

# Kaitlyn Graning

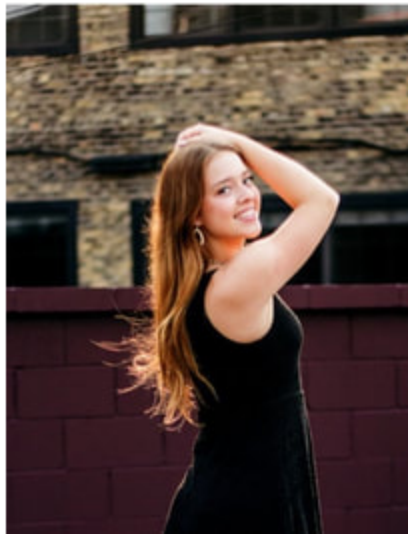
HOME

ABOUT ME

HONORS PROGRAM

CONTACT

## WELCOME TO MY E-FOLIO!



My name is Kaitlyn Graning, I am a student at **Minnesota State University Mankato** pursuing a bachelors in **Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services** with a **Therapeutic Recreation** emphasis. Here you will view my educational journey, and contribution to the Honors Program. Enjoy!

## MY MISSION

My personal mission is to continue to develop my level of knowledge in the Therapeutic Recreation field, to properly serve individuals of all abilities in a positive environment. I will continue to reach out of my comfort zone through new opportunities to become a larger-minded individual, and encourage all to experience inclusivity within recreation and leisure.

JOIN THE HONORS PROGRAM NOW!



## About Me

I am from the small town of Becker, MN and always on the go. I have a very extrovertedly-introverted personality; which means I can be timid at times, but also not afraid to be the goofy one to pitch a laugh. My main life goal is to always be positive; which encourages me to have an optimistic outlook on life because you never know who's watching. I am from a family of 5; mom, dad, younger brother, and even younger sister. Since I am the oldest, I have always felt the need to be a role model for my siblings, and this really influences who I am today and who I strive to be.

"Being sad is a waste of time!" -unknown

### YOUNGER YEARS - HIGH SCHOOL

I grew up in my small town of Becker, MN where I attended the public schools. Here, I was involved in band and choir starting in 5th grade; along with dance at the local studio, Starz Dance Studio, starting in Kindergarten. My sophomore year of high school, I took a leap and enrolled in a performing arts charter high school an hour away from home. I enrolled in Main Street School of Performing Arts in Hopkins, MN to continue my passion and love for dance. Since dance has always been a big part of my identity, my high school career influenced me in many positive ways.

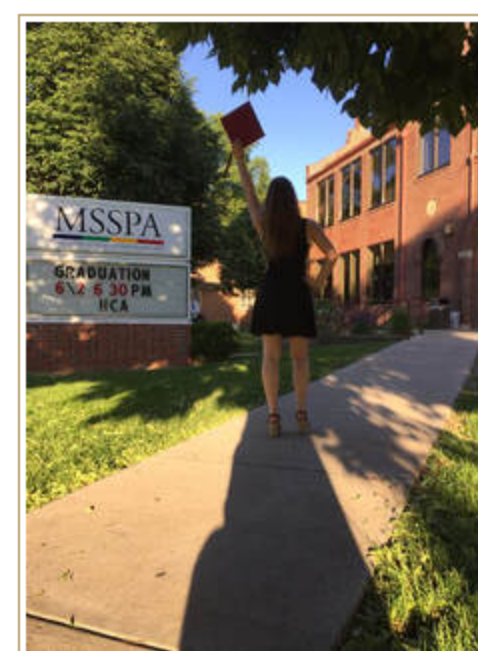
In high school, I was highly involved in the dance program. Which meant I was given large leadership opportunities such as the Director of the yearly student run dance show, Vice President of National Honors Society for Dance Arts, and a Student Ambassador. Some experiences that boosted my self-confidence and independence were the performance opportunities given by my school. To name a few: performed as the pre show of the Minnesota Orchestra, a part of The Southern Theater's ArtShare program where we performed an originally written show 11 times, performed our seasonal dance concerts at the Cowles Center TekBox Theater, choreographed and performed original work, plus more. While I was indulged in different opportunities and coordinating events, it encouraged me become self-aware of my strengths, and lead to finding my path to a future career. High school influenced my personal characteristics because I was able to collaborate with many different professionals and organizations; also discover the importance of commitment while fulfilling all these opportunities. Through it all, I was able to discover what my strengths were, my passions, and purpose; which lead to discovering my major of Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services.



