

Muna Omar

Minnesota State University

My Path to Success

Welcome:

Hi, my name is Muna Omar, and I am from the Republic of Somaliland. I am currently a Senior in the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I am working on receiving a Bachelor of Science Degree in Bio-Medical Sciences and minoring in Chemistry. I am a pre-dental student here in the University, and I am planning to attend dental school and start my service mission with my degree after that to various countries around the world.

Mission Statement:

My goal is to graduate from the Honors Program with a deeper understanding of what research, global citizenship and leadership are. My goal is to graduate from the Honors Program with these three competencies so I can go and make my ultimate goals a reality. After graduating from the university I plan to go to dental school and graduate to help those in need around the world especially people in my country, Somaliland. My other goal will be to volunteer and build charities to help this world better by using the skills that I will gain from the honors program.

Honors Program

Mission statement for Honors Program:

The mission of the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato is to create future leaders, researchers and global citizens by providing high ability and motivated students with exceptional learning opportunities, mentoring relationships, and a community of scholars that foster their development as future leaders in a global society.

www.mnsu.edu/honors/missionsngoals/

My Leadership Experience

Everybody is born with a leader inside them, but the person might have to dig deeper to find that inner leader. Leadership, so far, has been the most challenging competency of the three. I was very nervous in the beginning to do anything that was related to leadership, because I had no idea how to present myself as a leader or how to share my voice with others. In order to improve, I had to face my weaknesses with leadership during the fall of 2015. I took Honors History 180 with Dr. Corley, which along with learning about history, focused on building the leadership aspect of the students. In one of the class assignments we had to play [The Greek Game](#), in which chosen students had to be leaders in the assembly, which was the classroom to manage the students in the session and to make sure that the game rules were being followed. As nervous I was, I was able to manage the situation and win the game as a leader. Playing this game allowed me to discover my strengths, which was my determination, and my weaknesses, which was my lack of confidence in my abilities as a leader. This experience encouraged me to start my journey toward discovering more about leadership and growing as a leader myself.

After that class I was able to take [Honors 201](#) with Dr. Dahlman. In the class we were formally introduced to the program and the three competencies. For the leadership component, we read a book called *Strengths Based Leadership*, which explained the qualities that make great leaders, and talked about many things like team management, along with explaining how leaders invest in their strengths. As part of the book, I was able to take the StrengthsFinder assessment, which showed the qualities I have as leader, such as being a learner, achiever, deliberative, restorative, and a person with consistency. From there, I was able to share the qualities I had with others, and I identified the values I personally held as a leader such as respect, wisdom, integrity, and courage.

To be able to practice and execute what I have learned about leadership, I received the opportunity to be part of the 2016 [Fall Honors Retreat](#). Even though my main task was to explain global citizenship to the students, an additional central aspect of the retreat for me was practicing my leadership skills. During the retreat, I worked with two other students to design a game to introduce the students to different cultural practices, traditions, norms and the appropriate and the inappropriate ways to respond to them. For each group of students I had to introduce myself and explain to them the reasons behind the activity and the main values they were gaining from the activity. From leading the activity, I was able to use what I valued as leader such as showing respect toward what I was presenting and to the students themselves, along with using the wisdom I had from my own global citizenship experiences. In the activity, I was also able to efficiently work with my other two teammates to achieve a common goal of giving the students a new knowledge. At the end of the retreat, I believe that I achieved my goal of using my leadership model within a group setting, along with working with a group to achieve a common goal.

Even though I was progressing as a leader, I knew that by taking Honors 401 with professor Walters I was going to increase my confidence and teach me more skills about leadership to help me out with my future career. In the class [Exploring Personal](#)

Global Citizenship

Global Citizenship

Out of the competences in the Honors Program, I best understand global citizenship. Being born and raised in a different country from my own made me interested in learning about my country and culture. So, I started asking my mom about Somaliland history and how it was established. I asked her to teach me about our tribal system that was common between all Somalis. I asked my mom to teach me about cultural practices that we had, for example, during gatherings, engagements, and wedding celebrations. To strengthen my Somali language, I always went to my mom to teach me different words and phrases. Doing these things taught me a lot about my culture and deepened my understanding about my identity and background. That, in my opinion, was the establishment point of my global citizenship.

