

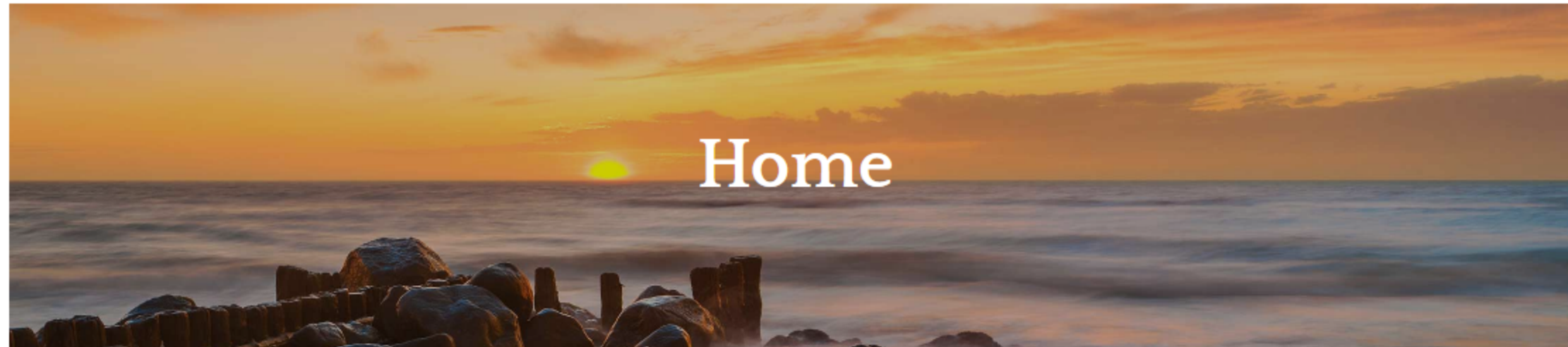
MADDISON HAJEK

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Welcome!

Hi there! My name is Maddison Hajek. I am currently a senior at Minnesota State University Mankato (MSU, M). I am pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Exercise Science with an emphasis in Pre-Physical Therapy. I will graduate in the spring of 2020 and continue my education at the University of South Dakota to receive my Doctorate in Physical Therapy (DPT). Thank you for taking the time to look at my efolio. You can begin by clicking the buttons on the top of the screen to navigate your way through my site!

Personal Mission Statement:

I will have an open heart and mind as I go through life, being willing to learn from unexpected trials and situations. As I continue through my years of education, I will work hard and stay concentrated on my dream of becoming a physical therapist in a rehabilitation hospital. I want to make a difference in the lives of those who have suffered traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. I will keep this as my constant motivator as I progress through my education. As I participate in events on and off campus, I will reflect how I am growing as an independent, influential individual. My faith, family, and friends will always come first as I go through this journey of life.



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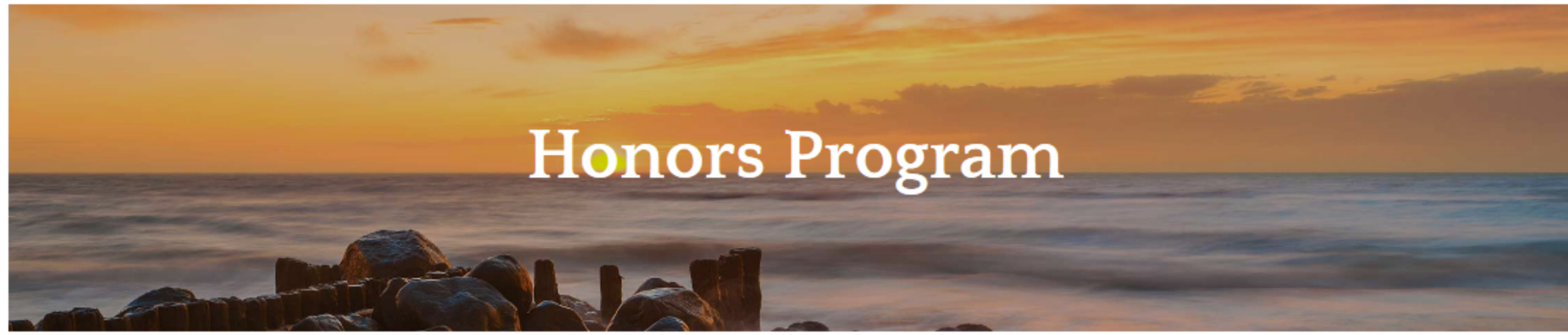
About Me



Hello again!