MSSPA: Hollywoodland



Starz Dance Studio: Performers 2016



MSSPA: Graduation Day

### COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

While I was grateful to enter college with a decided major, my college journey altered as time went on.

My first year, I decided I wanted to double major with Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services (RPLS): Therapeutic Recreation (TR), and Dance. Here, I was able to continue my love for dance, while exploring another career path that spoke to me. TR is the perfect major for me because I enjoy serving others, and I am able to do that through recreational and leisure activities; which I have enjoyed all my life as a dancer and dance teacher.

Second and third year were unexpected paths, but lead me to develop personal strengths which in turn improved my professional skills. I took time off of campus to finish my generals online/in Duluth, MN. My boyfriend was going to Lake Superior College for his own college journey; I decided to go with him to gain more outside experience and do what was best for my personal life at the time. This change lead me to fulfill my field experience for the RPLS major at a long term care facility in the activities department, which can be found in the "Global Citizenship" tab. This experience reassured my mind that I was on the right career path. It increased my mindset with the importance of TR in older adults. I was also given the opportunity to be a dance teacher at a local studio to 6-8 year olds. This was tied to fulfill one of the honors practicum credits, which can be found in the "Leadership" tab. During this time, I decided to drop my Dance major to a minor due to being off campus for awhile. I also furthered my time management skills as my courses were online. Spring of my junior year, I returned to MSU campus.

Currently, I am in my fourth year at MSU with a single major of Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services with a Therapeutic Recreation emphasis. I decided to drop my dance minor because I wanted to dedicate more time with my RPLS major. This was a huge step in my identity because I was always regularly involved with dance; whether being the dancer or the teacher. Therefore, I developed a great amount of self-reflection and awareness skills to take on this milestone.



MSU Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services: Therapeutic Recreation



Elite Dance Productions: Spring 2018



Hiniker Pond: RPLS 489

### FUTURE PLANS

Once I graduate, I will fulfill my practicum requirements at St. David's Center for Child and Family Development as a full time TR intern. Here, I will plan and facilitate community recreational programs and opportunities for individuals with disabilities. I will also plan and facilitate therapeutic interventions, create individualized care plans, plan, facilitate, and direct the final week of the summer camp, and refine the program to better accommodate to those being served. Once completed, I will then seek occupational opportunities within a communal setting involving recreation inclusion/adaptive recreation. During this time, I will also apply and study for The National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC) to become a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS).

Through this major, I have been able to continue my passion for serving others; and gain knowledge on how to create an environment where individuals can flourish as human beings through recreation and leisure. My dance experience will also be a unique touch I can bring in the field to encourage the arts and the kinesthetic benefits amongst all individuals.



**National Council for  
Therapeutic Recreation  
Certification**



## COMPETENCIES

There are three competencies in which MSU Honors Students fulfill

### LEADERSHIP

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)

### RESEARCH

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)

### GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)

## HONORS PROGRAM'S MISSION

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.

### WHY HONORS?

The Honors Program at Minnesota State University Mankato has been a motivating, and thrilling journey. It has pushed me to create personal experiences I never would have on my own. Not only has it positively impacted my time on campus, but improved my professional growth as well. With thanks to the three competencies, I have been able to be involved in a wide range of opportunities.