Since I have experienced different cultures than my own I have developed an understanding and appreciation for them, taking Honors 201 was very useful. In the class, Dr. Dahlman taught us to think about life experiences we had in the past and reflect on them and how they made us global citizens. So, I wrote [Citizen Since Birth](#). In this essay, I related what I have learned in class about the micro, meso, and macro cultural levels and I explained how each applied to the things I knew and things that I have learned about in class.

Taking Honors History with Dr. Corley taught me about European history. It opened my eyes to a different world that was outside of the places where I lived in Asia and Africa. In the class, we learned about the Roman and Greek government system, famous characters and their achievements, famous architecture, wars and cultural practices. In one of the class projects we were assigned to research a topic related to the Elizabethan England, and I choose to research about [Elizabethan England and Lent](#). To get an understanding of the topic, I started by learning about Queen Elizabeth's family and how she came to power. After that, I researched about religion at that time and the importance of Lent. This project helped me learn and understand about a culture that was significantly different from my own. This helped me gain new knowledge about the history of England. Overall this project, in general, helped me gain a new perspective about how cultures can share similar practices, such as religion-despite being different from each other.

In Dr. Corley's class we were also encouraged to reflect on how the topics that we learned in class were related to our global citizenship. In one of the class projects I wrote about the Renaissance, which means "rebirth", the Renaissance was a movement that started in Italy and later spread to rest of Europe, this movement was considered to be a bridge between the middle age and modern history and it witnessed a new thinking in art, politics, architecture, and science. To reflect on how the renaissance has increased my awareness about global citizenship, I decided to reflect on [Women in the Renaissances](#) and how the western society still has the belief that women are inferior to men when it comes to education the same way that men in the Renaissance believed that women had to be educated to make them look good in front of the society members only and not for any other purpose. In this reflection I believe that I improved my global citizenship skills by learning how to look at cultures at different periods and make comparisons and connections between them using evidence from the history.

To expand my knowledge about other cultures, I took an ethnicity class called [Perspective on Asian Americans](#). In the class we learned about the history of many Asian countries and their cultures. We also discussed the contribution of many Asian American ethnic groups to America. In our midterm class assignment, we were asked to listen to each other's presentations about a specific Asian country. After that, we had to reflect on things we learned from the presentation and in addition, write about a famous Asian American character from that specific country. For me, I had to reflect on the Japanese presentation and research about the famous Japanese American Fred Korematsut ([Japan Final Paper](#)). Doing this assignment taught me about about Japanese history and how it was involved in a war with the United States, it also taught me about the struggle that Japanese people went through and how they were imprisoned in relocation camps. I also learned about the racism they faced here in the Unites States. Professor Phan taught us not use certain words when talking to Japanese people, because they are very insulating and many people are not aware of this. In my reflection about the presentation I included how I learned about traditional Japanese practices like bowing and New Year celebration ceremony. Taking this class did not only teach me about the history of Asian countries, their different ethnic groups, contributions and achievements, it taught me a lot about how cultures shape the behavior of people from these countries. For example, in certain cultures it's considered inappropriate to smile at people. In general, that taught me not to judge people. Learning this will definitely help me interact with others while having an understanding of the reasons that make them behave in certain ways. This will also help me in my future career (Dentist).

