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Hello and Welcome!

My name is Claire Achen and I am currently a Senior at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I am pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Dance with a double minor in theatre and film studies. I plan to graduate in Fall 2018.

I invite you to explore my efolio to learn more about me and my experience with the MSU Mankato Honors Program!

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.



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Leadership

"Leadership and leadership are not the same thing. Leadership is a verb, leadership is a noun."

-John F. Kennedy

[Leadership Synthesizing Essay](#)

[Honors 201 Leadership Essay](#)

[HONR 401 Alumni Mentorship Program](#)

[HONR 401: Class Reflections](#)

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each other."



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Leadership is unique to each individual. Leadership contains values and beliefs that when nurtured and reflected upon propel leadership into a higher level that not only functions as a guide, but influences others to change their point of view and actions taken. Leadership is to find a message that one distinguishes as essential to promote the betterment of the world for others. An honest leader conducts movement and shares a philosophy that assists others over themselves. My leadership philosophy has evolved over time to include all of these aspects in being the best leader I can be and in viewing and connecting to the leadership styles of others. I believe my philosophy of leadership includes following the servant leadership model, where I work to lead and serve the well being of others before myself.

My college leadership experiences began with developing personal values as a leader. My personal leadership values are kindness, patience, and honesty. I planned to further develop these values by learning more about how I could be an effective leader. I did this first in the **Introduction to Honors** class and in the Honors 401 Seminars. I realized in these classes that in order to develop and fulfill my values, I must lead with a goal in mind that I am passionate about. My values and experiences as a leader will not feel genuine; thus, my work with teams have benefited from my loyalty to my values.

An example of my role on a team was in the Honors 401 seminar, Growing the Leader in You. My task was to collect survey results to see how to best represent the number of Honors students who would be interested in an **alumni mentorship program**. I was part of a larger team of Honors students that committed our time to try to improve the Honors program for future generations in pitching our idea to the Honors committee. All of our tasks on the team mirrored our leadership strengths. Each task was vital in gathering data to present.

Working in team or group settings is where I was able to realize my strengths and weaknesses as a leader. I am excellent at listening to others and taking responsibility for tasks, but at times struggle with offering constructive criticism that is helpful and stepping into the position of needing to delegate tasks. In both HONR 401 Seminars, Growing the Leader in You and **Leadership through Social Change**, I was able to analyze my StrengthFinder assessment and realize where my strengths truly were as a leader in a way that wasn't completely subjective to my own thoughts and biases. Acknowledging my strengths makes me confidently strive to improve my weaknesses. My strengths of responsibility, input, intellection, strategy and empathy could be seen in the small team I created with my **dance mentee** I was able to capitalize on these strengths in how I responsibly made meetings with her and asked for her input on what we wanted to talk about. Our teamwork benefited from our understood roles.

In the HONR 401 class, Leadership through Social Change, in small groups we discussed different leadership models or styles. I observed that the servant leadership model was a successful model for me to follow that was structured around my leadership values and is effective **in bringing about social change** in its focus on helping those in need. In working toward a common goal with a group, my learning community, Leadership and Civic Engagement, participated in **Maverick Day of Service** on campus. At this particular event, I tapped into my servant leadership style and my strength in responsibility to buckle down and get the job done. Even if it was menial work, I made sure to clean the area that best that I could. I tapped into others abilities to have fun while we were cleaning to make the time pass faster and to enjoy working together as a group for a good cause.

All of my leadership experiences from campus and the community mirror my leadership values and my leadership style. I have used this personal theory within campus as I continue to take on leadership positions (Language Partners Program and Honors Peer Advising). I want to be of some help to others above anything else. When I lead, a positive experience comes of it, and I hope anyone I have the chance to lead will also be affected. My personal theory of leadership has evolved greatly in my undergraduate career. I know now that I have all the tools I need to be a motivated leader. I now view leadership positions as opportunities that are meant for everyone. My personal philosophy of leadership is that a leader should first and foremost serve others. In my future career as a dance teacher, I hope to instill in my students that they are leaders of themselves, others, and the future. Leadership is not about the need to be powerful, but the desire to make a difference. As an individual, I hope to carry this philosophy as my own personal leader and as a member of any team.

Leadership does not stand solitary in its understand and development, the inclusion of research and global citizenship into my broadened knowledge of leadership. I lead when I conduct research when I investigate topics that fascinate and call me to make changes to current or perceived understandings of a topic. Leadership also leads me to expand my mastery and skills when speaking with someone with a developing comprehension of the English language or in studying or traveling to new countries across the globe. Leadership involves taking the values and beliefs I attain and transferring them to other competencies, applying the leadership philosophy that not only enlarges my worldliness within these areas, but guarantees that I serve and assist to improve the world of others that I am passionate about. With the assistance of my experiences in the honors program, I believe my future as a leader is bright.