When I entered The Honors Program, I already considered myself a leader; however there was a lot more to it than I thought. The first leadership experience I was involved with on campus was Community Council in the residence halls. This was the first experience where I was in a leadership position with strangers; and it pushed me as a leader because I wanted to stick to my values and strengths, while being self conscious as I was afraid of what others were going to think of me. Therefore, I was able to work in a team setting while developing my personal leadership skills. Another leadership experience I took part in because of The Honors Program was a dance teacher for practicum credit. I pushed my abilities to teach a large group of 6-8 year olds, and reconstruct my teaching style through creating activities, unique lesson plans, and discipline techniques. I consider myself a strong dance teacher, however I set personal goals to branch out of my comfort zone. Therefore, I was able to explore different teaching styles; which lead to me becoming a better leader.

Research was the competency that pushed me to improve the most because we had to conduct original research. At my summer job as the Program Coordinator at my hometown community center, I researched how recreation inclusion was implemented in a small town. This research led me to discover inclusion was the area I want to build my professional career in. Without The Honors Program, I would not have been able to discover my passion for offering recreation and leisure inclusion in a communal setting. Also at my job, I was in charge of a project where I presented my findings at the Minnesota Recreation and Parks Association Annual Conference. Little did I know, this was also research because I was creating an original program. This pushed my research skills and the ability to showcase my results in a professional setting.

The Global Citizenship competency was the one I was most nervous for because I was not sure how to fulfill it without studying abroad. However, I grew more comfortable with what global citizenship could actually identify as. For example, I was a part of the IELI Language Partners Program on campus where I worked one on one with an individual from a different culture. This introduced me to becoming more self aware with my own culture and how to interact with those from others. Another example was during my RPLS field experience with older adults. The older adult dementia population definitely qualifies as another culture because they grew up in different decades than myself, and because of their disease they view life through a different lens. Other experiences have been through the RPLS department, and we have been able to step into the community; for example people with disabilities at Hiniker Pond, and international individuals learning English as their second language at Lincoln Community Center.

Because of The Honors Program, RPLS department, and my professional development, I have been able to proudly document my experiences and be grateful for the numerous opportunities. Thus, escort me to becoming a better leader individually and with others, explore different research opportunities, and build an open-mind to other's cultures and lifestyles.



## LEADERSHIP

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

I considered myself a leader even before starting my undergraduate journey. However, there are more elements involved than I thought with being a well-rounded leader. Through the Honors Program, I was able to discover and reflect on my personal leadership values and strengths, develop my own theory of leadership, and reflect on working within a group setting.

I first began by identifying my leadership strengths and how to continue to utilize my strengths through the First Year Experience class. My top two identified strengths through the Strengths Finder Assessment are positivity and learner. Because of the final **Leadership Essay**, I was able to connect everything together that we did in class; such as the Strengths Finders Assessment. This opened my eyes to my personal qualities, and gave further knowledge of how to utilize my strengths daily.

With the help of the First Year Experience class, I was able to implement my newly identified leadership strengths into **Community Council** on my residential hall floor. This was the first council I was on during my college experience, along with being on a committee with strangers. Even though each person had their own roles, we created and coordinated as a group towards a common goal. This influenced my leadership skills because it gave me the opportunity to utilize my top strengths. I used those strengths to come up with ideas that those around me would enjoy and be open to, while creating a positive environment. This experience helped me move forward with my learned skills while being in a team setting, and prepared me for future collaborative projects.

Now that I had my leadership skills established and implemented them in a group setting, I felt ready to take on a larger leadership experience to reflect on effective and ineffective leadership models. I was able to do that through my **Honors Practicum**. Although I was comfortable with being a dance teacher, I took my leadership to the next level by constructing goal-oriented lesson plans. I learned from this experience that no matter how comfortable you are as a leader, there will always be situations that lead you to the unexpected. Therefore, this helped me become open-minded to other leadership models.