If you are wanting to find out more personal information about me, you are on the right page! As stated on the Homepage, I am currently a senior at Minnesota State University Mankato, majoring in Exercise Science with an emphasis in Pre-Physical Therapy and a minor in Psychology. My ultimate goal is to work in a rehabilitation hospital, helping individuals recover from traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. It would also be awesome to eventually be a high school cross country and track coach once I have settled into my career. I grew up on a farm located in Tyndall, South Dakota, which has a total population of about 1,200 people. My graduating high school class, Bon Homme High School, had a total of thirty students. Small towns and schools have always been my thing, but I have loved the experience of branching out to a larger city and school setting. My faith, family, and friends mean the world to me, and I try to live life to the fullest everyday by having a positive attitude, spreading happiness, and living out my values. During my free time, I enjoy going on long runs, watching Grey's Anatomy, and adventuring through nature with my closest friends. I live by the motto: "Love life and life will love you back."





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."



Competencies

Leadership:

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

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:

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.

Why Honors Essay

If one was to ask me about my perception of a college Honors Program four years ago as a senior in high school, I would have stated something along the lines of it being an extracurricular organization that involves taking hard classes, attending uninteresting events, and writing a thesis paper on an abstract subject. I am not sure when and how this particular idea formed in my mind, but I was confident in my beliefs. When my parents pushed me to examine more closely what the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU) was all about, I was pleasantly surprised. The strong mission statement that contained the appealing words of "leader, researcher, and global citizen" caught my attention. I decided to reconsider my previous attitudes and challenge myself by giving this program a chance. I am grateful for this decision, for the Honors Program has greatly shaped me into who I am as a student and individual, which I believe will have lasting affects in my future career as a physical therapist.

There are many perks to being an Honors student, such as early class registration and new friendships with those of similar mindsets, and I have appreciated them all. One of my favorite experiences was the Honors seminar classes. I took two of these types of courses, including "Developing Your Mentor Philosophy" and "Reading the News." I loved the small class sizes that allowed for deeper and more genuine discussions, for I felt like I could truly open up and share my opinions without the fear of judgement. I think this is important, especially in the college setting, for it creates a safe space where discovery and growth can flourish. I can confidently say that my conception of Honors classes was false. These courses were some of the best ones I have taken and where I spent the most time reflecting on different experiences and my attitudes on topics that are rarely discussed.


I believe the Honors Program most significantly influenced my personal and academic life by urging me to grow in the three competencies, specifically global citizenship. Growing up in rural South Dakota where almost every individual looked and acted the same, I lacked understanding of other cultures and the chance to interact with diverse individuals. I was anxious when I first learned about the global citizenship competency, because I had no idea how I would advance in this area. I took it slowly and began by being a Language Partners Tutor through the Intense English Language Institute (IELI) program. It was through this experience that I realized I just need to be myself and have an open mind when interacting with individuals of other cultures, for there is much to be learned from those with different experiences and ways of life.


After taking a couple of Spanish courses and being involved in the Spanish Club, a yearning sparked to push myself outside of my comfort zone and challenge the misconceptions that had developed over time. I decided to pair my love for traveling and desire to grow as a global citizen by going abroad. Currently, I have traveled and been fully immersed in three different countries: Costa Rica, St. Lucia, and Belize. Although they are all located in Central America and have many similarities, I would argue they each have unique differences that make them special. These trips abroad have been the most influential (and most loved!) part of my undergraduate experience. I can honestly say that I do not think I would have gone abroad if it wasn't for the Honors Program, which exemplifies how important this program has been to me.