Research

*"Research is to see what ev
think what nobody else has*

-Albert Szent-Gyorgyi

[Research Synthesizing Essay](#)

[Honors 201 Research Essay](#)

[Lakota Ghost Dance](#)

[Greater Body Positivity in Dance](#)

[HONR 401: Change Project](#)

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seen, and to



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Research incorporates elements, places, ideas, or emotions that have been thought or felt before and translating them into a thesis that is uniquely individual. Research uses developed information, but creates a new perspective on how this information should be seen and presented to the world. My comprehension of research has developed into studies that have taken me across the world, to discovering thoughts and emotions I have found residing within my mind and body. I have learned that research is unlimited in how it is approached and conceived.

My college research experiences began in the Honors 201 class, [Introduction to Honors](#), with the significance the course put on scholarly research. I learned that research centers on finding legitimate sources that not only deal with a specific topic, but also focus on new ideas and perspectives that help to emphasize your own thesis. In this sense, I learned strategically that information must be analyzed carefully, as I developed beginning skills of information literacy. The act of synthesizing sources to support my own thoughts also advanced me in the beginning skills of successful information synthesis.

The honors course, Worlds of Dance continued to further my research skills. The final research paper I wrote for class surrounded the false beliefs of the [Lakota Ghost Dance](#) by American westerners who misconstrued the dance as an act of impending violence. My thesis of the paper stated that the dance could have been saved if time could have been taken to learn what the dance truly meant to the Lakota people. This unique question was formulated through my previous knowledge of the dance that I had learned in class and through personal research. I was attentive in how I read through information, assessing it carefully and efficiently applying it to my thesis, proving my understanding of information literacy. I submitted an abstract of my research to the Undergraduate Research Symposium and disseminated my results to a small crowd at the spring 2016 event.

During my junior year, I was able to develop another research project in the realm of the dance world. My research covered the [harmful effects of the perpetuation of the ideal ballet body](#) for developing dancers and audiences alike. My research included scouring through many credible sources. I was able to further practice information literacy in the strategies I have utilized that are effective in evaluating potential sources of research, such as how to narrow down research that will closely connect to my thesis and the use of sources that offer perspectives that will expand my work. I disseminated this research at the 2017 Undergraduate Research Symposium, improving my presentation skills compared to my performance at the URS the year before. I realized my strength in presenting personal research that I am passionate about, which has allowed me to grow to be proud of pursuing research within my major.

As part of my change project paper that I completed in the [Honors 401 Seminar class](#), I volunteered at the local Echo Food Shelf to learn how food insecurity is a social issue in the Mankato community and in the scope of the nation. I utilized the strategy of deploying varied perspectives on this topic by having my project not only include research from informative, textual sources, but personal research in the form of interviews and hands on experience during my time volunteering with the organization. I completed a higher level of information literacy during the process of compiling and conducting research by evaluating what potential sources of personal research or information from interviews could be utilized critically within my research to make it as potent and moving as possible.

Throughout my junior and senior year, I had many opportunities to dive into a different form of research, [creative/original research](#). My study abroad trip to Paris allowed me to capture and visual and physical understanding of the history and status of baroque and ballet dance in the history of Paris and how this has translated to my study of ballet in the U.S. today. Additionally, in group and solo dance project choreographic achievements, I have been able to connect to social topics like the immigration crisis and be inspired by site specific locations, like an abandoned house to emotionally and physically try to comprehend difficult issues. Creative/original research opened my eyes to the intense amount of knowledge that can be revealed through the discipline of dance and the very rewarding nature of research that is conducted using all elements of the mind and body.

My journey of orchestrating powerful research has grown with each project I have created. I have come to understand that research expands to areas of leadership and global citizenship in the ways that it can inform and change the way something is viewed and discussed, to the manner it can connect and broaden the understanding of cultural history. Within the honors program I have developed research that has involved information literacy, dissemination, personal research through volunteerism, and research that included travel and art as a medium to formulate creative/original research. I believe research above all, can be utilized as an agent for change and initiate the perpetuation of further understanding. I hope that my research in the future will continue to inform and inspire those that read, view, or experience it.

Global Citizenship

"There are injustices great and small, and even the small ones, at least we are fighting."