After evaluating my leadership models, I was able to take them into the community and reflect upon leadership roles within a group; which was planning a public event in **RPLS 376: Program Planning**. Each group member was assigned a specific role, but we found at times all of us would complete the tasks together. I believe this strengthened us as a team because we were comfortable with helping one another. This group project greatly benefitted my leadership skills because I increased my comfort level with working in groups and my self-efficacy with coordinating a public event.

Which leads to my biggest leadership opportunity during my undergraduate career; being the **Program Coordinator** at the Becker Community Center. What I learned through the honors program and my RPLS courses perfectly set me up for this experience. While being the youngest on the management team, I observed their leadership and communication styles while comparing them to my own. I learned how to confidently utilize my leadership skills to take on tasks and lead to a powerful collaboration with different leadership styles around me. My philosophy of leadership is to create a positive and enjoyable environment to provide opportunities for success amongst all. I will use this philosophy in my future career because optimism/positivity is a personal strength I execute individually and in teams; which I believe supports opportunities to consistently grow in my leadership skills.

LEADERSHIP ESSAY

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

HONORS PRACTICUM: DANCE TEACHER

RPLS 376: PROGRAM PLANNING IN RPLS

PROGRAM COORDINATOR: BECKER COMMUNITY CENTER



## 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."*

Research was the competency in the Honors Program that pushed me the most out of my comfort zone. I assumed it was going to be difficult; and had no idea what kind of experiences qualified as "non-scientific" research. However, I was most proud of my research experiences during my undergraduate career because I learned how to effectively access and utilize information, synthesize my findings and reflect on what I learned, conduct original research, and present my findings in multiple formats.

I was first introduced to research in the First Year Experience course my freshman year. Because of the final **Research Essay**, I was able to connect everything together that we did in class. Such as: the necessary steps to conduct research, how to ethically pursue research and access information, and identify different concepts we could implement during our original research. This class was beneficial because I became more aware of the possibilities of research.

Once I increased my open-mindedness about research, I became more confident in how to talk about my research and its findings; which lead to my **Advocacy Speech** in my CMST 100 course. The purpose of this assignment was to gain familiarity with public speaking and research a particular topic. I choose advocating against a K-12 four day school week. While learning how to choose credible sources, I developed knowledge on the ethical use of research. Therefore, I developed effective strategies that influenced the sources I used and organized my thoughts to create an effective speech.

Now that I became more comfortable with conducting and presenting research, I grew ready to take my developed skills into a public venue; which was creating a **Nature Birthday Party Package** at the Becker Community Center. During my time as the Program Coordinator in Summer 2019, I proposed a nature-themed birthday party package to the management team. I wanted to create a uniquely designed party for children of all ages to connect with nature. This experience was important because I utilized all steps of the research process such as reflecting on how I utilized my research effectively and ethically, presenting my findings in a public venue in a synthesizing manner, and practicing my own research skills in creating the program.

After practicing my research skills in a public setting, I was thrown into something even bigger. I presented another original project (a nature kiosk) from my summer job at the **MRPA Conference** in November 2019. This experience was greatly beneficial because it was the first time I presented in front of professionals outside of campus or employment. It was important to synthesize my work because there was a limited time frame. Although everything I created was important to me, I had to think about my audience and what they would be interested in learning. There were many lessons I learned from this experience that boosted my confidence and professionalism.

To conclude my undergraduate career, I digitally presented and submitted my **Original Research** for the Undergraduate Research Symposium. My research question was, "How to overcome the barriers to implementing recreation inclusion in a small town?". This experience lead me to achieving the entire research process, this included identifying a research question that related to my undergraduate studies, conducting research through collecting data, processing my data, then synthesizing it into a presentation. It was empowering to speak upon a subject I am passionate about which in hopes will inspire others too. This experience pushed my research skills and abilities that I will carry over in my future career in the Therapeutic Recreation field.