Being an Honors student has meant more to me than I could have ever imagined. The experiences I have been granted, wonderful people I have met, and welcoming environment that emphasizes deep reflection has greatly influenced me as a student, individual, and future healthcare professional. I would highly recommend the Honors Program at MNSU to all eligible students, for it truly provides a rich, well-rounded undergraduate experience.


Learning Plan

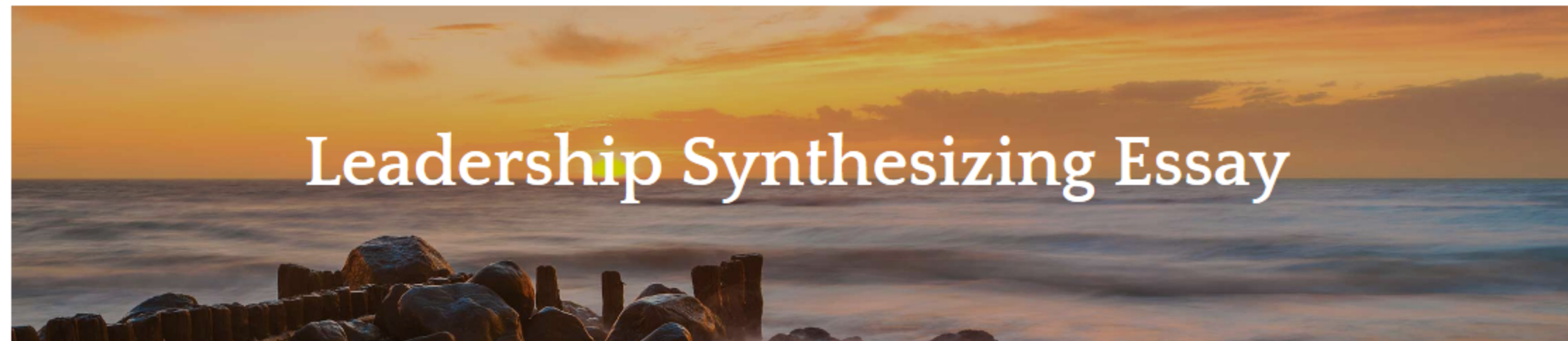
Every fall semester, honor students are required to develop a personal learning plan. This is a plan of action to further develop the three competency areas. A couple goals (experiences) are listed for each competency along with an explanation of the demonstration and what rubric level is expected after successful completion of the activity.

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Leadership Synthesizing Essay

I have been told throughout my life that I am a natural leader with valuable traits that should not go unused. I never really believed this, because I wasn't even sure what a leader really was and didn't think I was capable of guiding and influencing others in this way. By being challenged to grow in this capacity during my time at Minnesota State University, Mankato, I believe I have a better understanding of the meaning of leadership and its significance in accomplishing goals. Through participating and leading in numerous and diverse experiences, I have been able to identify and cultivate my leadership values, skills, and ability to work in a team setting.

To begin my leadership journey, I first had to learn who I was as a leader, specifically what my core values, strengths, and weaknesses were. I took the StrengthsFinder Assessment and discovered harmony, learner, belief, responsibility, and achiever were my biggest strengths. I was not surprised with these results, for they coincide well with my personality and how I live and interact with others. To continue reflecting and begin implementing what I had learned about myself as a leader, I took the *Honors Seminar 'Developing Your Mentor Philosophy'* course. Through readings, group discussions, and reflecting on past experiences, I identified my most important values as knowledge, experience, and emotional intelligence. Through my mentor relationship, I was able to implement my strengths, specifically harmony and belief, and become more aware of my weaknesses, like flexibility and perfectionism.

