



Welcome!

Mission Statement

My personal mission is to become the best I can possibly be. To reach my goal, I will strive for excellence in everything I do and actively search for learning experiences where I can better myself as a person, as well as continue to build my confidence and understanding of leadership, research, and global citizenship.



Thank you for visiting my e-folio!

My name is Lauren Hesser and I am currently a Senior attending Minnesota State University, Mankato pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Biomedicine. After finishing my undergraduate level schooling, I hope to continue on to Physician Assistant School. With this degree I hope to have a career in neurosurgery. It is also my hope to incorporate research focused on regenerative medicine, specifically focused on traumatic spinal cord and brain injuries.



Why Honors?

When I was younger, I never imagined I would be where I am today or who I am today. It is a truly amazing feeling to be able to look back on your life and see how much you have evolved throughout the years. For me, I believe that the honor's program has had an enormous impact on my growth throughout the past four years and can't imagine my time here without the program.

As a freshman, the program was very helpful, as I met a lot of new people through my first-year experience class. This course showed me the importance of leadership, research, and global citizenship, and encouraged me to get my research kickstarted early. Because of this, I joined a research team as a freshman which many students do not get the opportunity to do. Having so much research experience has helped me not only get jobs and fellowships but has taught me the importance of teamwork and dedication. I have learned the amount of effort it takes to plan and stick with a project, as well as how much time goes into the presentations and funding. Without my first-year experience class, I never would have been so inspired or determined to start my research career so early, and I am very grateful for the class for that reason.

In addition to research, my honors 499 independent study also led me to amazing experiences I would not have known about had it not been for the honors program. Through my independent study, I started volunteering with Special Olympics Minnesota, and continue to volunteer with them to this day. This experience, as cliché as it sounds, changed my life. I met so many amazing individuals and learned the importance of a strong leader for this community. I have made friendships and bonds with the participants that I cherish to this day. This experience also forced me to take a step out of my comfort zone. Previously, I was not comfortable doing things on my own without the safety net of a close friend along with me. However, I went into this opportunity knowing no one which turned out to be the best thing for me. I learned how to make new connections on my own, a trait I was not taught coming from a small town where I knew everyone. I learned how to be independent and how to thrive in new environment. This opportunity showed me how much I enjoyed that independence as well as how much I love forming new friendships. This newfound passion led me to go on an STLF trip across the country with 40 strangers who later became lifelong friends.

These skills have clearly served me well personally, however, they have also formed who I am as a professional. The competencies have taught me how to be a better leader at my jobs, and who I expect to have as a boss in my professional career. I have learned how to be a well-rounded professional who is culturally aware, able to effectively research topics, and able to work as a team member and leader.

I have had a very busy schedule working 2-3 three jobs as well as pursuing a biomedical degree, so I have not been able to make it to many of the honors activities. It saddens me to think of everything I missed with the program but is comforting to know how many opportunities are offered when I have the time. The honors program at MNSU is so important to me, and has so many amazing classes, activities, people, and opportunities. I am so happy that I got the opportunity to be a part of such a wonderful community, and truly believe that I would not be who I am personally or professionally if it was not for the program.



The Honors Mission Statement

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.

Leadership

Upon graduation, I will have demonstrated the ability to utilize personal leadership values and guide groups toward a common goal.

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Research

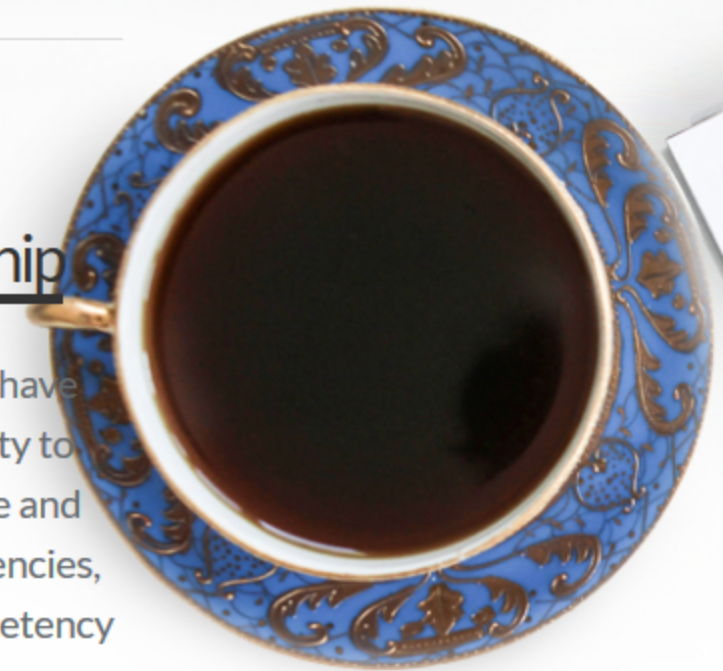
Upon graduation, I will have demonstrated the ability to exhibit information literacy skills, synthesize and integrate ideas, produce original research or creative works, and contribute to knowledge.

