, the tools astronomers use to observe them, and the natural laws of the universe. We appreciate Dr. Williams' dedication to encouraging others to challenge the unknown. I had the opportunity to interview Dr. Williams about his experience as an Honors professor.



What is the best part about teaching honors courses?

His favorite part about teaching honors courses is the ability to examine more closely areas of study in astronomy. He loves the engagement and curiosity honors students have towards the subject.

What is the most helpful advice you've received?

The most important advice he received is to always be kind and understanding. It is so easy to get wrapped up in personal conflicts and setting this standard for yourself allows for you to empathize with others and to see the human in them.

What is your favorite part of your job?

The ability to impact and empower students, watching them mature over the semester, and seeing them succeed are some of his favorite parts of his job. He also enjoys the numerous opportunities to further explore science by using telescopes. One of his favorite telescopes is the Keck Telescope in Hawaii which is one of the largest and most advanced telescopes on the planet.



A Year after Honors

Meet Samuel Pearson, Class of 2024. Samuel graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering and pursued the thesis track of the honors capstone experience. His thesis was titled *Estimating Direction of Arrival for Multi-Arm Spiral Antennas using Machine Learning* and his Senior Capstone project was titled *Real Time Implementation of Unitary Root MUSIC and Unitary MUSIC with Real-Valued Rank Revealing Triangular Factorization*.

Samuel now works as a GDP Engineer at the Electric Reliability Council of Texas.

What skills or knowledge from your honors experience have been most valuable in your professional life?

"I think the communication and presentation skills I gained from my thesis experience in the Honors College has been invaluable at work. As an engineer at ERCOT- a company responsible for handling the power market in Texas and maintaining the reliability of our state grid- being able to effectively communicate with other colleagues in and outside of my team is essential; whether that's presenting problems, workshopping solutions, or being able to take critique of your work and grow from it instead of letting it damage your ego."

What is your favorite memory from being part of the Honors College?

"While my thesis defense was certainly a very proud- and stress relieving- moment for me, if I may cheat a little here, I think I look the most fondly back on all the different volunteer work I did over my four years in the Honors College. It's easy to have your time and energy consumed by school, work, and friends- so I really appreciate in hindsight the incentive/reminder that the volunteer hours requirement imposed to get connected and give back to the local community in Commerce.

Serving meals at the BSM, helping out with on- and off-campus food pantries, or even something as simple as picking up trash around campus- the connections you form and the knowledge that your actions are, right now, improving the life and experience of those around you is really special."



Call for Honors Courses

The Honors College is delighted to invite proposals for Summer 2025, Fall 2025 and Spring 2026 honors courses!

Teaching with honors provides exciting opportunities to:

- Showcase your department's strengths and the expertise of your faculty members!
- Experiment with new teaching methods and interdisciplinary approaches in a supportive environment. As a new initiative, faculty teaching honors designated courses will be eligible to apply for micro awards to support instructional activities!
- Join a vibrant and robust community of engaged faculty, staff and student scholars!
- Have a lot of fun teaching what you love!

While the priority deadline has passed, applications will continue to be accepted on a rolling basis. Proposals must be submitted using our online form: [Propose a course for honors designation.](#)

Alumni Event at Cidercade!

In March, The Honors College was thrilled to host an Alumni Mixer at Cidercade Dallas! Alumni had the opportunity to connect with current Honors College students, as well as share their experiences and wisdom. On the other hand, students had the opportunity to receive guidance, ask questions and network with alumni.

Prior to this event, honors students volunteered to connect with alumni over the phone inviting them to the event while engaging in meaningful and insightful conversations. We sincerely hope everyone had a blast and will join us at Homecoming on October 25th!



Dr. Erin Webster Garrett, Ph.D.
Dean of the Honors College

A Word from the Dean

We are pleased to share our inaugural newsletter, which exemplifies the values of an Honors College that places students at the center of all things and empowers them to tell their stories.

Working with the Honors Council, we are re-engineering Honors as part of a student-ready university while preserving the academic values and essential strengths that are our foundation.

I am especially proud of the way we have intentionally built a student community. We are reconnecting with alumni and building new connections with academic faculty and departments. I hope you will be a part of our community going forward and participate in some of the many wonderful events to come! Go Lions!

- Dr. E