My knowledge of who I was as a leader became even more clear through being a member of the *Women for Global Leadership Program*. I learned the importance of leading with passion and owning my life story to help others reach their full potential. The concept of being real and vulnerable emerged as one of my essential values, for I believe it creates more meaningful relationships and a sense of trust and openness. By listening to different speakers and reading related articles, I was able to reflect on my strengths and weaknesses and how I desire to grow as a leader. It was helpful to intentionally write out my weaknesses so that I could see where I was lacking and develop a plan to grow in those areas.

After learning about myself as a leader, I began to evaluate different leadership styles and use my own leadership theory to guide others. By being a *Girls on the Run Assistant Coach*, I saw many leadership styles from the different coaches, some which were effective and others that were not. I learned the most successful leadership style was one that consisted of a genuine desire to be there and a willingness to put one's own needs and wants aside for the benefit of the girls (i.e. servant-type leading). However, I do believe different leadership styles can be effective and should be adapted based on the type of people one is leading and the specific goals. By being a part of this program for three years, I had the opportunity to practice what I had learned about myself as a leader through classes, experiences, and personal reflections to lead the girls in a fun, interactive environment.

A large part of leading is working with others in a team or group setting. A significant experience that helped me learn the different roles within a team and grow as a team member was being on the executive board of the *Pre-Physical/Occupational Therapy Club* as the Secretary and later on as the President. Being introduced and immersed in the formal roles of a team opened my eyes to their importance in creating a successful team that is capable of achieving its goals. I did face the difficulty of working with a few individuals who were not fully committed to the club or leading purposefully. Through this, I realized that not everyone will always be interested in leading for the same reason or have similar values and strengths. This is acceptable as long as the common goal exists and is sought after, for each individual has their own beliefs and there are many ways to be a successful leader. Being a student leader for the *Honors Annual Fall Retreat* helped instill this idea in my mind to a deeper level. I was able to work with two other determined, successful Honors students that each possessed their own unique strengths and styles of leading. Although we did not have clearly defined roles on our team, we each capitalized on what we did best to reach the goal of educating the incoming Honors students about the research competency. Through these experiences, I developed my own leadership philosophy that focuses on my values and strengths to help guide future collaboration within teams, such as within the medical field as a healthcare professional.

All of these experiences have had a significant impact on who I am as a leader and team member. The lessons I have learned along the way have been very valuable and important for my personal growth. I will use these experiences and the knowledge I have gained to help guide my actions in future leadership positions, which will likely occur in physical therapy school and even within the profession.



Before coming to Minnesota State University, Mankato and joining the Honors Program, I was very intimidated by the word 'research.' I believe this fear was fueled by not truly knowing and understanding the concept of research due to a lack of exposure and experience. When I discovered the Honors Program wanted me to eventually perform my own research, I was overwhelmed and apprehensive for I didn't know how this would be possible. However, by being exposed to research through several experiences and learning that it can take many different forms, my fear slowly diminished. I have grown to appreciate and enjoy the research process and will apply what I have learned to continue utilizing and performing evidence-based research while in physical therapy school and as a professional.

My research journey started with a composition course in which I had to write an *argumentative research paper* on a topic of my choice. Preparing and composing this paper required learning how to access, organize, and utilize the work of others in an effective and ethical manner. I developed my own strategies to evaluate and synthesize information efficiently, such as taking notes on the main message of each article and its stance on the topic, to reach my final goal of raising awareness through evidence and my own experiences and beliefs. I learned this is not always an easy process, for an abundant amount of information exists, especially on the Internet, and it can be difficult to decide which sources are best to implement in order to reach one's conclusions. This experience created a strong understanding and foundation of information literacy and synthesis that would significantly help me during my future research encounters.

Since my emphasis of study requires science-heavy prerequisites, I had the opportunity to be immersed in research through performing different laboratory experiences. In one biology course, I studied and composed *lab reports on two different topics: osmosis and genetically modified organisms*. Because these are scientific papers that involved an experiment, I had to formulate a concise, well-written hypothesis based on the scholarly work of others. This required practicing my information synthesis skills to ensure my hypothesis was established with sound evidence and reasoning. Through this experience I learned that failure is often a component of research, for there were times procedures had to be repeated due to human error or the results of a test were not as originally predicted. Although this can be frustrating at times, I realized the importance of honesty and integrity when conducting research, which was a valuable lesson to learn for subsequent research projects.

