

Ms. Yuseina Brito Lino

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Hello, a bit about me:

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Welcome!

Thank you for taking the time to visit my web site and read about my experience while in the Honors program.

Mission: Aspiring first-generation, teacher of color in elementary education who will utilize various teaching strategies to support student's discovery, achieve their full potential and further their knowledge of their equity journey.

I've always considered myself a go getter type of person who loves to be involved in everything and am constantly wanting myself to be a better person. As a result, I of course, without a doubt in my brain was joining the honors program even though I had no idea what that meant of involved me doing. Before joining I looked at the student body that made up the honors program as students who were perfect and had it together which is what my goal at that time was. Now reflecting almost four and a half years later I have gained many new experiences because I joined the honors program.

My biggest takeaway from the honors program is the portfolio that I hope to perfect this year. As an elementary education major this is a great professional addition to my resume to sum up my experiences here at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU, Mankato) in a single website. To my future employer this will show them my skills in the three competencies along with being able to reflect and learn from experiences, my ability with technology and a place to hopefully add resources that I can take with me into any classroom I walk in. Having the ability to come back to my portfolio in the future to reflect on my college years will be simple because of the honors program.

As a person of color who is also a first-generation college student being able to join a culture such as this one was a critical one in helping me survive. Here I was able to interact with other students who had the same goals and motivation that I did through events. Being a first-generation college student there are moments where there is no one to turn to for answers, but the honors program reassured me that many students on campus were going through similar struggle making it on how you react in the moment and reflecting on how you would learn and move forward from that.



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Competencies

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 fosters their development as future leaders in a global society.



Leadership

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



Research

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



Global Citizenship

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



"Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose."
Zora Neale Hurston

My undergraduate experience at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU) was the first time that I was introduced to the idea that research is more than just writing a paper. With research there comes a drive for a topic, many ways of gathering information and even more ways of presenting your findings. During the last four years I have read investigations conducted by other researchers along with creating research that I would later have the honor of presenting at both the MSU, Mankato symposium and the National Conference of Undergraduate Research (NCUR).

My first experience with research was during my freshman year when took part in in the **401 Honors class: Exploring Personal Leadership**. I conducted research on a local organization, the Backpack Food Program. This was the first time that I had taken my research into the community. I felt uncomfortable at first because I had never volunteered outside of the classroom. However, as I participated in volunteering, met with their leaders and saw how students benefit I realized how efficiently and effectively research flows beyond scholarly journals. By experiencing different points of views, I understood the organizations mission, their needs and their goals of expansion within the community.

During the same semester while I was taking this Honors class, I was taking a **Spanish Literature class**. As I imagined, there were multiple research paper that I wrote by the end of the semester. I wrote a paper where I discussed a Spanish poet, Luis de Gongora, and compared two of his poems. I found that this was both my hardest and best paper of the semester. With success I was able to look through multiple digital research data bases to identify important information that pertained to my topic and translate between both languages to ultimately write a paper that was fully in Spanish. This was also my hardest paper because I needed to find information that was both reliable and credible from a person that lived in a different era than us. As I looked through dozens of articles, I created strategies in organizing my information that helped me in this paper and beyond.

After freshman year and all the new strategies, I was able to successfully take information from researchers to develop literacy lesson plans, reflect on researcher's data and diagnose a student that I tutored online. In my **EEC class** I learned research strategies as a teacher. In this class, I learned how to take the strategies that researchers found and apply those into lessons for actual students. For my student I tutored online, I was able to tailor to her academic needs because I had multiple strategies and theories from which to choose. With my ending products I created I was able to create a plan for each student and class because of their strengths and needs.

Finally, my biggest accomplishment in this competency was presenting at both **symposiums** and having my research be posted on the MNSU online library. This by far was my biggest challenge as I needed to learn everything from writing a grant proposal, to an abstract and being able to successfully convey the information that was acquired. The conducted research was on the impact of service learning on pre-service teachers. I realized that there is never an end to research, and it is constantly evolving making it always a good moment to join. My previous experience really came together in this project and I was able to learn from my mentor, my peers and other researchers. I am excited to see where my research experience will take me as I know research is heavily relied on in the education field.



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According to Merriam-Webster Global citizenship means, “the quality of an individual’s response to membership in a community”.

Before attending Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU) I hadn’t considered myself a leader. Throughout my time, courses and involvement on campus my leadership skills have developed and will continue to as I take what I have learned into the real world. My first experience with leadership happened much faster than I thought it would with the **involvement in the registered student organization (RSO) Chicano Latin American Student Association Club (CLASA)**. The leadership position of secretary in this RSO was offered to me half-way through my freshman year. I was hesitant at first because of the lack of leadership experience I had but with the help of my Strength Finder leadership test by Gallup I knew I brought to the table strengths such as harmony, achiever, deliberative, discipline and focus according to the Strength finder by Gallup leadership test. Fast forwarding years later I take the vice presidency of the teacher of tomorrow (TOT) RSO and I apply skills such as working towards a uniform goal, public speaking, deliberation within the group and to others. Like anything there were plenty of obstacles that I faced as an individual and in a team setting where I was able to grow from.