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Global Citizenship

Upon graduation, I will have demonstrated the ability to exhibit second language and communication competencies, and exhibit cultural competency and awareness.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Leadership Competency

Leadership Synthesizing Essay

Leadership has never been a trait that came naturally to me, or at least that's what I thought. When I arrived at MNSU, Mankato, I was uncertain of myself and my leadership abilities. However, when I enrolled in my **Honors First Year Seminar class**, I learned just how much potential I really had when it came to leadership. At the time, I thought of a leader as someone who was clearly in charge and made all of the decisions on their own. During my honors FYE class, I quickly learned that a leader can be anyone and started to understand my own leadership values. I decided that with more practice, I could be a great leader; one who lead from within the group rather than in front of the crowd.

I put my leadership values to the test soon after when I became a **Special Olympics basketball coach**. I had recently decided that I would become the type of leader who was seen as part of the group rather than someone who barks orders or sits back as others do the work. I implemented this during my coaching, as I often times participated in the drills and games with the individuals. This strategy proved effective, and I also discovered my leadership role within a team working alongside multiple other coaches. Even though I was the only coach with basketball experience, it was clear that in order to be effective we all needed to work together and take advantage of each of our strengths while also working on our weaknesses. Another time I became aware of the various leadership roles individuals can play in a team setting, was when I **shadowed multiple surgeries**. Observing the role that each person played in the OR made me realize that while the head surgeon clearly played an important leadership role, the residents, medical assistants, nurses, and anesthesiologists all had their own leading moments as well. Similar to coaching special Olympics, each of the professionals had their own strengths and expertise, and I soon realized that the surgery would not be efficient or effective without each member of the team.

While these experiences helped me critique my own leadership values, it also pointed out my weaknesses as a leader as well. I realized I am not very comfortable making big decisions on my own. However, when I became the **Tri Bets Honors society historian**, I had the chance to work on this in a comfortable team atmosphere. I had the opportunity to come up with ideas for the organization and make decisions while still having back up from the other board members. I became more comfortable making decisions on my own and decided to put my new skills to the test and **start a recognized student organization** on campus: Mav Trav.

This took a lot of dedication and self-reflection. I had to contact multiple faculty, make appointments, plan events, and make nearly all of the decisions on my own. I never thought I would be able to do something like this, but with the knowledge and confidence from my previous experiences I was able to overcome my fears and weaknesses and the organization was successful. Playing a leadership role in the organization also allowed me to put my values to the test. I stuck to my original goal of being a leader who asks for input from the community members in hopes of making it the most enjoyable for everyone involved. I did this by spending a few minutes at each event and meeting asking the members for their ideas and critiques on how to make the organization better. I realized this really is the most effective way to be a leader. Another time I saw this approach in action was on my **Students Today Leaders Forever** spring break trip. On this trip we traveled across the country stopping in towns along the way to complete community service projects. Our bus had various leaders by definition, but when we were completing our projects we all did the same amount of work and put in the same amount of effort towards the common goal. I believe this was an important aspect of the projects, as it made us each feel just as important and gratified. The team worked very well together because of this dynamic and became amazing friends as well.

I have learned so much about teamwork and leadership through these experiences, and I will take them with me into the work force. Since I am becoming a Physician Assistant, team work is very important to the efficiency of the operating room. These skills helped me realized that even though I won't be the head surgeon, I will still be an important and valued member and leader of the team. I will continue to work on my leadership skills and improve my comfort with decision making by seeking out more leadership roles and opportunities.

Research Competency

Research Synthesizing Essay

I have always had a very research-oriented mindset and had a passion for solving problems and thinking outside of the box. In fact, when I began my undergraduate studies, my plan was to pursue a career in medical research with a focus on regenerative medicine. Later, I realized I would enjoy a career with more patient interaction, but throughout my years at Minnesota State I kept my passion for research and continued to build my research skills with the hope that I will find a way to incorporate it into my career, yet.

My first experience with research at MSU was during my **Honors first year seminar course**. In this course I learned how to find information pertaining to my topic and how to differentiate between credible and non-credible sources. In addition, I discovered the importance of ethical use of other's research and literature. We were taught how to cite sources correctly and how to utilize the information without plagiarizing. It was very exciting and interesting for me to learn about the logistics of ethical research, and also very important for me to gain these information literacy skills.