Learning languages is an important part of being a global citizen. I was fortunate to learn how to speak more than one language as I was growing up. Through my Somali language, I was able to communicate with my community and family members. Through it, I connected with my roots and learned about my culture and country since I did not have the opportunity to live in it for more than a year. Language is definitely a bridge that links between different cultures. When I learned English I was able to communicative with many people from different parts of the world. I was able talk to them about their life experiences, traditions, along with differences and similarities between us. During my years here at MNSU, I met people who were very connected to their language. For them, language was a way that they represented their motherland, and that forgetting their language meant forgetting their identity--the same reason made me cautious about learning my own language, because for me it meant identity. Taking English composition was a very useful way for me to strengthen my English language. At the same time, I had the opportunity to learn about other languages. In one of class assignments we were asked to research and present about any language in the world. My teammates and I decided to research about the [New Zealand Sign language](#). Researching about this language thought me about New Zealand history, indigenous people who spoke this language the most, and how this language related to many sign languages around the world. Having an experience with multiple languages taught me that language is what creates connection between the members of an ethnicity, community and countries. Through language, people communicated and that led to the birth of cultures which unify and connect people. Learning all of this about language has made me a global citizen who is more knowledgeable different cultures, norms, and traditions.

My Research Experience

Research

Coming from a place where computer usage was not incorporated in the high school education system, definitely limited my definition and understanding of how to use sources to conduct research. My first class at MSU which was Biology 105, we were asked to write a lab report about [photosynthesis](#) using information from the experiments we conducted throughout the semester. This task was very challenging for me because it was the very first research that I had to do as a college student. It was the first time that I ever learned about search engines in the library and their usage. I did my best to look at many web pages to see if my findings were accurate and to see if I had the correct format for a biological lab report. This project introduced me to the methods of finding specific information of interest. Along with using information to correctly explain ideas, thoughts, and facts to the readers, our teacher also explained the meaning of plagiarism and the proper ways to use sources for the lab report without copying the information uncited. I was able to use what I learned from researching the first half of the class to prepare my final project along with my classmate. We used many resources to find information about [Alzheimer's](#), and we were able to locate the specific information we were looking for along with presenting it to the class. These two projects taught me about what research meant, and they opened my eyes to the importance of research for the rest of my academic career. They also showed me the weakness that I had with research and the things I needed to improve on.

In Honors History 180, Dr. Corley taught us about European history and the majority of his assignments required research skills. In my research about [Augustus](#), I started by specifying the things that I wanted to talk about like how the Roman empire witnessed stability and construction prosperity and how Augustus became the ultimate leader of the country. After finding primary literature, secondary literature and books about Augustus, I grouped all the information I obtained and started connecting them with each other. Then I wrote my thesis and wrote the paper in an organized fashion that followed a time line of Augustus' achievements in Rome. In this assignment, I learned how to look up information along with thoroughly using the sources to locate the information that I was looking for. I gained new knowledge about how to write and find information for research papers along with learning a lot about Augustus, his personal achievements and his role in Roman history.

In Global Change Biology, every Friday a group of three students were assigned to research and present a topic that was affecting the climate and leading it to change. My group and I chose to research about [Climate Change and Dietary Trends](#). The presentation had to be as long as a lecture, so the three of us divided the task and conducted our research independently. Using mainly primary and secondary literature articles, we all located the necessary information. For my section, I had to research about healthier diet choices for people, and suggest different types of them along with explaining their benefits and the impact of these dietary trends had on lessening the harmful effects on the climate.

For three semesters I got the opportunity to work in Dr. Anderson research lab via Biology 499. After taking Microbiology, I felt interested in the study of microbes and this is why I joined Dr. Anderson in her research on Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. Our main research question was whether MRSA was able to grow on the screens of college students' cellphones. To find out, Dr. Anderson explained the experiment she designed for me and my lab partner. Each one of us was responsible of collecting samples and doing the test in lab to see if MRSA grew on the cellphones' surfaces or not. Doing this project for three different semesters taught me a lot about how biological research in lab was being done. I learned about the processes of choosing a topic to research depending on the amount of information found and available resources. I learned about different laboratory tests and their purposes. I learned to ask questions and making observations to try and find answer to our research question. Along with working inside, lab Dr. Anderson assigned us homework to find five different primary literature articles about [MRSA](#) and its growth on animate objects and write a summary about it. We were assigned to do them to gain a better understanding of MRSA and the environment it grew in. I also learned to read the work of other scientists to benefit from how they were collecting and testing their samples. With that I was able to do my first ever original research in a university setting and I wrote about its details here, [Biology 499 Original Research](#).