-Roxane Gay



[Global Citizenship Synthesizing Essay](#)

[Honors 201 Global Citizenship Essay](#)

[International Cinema Essays](#)

[Progressions of White Studies in Dance](#)

[Paris Journals & Final Reflection](#)



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The concept of global citizenship has become an encompassing goal for me. At first, it felt like a very daunting task that I would not be able to grasp or achieve. In my time throughout my college career and within the honors program, I have come to realize that global citizenship is as much about the mindset of an individual, as it is about the learning of a new language or traveling across the world, or the appreciation of cultures and viewpoints. The act of global citizenship is to willingly fling yourself into a situation or area of study that is new to you in order to better understand the world and the various people that surround you.

I began to understand the intricacies of the global citizenship competency in a reflective essay that I wrote in [Introduction to Honors](#) (Honors 201). Through interpersonal experiences taking courses Spanish language courses and studying forms of dance from other cultures, such as Afro-Cuban, I was able to better comprehend how my knowledge of English and the dance techniques I have personally studied have influenced my very own cultural identity and background as a student. These courses allowed me to see not only how Spanish differs from English in its structure when spoken in conversation, but how Cuban culture views dance not as just a fun pastime, but an essential part of life. Taking Honors 201 and writing this reflective essay allowed me to realize that the first stepping stone of global citizenship is exploring cultures that challenge my perceptions and understanding of the world.

Using my passion of analyzing film, the international cinema course allowed me to view global citizenship through a unique lens. Though I didn't physically travel, by learning about film history from around the world, I was able to experience many cultures through visual and auditory means. [International Cinema](#) made me realize that as an American, I developed a cultural identity of growing up within the Hollywood system of making films, films that featured dialogue and soundtracks primarily in English. I expressed my understanding of these cultural influences through papers I wrote for class, realizing I held the stereotype that international cinema would be difficult for me to understand and emotionally connect with based only on differing cultural locations. This stereotype was abolished when I indeed connected with these films, learning that variety exists in all areas of film from many cultures, in the form of popular genres like comedies, dramas, animated films, and utilizing American music or actors.

Researching false perceptions of dance within cultures in the history of dance in academia, allowed me to comprehend the similarities and differences that exist between dances from various cultures. I learned that these differences can be noted and celebrated, but they cannot in any circumstance be viewed in a degrading way. To see one group of dance from a specific culture as superior based on a construct such as race or from where it comes from in the world culturally, is holding an unfair bias and lacking self-awareness. This new viewpoint, as articulated in my essay, [The Progressions of Critical White Studies in Dance](#), affected my individual values and beliefs on how I view dance from anywhere in the world, learning that I had viewed dances from other cultures with this conflicted bias. This information has allowed me to succeed in now viewing all forms of dance with an open mind and on related planes of historical and societal contexts.

[Traveling to Paris](#) provided me an opportunity to become personally aware of how a culture can be perceived first hand. By walking the streets of Paris, eating, and communicating with Parisians, I saw what elements of culture were essential to Parisians, how the value of food, communication and the history all around the city affected their daily lives. Languages may be differing among how individuals communicate in a culture, because power relations among people in a culture are strengthened when the native language (if there is one of a country) can and is used to communicate. I was particularly challenged with my lack of knowledge of the French language, allowing me to make weak communicative connections with Parisians. Besides French, I was able to as a global citizen exemplify a culture and a language non verbally through the study of baroque dance. Language is usually thought of as something to articulate and hear, and though I knew very little French, I was able to communicate Baroque dance clearly due to the shared cognition dancers from around the world hold in their bodies. My ongoing process of acknowledging and understanding unknown cultures lies in pinpointing the differences found in various cultures, but knowing that cultural similarities are even more important, linking all people around the world.

In conclusion, my experience in Paris and the rest of artifacts I developed through courses at MSU, allowed me to realize traveling to new cultures is very important to develop one's sense of global citizenship. I hope in the future to always further expand my knowledge of how language, communication, and awareness can be utilized to mentally and emotionally grasp cultures perspectives around the world. I also desire that research and leadership opportunities will allow me to connect theories, points of view, and groups to investigate and guide new venues of thought and change. In essence, global citizenship is to explore the unknown or misunderstood. Traveling or learning a language is to comprehend how a language is spoken and the complexities, as well as similarities and differences of a culture that is not home to you. The enlightening aspect of being more culturally aware allows for biases and misconceptions to be dispelled, for further understanding to be not only mentally and emotionally understood, but also physically embodied. Global citizenship is to truly acquire a well-rounded view of the world and the ability to strive to continue to educate yourself and those that you encounter through leading with a global mindset and provide research that opens points of view. I believe that my convictions regarding global citizenship will only be strengthened in time.

CONTACT

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Feel free to send me any questions or comments regarding my efolio below!

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