Information literacy is often the first, and arguably one of the most important steps in mastering the art of research. I was given the opportunity to test my new skills in my **Honors 401 seminar: Writing Home**. For this course, we chose a place that was sacred to us and where we felt at home. We spent the entire semester researching various aspects of the location such as climate, geography, history, and other interesting information. While writing this essay, it was important for me to utilize my information literacy skills, but I also needed to incorporate some information synthesis skills. Not only did I need to find my sources and correctly cite them, I also had to organize them in a way the reader would understand and enjoy.

While these skills have proven to be very valuable to me, it was also important for me to collect some hands-on research experience. An opportunity such as that came soon after my first semester at MNSU, when I was invited to attend the **McGowan Institute Summer Program** for research in regenerative medicine. This was an amazing opportunity for me, as it has always been a subject I've been very interested in. I was able to listen to various lectures by researchers and faculty on campus and learn all about their new and exciting techniques and applications of regenerative medicine. I was given so much information in such a short amount of time, it was important for me to figure out how to organize their thoughts in my own mind in order to understand the complex discussions, which proved easier than expected with my previous knowledge of information synthesis. I also gained hands on lab experience with 3D printing, stripping pig intestines of all cells, working with the cell matrix, and working with cell cultures. I learned a plethora of information and new hands on research techniques which I put to use soon after returning.

I used these new hands-on techniques and skills later that same semester when I join a **research team with Dr. Sharlin**. I worked for many months on small projects in order to perfect my basic lab skills. I learned what it meant to work in a team setting towards a common goal, and how I fit in to the new dynamic. Later, I was given the opportunity to work on two different projects in a more independent manner. It was difficult at first to trust my own instincts and skills, but I soon became more confident in myself and my work. However, I also unfortunately had to learn how to handle a project when it doesn't go as planned. So, I focused on my project studying the effects of fstl-1 on the mouse cochlear development, and also how that development is affected by thyroid hormones.

I worked on that project for many months with the assistance of Dr. Sharlin and my lab partner Eunwon. When we found our results, we completed an abstract and submitted it to MidBrains, and later the Undergraduate Research Conference. Once we were accepted, we put together our poster and **presented our research at MidBrains and the URC**. Presenting our research taught me how to answer any questions that faculty or students may have, and how to think on my toes. It was important for us to know everything about the topic, as we were presenting to very intelligent people who tended to have interesting and in-depth questions.

My research journey at MSU took me up a winding road to where I currently am, with many stops along the way to learn information, techniques, and how to have confidence in myself. While I still have a long way to go, I have learned so much during my time here and only added to the passion I have for research. I will take these skills with me to my career as a Physician Assistant, and I hope to one day be a part of a research lab again.

Global Citizenship Competency

When I began my journey with Honors, I was fairly confident in my research abilities and had a general understanding for what I would need to work on with leadership. Global citizenship, however, was a very daunting subject for me, as I have never been able to truly discover my own culture or define the term in a universal way on my own. So, in order to step out of my comfort zone and explore a new culture, I decided to immerse myself in a community that is not always the first thing that comes to mind when we think about culture; those with developmental or physical disabilities.

I began this expedition into the community with an honors 499 experience **volunteering with special Olympics**. I already worked in multiple group homes with these individuals, but this experience gave me the opportunity to coach them as well as play as a unified partner and really get to know them. It was incredible to witness how this group of people worked together towards common goals and values, while also being completely unique as individuals, which I believe is an important aspect of the definition of culture. This experience also introduced me to the differences between the verbal and nonverbal community, and how one can still communicate efficiently with both.

This realization also came into play when I began working closely with another coach who was deaf. It was difficult for me to communicate with him, but I eventually found what worked for us. However, when I watched him and another coach speak fluently back and forth in American Sign Language, I decided I would **take a second language**; ASL. What surprised me while taking these language courses, was again how wrong I was about the definition of culture. I learned so much about the deaf culture, their traditions, their beliefs, and *everything non-deaf individuals may not realize about the culture; for example, the ability for non-deaf individuals to be a part of the culture as well.* Once I realized how different this culture was from my own and everything I had previously believed about culture, I found myself with a multitude of questions. I had always had an image in my mind of culture being a synonym to religion, with traditions, songs, food, and practices. While I now see this is not the case, I still found myself curious about the cultures that did fit my previous assumptions more closely.