I took what I learned through those two leadership positions and expanded on it through my two EEC classes, **Teaching English Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom and Literacy Methods Interactions**. In my first class Teaching English language in the Mainstream Classroom the biggest push was being a leader and fighter for equity. Equity in making sure all students got the adequate tools tailored to them in their journey towards success. In achieving this I made a lesson tailored to English language learners and embedded strategies to help students hit the ground running. In my second EEC course, **Literacy Methods**, being an equity ambassador continued in understanding what kind of leader I want to be in the classroom for future students. By placing different lens such as the teacher role, student role and administration role I discovered that there is at team working towards student success rather than just working as an individual. Through these experiences there was realization that there is a team unit working for the benefits of the students.

In the state of Minnesota less than three percent of teachers of color and that is the thought as I finish my undergraduate career with **student teaching**. My leadership experience can be wrapped by student teaching in Aldine, Texas. Over 80% of the students in my fourth-grade classroom look like myself. All of my leadership experiences are helping create my teaching philosophy no matter where I end up teaching. I am committed to be a voice to the students, paving their equity journey and helping create success in their lives. Through student teaching I realized that the type of leader I am now doesn’t define the leader I am in the future and just like the students we are constantly learning from each other.



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My favorite competency that I have developed during my time here at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU) is global citizenship. Without knowing it, as I am **bilingual** I had come to college with global citizenship skills. Being bilingual has helped open many opportunities that I would not otherwise have such as being able to build communication bridges that are otherwise restricted, learning about other people's cultures and showing other about my own culture.

My first experience with global citizenship was developed through my **EEC 222W: Humans in a Multicultural Society** class, when I wrote an autobiography. In this autobiography the biggest challenge was reflecting on my values, culture, digging deeper into the cultural norms and everything in between. This was the hardest part because growing up in the Latinx culture everything from microaggressions to cultural events was considered normal to me. Writing this was a great reflection on how just like I am finding my voice in my culture so are others and it is important to be patient, ask questions and be open to other's stories.

Knowing about my own values and beliefs I set foot into a classroom full of bright kindergarten minds for my **clinical experience** in block 1 of the education program. Here I was submerged into a classroom full of different cultures. I was fortunate to interact with students from different races. I enjoyed being of the only students of color, and being able to interact with my students cultures and ask questions. One of my responsibilities as a student teacher was doing "read alouds". For one read aloud I chose a book by the title, "We are all alike, we are all different" that focuses on differences/similarities and what they can look like even at such a young age. I am a big advocate on equity, and this was a great way to start that journey at such a young age. My students took me by surprise on how receptive they are at this age despite the makeup of their family, their living status or skin tone. My goal for this lesson was to have students start looking at their skin tone and acknowledging it. This was a big objective as many students like me grow up in the education system wanting to hide who we really are because its not how everyone else looks like or what is accepted.

After seeing how culture is different for everyone including my students it made me start to wonder how much of an impact culture has on my life. For this I wrote about experiences that happened outside of school that were impacted by race for my **EEC 445: Literacy Methods Interaction course**. I have always known that culture plays a large role from the time I wake up to the time I fall asleep, but as a person of color I made my paper focused on micro-aggression. As a result of these papers I wrote throughout the semester I found that there are many underlying ways that racism appears in my world. Although racism and micro-aggression appear frequently throughout my life, I have learned that I can stop this as a teacher by educating others about my own culture and giving them (my students) an opportunity to share theirs.

My **service learning and cultural partner interaction/paper** was by far the biggest challenge as I had not directly interacted, shared or asked questions to someone before this experience. Growing up in a predominantly white town I was accustomed to being the only person of color in my classroom. Arriving to this university where there are so many cultures was quite a shock to me. It was in the best way possible as I interacted with many other minorities and realized we shared similar experiences. This statement was validated through my service-learning with adult basic education and my cultural partner who was from Syria. Through these two experiences I met amazing people from Colombia, Africa, Mexico and Syria. The one-on-one time was a great place to share stories, ask questions and share my experiences with these individuals. This has made me want to continue seeking the opportunities in getting to know others' culture even more.

These global citizenship experiences are shaping the educator I am becoming. As a teacher I want students to know about their culture, know about other cultures and ask questions. The experiences that I have acquired during my undergrad are only the beginning of many to come.



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