RESEARCH ESSAY

ADVOCACY SPEECH

BCC: NATURE BIRTHDAY PARTY

MRPA CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

ORIGINAL RESEARCH: RECREATION INCLUSION





## GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

*"Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated an increased self-awareness of their own and other cultures, knowledge and understanding of cultural perspectives, and awareness of the connections between language and culture in communication."*

The Global Citizenship competency was the one I was most nervous for. I was not sure how to fulfill it without simply studying abroad because I assumed that was the only way to be exposed to other cultures. However, that was definitely not the case and I grew more comfortable with what it means to be a global citizen. I accomplished this by increasing my self-awareness of my own and other cultures, building a knowledge and understanding of other cultures, and developing a perception of the connection between language and cultures through communication.

I was first introduced to the global citizenship competency in my First Years Experience course my freshman year. The purpose of this unit was to gain more awareness of what the global citizenship competency entails, and different ways we can fulfill the competency. Because of this unit and the final **Global Citizenship Essay**, I learned my role as a citizen in my own culture was closed-minded because I grew up in a small, rural town; and I became more aware of cultural norms and biases I held.

Once I had the realization of my own culture and viewpoints of other cultures, I became more prepared in stepping into someone else's. This was through the **IELI Language Partners Program**. This program increased my self-awareness about my own culture because I was naive in assuming all individuals knew the American culture. Therefore, I was able to build a relationship with my partner in discussing each other's cultures such as family lifestyle, education, friendship morals, and holidays; which lead to him stating he learned English more efficiently through having complex conversations with me rather than literacy activities. Through this experience, I gained a better understanding of cultural differences, and what I can personally do differently to step into other cultures.

Even though I was just able to interact with someone from another culture, the communication was through my first language. Therefore, I increased my second language skills by enrolling in **Spanish 202: Intermediate Spanish II**. This class was to fulfill my language competency for the Honors Program, however I had an interest in continuing my skills from high school. Learning a second language has taught me the different communication and grammatical strategies other cultures possess. Since our class was strictly taught in Spanish, this lead me to admire those who are learning English as their second language, and to be more grateful to have learned English young.

Now that I became more comfortable in engaging with those from other cultures and increased my second language skills, I was able to put it into good use through my **Retail Experience**. There were many instances in which I encountered those who do not speak English, however this one instance I built the courage to communicate with a gentleman who primarily spoke Spanish. I was able to initiate an intercultural experience and build a strong relationship with the consumer. This lead to us feeling connected on a level that would have typically separated us.

At this point in my undergraduate career, my perspective on global citizenship truly took a turn. I discovered a great cultural difference during my **Field Experience**. Through my time in the activities department in a long-term care facility memory care unit, the population I served was a different culture than my own because the life I am growing up in is a lot different than the life they did. This experience also altered my perspective of those with dementia because underneath their disability they are all humans who have experienced life and deserve to be treated with respect. Although there were very few cultural differences through race or ethnicity, there were several differences through the decades. Those were intriguing to dive into.

With this new perspective in mind, I was prepared for my final global citizenship opportunity; which was going to **Hiniker Pond** for one of my RPLS classes. Here, we provided recreation and leisure opportunities for individuals with disabilities. This experience was important because individuals with disabilities are viewed as a different culture. Therefore, I was able to develop my communication skills, and revise my personal philosophy of what it means to be a global citizen; which was to treat all individuals with respect while creating an environment to compliment and unify our differences. I also altered my view of the world because I now felt comfortable asking complex questions about other cultures, and can understand the value of diversity and inclusion. I will carry this knowledge into my future career in the Therapeutic Recreation field.

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP ESSAY

IELI PROGRAM

SPANISH 202

RETAIL EXPERIENCE: SPANISH

FIELD EXPERIENCE

HINIKER POND: RPL5489



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[HOME](#)

[ABOUT ME](#)

[HONORS PROGRAM](#)

[CONTACT](#)



## CONTACT ME:

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