In order to understand culture in a broader sense, I decided to **join a meditation club**. I have always been curious about Buddhism and have admired their way of thinking and practices to connect body to mind, so I joined a club on campus to learn about the culture and practices. However, I was baffled again to realize even my definition of mediation was completely biased. This club showed me that meditation is not as simple as sitting and clearing your mind, but there is also chanting, singing, and beaded meditation. I realized that cultures are different not only between religions, but also countries, states, and even towns. **Traveling to new countries** showed me that while they may not speak the same languages, or have the same beliefs, certain aspects of other cultures can still be very similar to my own, and vice versa. Still, seeing countries as a tourist is nowhere close to living the lives of those individuals and it is difficult to truly understand a culture without being a part of it. So, in order to get closer to the first-hand experience, my honors class and I attended and **planned the Green Card Voices** exhibit on campus. This event brought speakers and stories from immigrants who traveled from their home countries to the United States for various reasons. These stories came from the individuals themselves, who lived through the hardships, joys, and traditions that came along with their cultures.

It was important for me to see culture from all of these aspects. I realized that a culture can come from a trait, religion, race, and a multitude of other factors. These experiences helped me to see that culture cannot be easily defined, and my own culture can be just as complex as any others. While I am still on the search for a definition of my own culture, I believe these experiences helped me to understand what a culture can be and also how many possibilities they can bring. I will take my global citizenship skills with me throughout my life in search of my own culture while also striving to understand and immerse myself in as many other cultures as I can in hopes of understanding them, and those who I share this world with, a little better.

Volunteer Experience

Students Today/Leaders Forever
Aktion Club Theater volunteer
Leisure Experience for Exceptional People(LEEP)
Special Olympics Basketball Coach
Special Olympics Volleyball Coach
Local animal shelter volunteer
Red Cross Blood Drive
Dance Teacher

January 2016 – Present
February 2018- Present
January 2016 – Present
January 2016 – Present
January 2016-Present
January 2016-present
2014, 2015
2012-2015

Work Experience

Tutor for Educational Talent Search

December 2017-Present

Responsibilities: Tutor high school student in various subjects in addition to ACT workshops and tutoring.

Tutor for Student Support Services

December 2017-Present

Responsibilities: Tutor at the collegiate level for various science and math courses.

Accra Home Health Care

Mankato, MN

March 2016- Present

Responsibilities: Care for a specific disabled individual in a home setting.

Accra Home Health Care

Mankato, MN

March 2016-Present

Responsibilities: Housekeeper for the same individual's family listed above.

Harry Meyering Center

Mankato, MN

December 2015-Present

Responsibilities: Care for vulnerable adults in a group care setting.

Best Buy

Mankato, MN

Project Team Specialist (Solar)

October 2015 – May 2016

Responsibilities: Work independently to set store displays, planograms and maps to corporate standards.

Customer Service

May 2015- October 2015

Responsibilities: Provide quality customer service; process returns; address customer complaints; manage the register.

LCARC Fit Kids

Lake Crystal, MN

May 2014 – September 2015

Responsibilities: supervise children ages 4-12; coordinate activities; provide basic first aid; enforce appropriate discipline.

Research Experience

MSU, Mankato Biology Department

December 2015 – January 2018

Dr. David Sharlin's Research Team

Summer Research Fellowship

June 2017

Regenerative medicine research at McGowan Institute in Pittsburg, PA.

Presented Research at MidBrains

Fall 2017

Presented Research at local URC

Spring 2018

Scrubbed in to shadow Surgeries

January 2017-Present

3 brain surgeries, 1 Spinal surgery

Shadowed Spinal Surgery PA at OFC

May 2018- Present

Medical Shadowing Experience

Parkinson's Brain Surgery x3

January 2017

Spinal surgery x2

March 2018

Spinal surgical PA office shadow x5

May 2018

Honors Societies

Tri Beta Biological Honors Society

Spring 2017-Present

National Honor Society of Leadership and Success

Fall 2016-Present

Msu Honors Program

Fall 2015-Present

Awards and Honors

MSU Dean's List

Fall 2015, Spring 2016, Fall 2016, Spring 2017, Fall 2017, Spring 2018, Fall 2018

Affinity Plus \$5,000 Scholarship

Spring 2018

CSET \$1,500 Scholarship

Spring 2018

CSET \$1,000 Scholarship

Spring 2017

Affinity plus \$3,000 Scholarship

Fall 2017

Maverick Scholarship

Fall 2015

Lake Crystal Chamber of Commerce Scholarship

Fall 2015

Wendy's Heisman Local Representative

2015

3rd Place at American Legion Regional Oratorical Contest

2015

Spotlight on Scholarship award

2011-2015



College

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Biomedical Science Major

GPA: 3.83

August 2015- Present

High School

Lake Crystal-Wellcome Memorial High School

GPA: 3.66

May 2015

