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Honors Academy: Designed for Exceptional Student Success

July 2, 2024

By Dr. Justine Pas and Dr. Kathi Vosevich, Honors Academy Faculty Sponsors

Lindenwood University's [Honors Academy](#) is an innovative and flexible program, with more than 250 members, that offers gifted undergraduate students opportunities to explore academic excellence in any major. It is designed to support, strengthen, and highlight the achievements of its members because it puts the needs of students first. As information technology student Lliam Gammon declares, "Honors Academy is a leadership-making machine!"

One of the program's most exciting features is that Honors students design their own journeys without necessarily adding hours to degree requirements. They can engage with topics they are passionate about as they enhance lifelong Power Skills, such as critical thinking, communication, creativity, leadership, and empathy.

Musical theater student Madeleine Nelson said, "I personalized my Honors-enhanced assignments around inclusivity in the arts. Being in Honors helped me grow and innovate."

Chemistry student Sophie Juliana said that thanks to Honors' flexibility, "I could take my education to the next level. I recommend Honors to every student committed to reaching their highest academic potential."

Faculty are equally enthusiastic about facilitating Honors-enhanced experiences, such as writing publishable papers, delivering presentations, producing videos, designing art and graphics, and working on podcasts. When psychology and pre-art therapy student Faith Salamone worked with Geography Professor Dr. Meri Marsh, their collaboration resulted in hand-drawn maps that layered together the physical and human geography of New Zealand. "We joined forces to define an Honors plan that combined Faith's disciplinary interests and desire to study abroad in New Zealand," Marsh said.

When political science student Kadence Berry collaborated with English Professor Dr. Daniel Plate in his writing course, they produced a guide on using generative AI in academic writing and published it! "Embracing AI in English Composition: Insights and Innovations in Hybrid Pedagogical Practices" is available in the International Journal of Changes in Education.

Honors Academy membership comes with further benefits. Members can enjoy the exclusive Honors Lounge, a beautiful space in the LARC, where they can socialize and network. Perhaps students' favorite benefit is priority-course registration. They also have exciting options to complete Honors-designated courses and Honors Learning Communities, which are taught by award-winning professors. English Professor Melissa Qualls is particularly passionate about teaching literature in the Honors Learning Community because she gets to work with curious and enthusiastic students as they build mentoring relationships with her and friendships with each other.

Membership benefits also include practical leadership opportunities. Honors Officers and Honors Ambassadors, for example, are special groups of students who volunteer their time to represent the Academy. As international relations student Sofia Hernandez Otero put it, "Being an Honors Academy student is transformative!"

These student leaders are assets in recruitment, too. They help welcome students' families to the Honors Academy reception, for example, and showcase the value of Academy membership to prospective students during Future Lion Day.

University Honors, the highest recognition awarded by Lindenwood University at graduation, is the destination of these individualized Honors journeys. Students are awarded special purple cords for commencement, and University Honors is announced as they receive their diplomas. Their achievements are celebrated at the annual Honors Cord Ceremony by Lindenwood's executive leadership, faculty, family, and friends. This prestigious recognition signals their perseverance and commitment to excellence on resumes, too. It is a differentiator that distinguishes them from other applicants because they intentionally chose to complete rigorous and enhanced learning experiences.

Honors Academy students present at national conferences; win national scholarships; publish in peer-reviewed journals; excel in graduate schools, such as Arizona State University, University of Denver, Tufts, University of Iowa, and St. Louis University; and pursue fulfilling careers at companies, such as Washington University School of Medicine, Red Bull, Barnes-Jewish Hospital, and EY (formerly Ernst & Young).

Anna Ostmann, who is now completing an English graduate degree at SLU, remembers her acceptance to the Honors Academy helped her decide that Lindenwood was right for her. She realized "other universities have honors programs, too, but Lindenwood's Honors Academy allows us to personalize our Honors experience. I customized my Honors journey according to my interests, which made it uniquely my own."