After having grown in my skills of gathering reliable sources and implementing them into my own projects, I began to further develop my research competence by conducting my own original "miniature" study. I completed this project in a biology course in which we were to design our own *case study* and use proper experimental procedures to gather data and analyze results. I worked with a partner to investigate the energy levels of individuals exercising at the gym at two different times of the day. Planning our experiment consisted of a lot of brainstorming and creativity to form the materials and methods component, which helped signify the importance of being prepared and organized in order to conduct successful research. Although the results of the study were inconclusive, it was a great first field experience that increased my knowledge of research and understanding of what this process looks like in practice.

Finally, I continued to grow in this competency by conducting my own *original research project titled: "The Fear of Falling and Restriction of Activity in Older Adults."* This study consisted of both a questionnaire and in-person interview to assess older adults fear of falling and whether (and even how) this leads to the restriction of activities. Because of my interest in physical rehabilitation, I decided this would be an intriguing topic to investigate since many older adults experience falling and the complications, such as broken bones, that can result. There was a great amount of hard work put into planning the project and recruiting participants, and the most fun and exciting part of this research experience for me was collecting the data and getting to talk to the older adults about a topic in which I was deeply invested. Although there were several instances where conversations got off track and more time than expected was spent on collecting the data, I learned so much about the research process and how rewarding it can be to have results on a project that demanded a lot of time and effort. To share my findings, I gave an oral presentation at the local Undergraduate Research Symposium (URS) in which I realized the significance of communicating results to increase awareness and knowledge of a particular topic. Completing this project and presenting it to others solidified my knowledge and comprehension of research and how important it is to the advancement of society.

I am thankful for the experiences that have helped me understand and appreciate the concept of research. I learned many lessons along the way and have seen significant growth in who I am as a researcher and contributor to new knowledge. I believe these were all great experiences to kick start my research journey, and I am excited to see what other research I become involved in during my time as a graduate student at the University of South Dakota and a professional in the field of physical therapy.



Global Citizenship Synthesizing Essay

Growing up in a small rural community in South Dakota, I was unaware of the concept of global citizenship and its significance in helping me learn more about myself and others. The Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, prompted me to grow in this area that desperately needed improvement. I had the opportunity to be involved in several different seminars, classes, and service learning/mission trips that greatly increased my knowledge of my own and other cultures. These experiences have been some of the most valuable and life changing ones of my undergraduate career.

My global citizenship journey began in the *Honors First Year Seminar course*. In this class, we discussed and reflected on the meaning and purpose of being a global citizen in today's world. This was my first real exposure to global citizenship and understanding its importance in helping me grow as an individual and student in this diverse world. I learned that I am a member of a culture and have my own values and beliefs that shape who I am and how I interact with others. Participating in the *'Learning to See' Seminar*, a cultural awareness event sponsored by Leadership U, helped solidify my knowledge of my culture along with its rules and biases. By learning about the refugee crisis through compelling photographs, discussions, and personal reflections, I grew in awareness that the American culture is not as appealing as it may appear from the outside. My culture tends to get caught up in ourselves and complain about the little things causing us to fail to love and care for those who are most in need. This experience made me realize that all cultures, even my own, have positives and negatives that need to be considered to allow for growth and improvement as a society.

I continued to increase my awareness of my own culture through going on a *medical mission trip to Belize*. I served the sick and dying through the Belize Hospice & Palliative Care Foundation and worked on fixing a home to make it livable for a patient in his or her final days or weeks of life. In this experience, I was able to interact with many of the Belizean locals, including patients, doctors, volunteers, and church parishioners, and compare and contrast our different cultures. I learned the Belizean culture is much more laid back with their time and obligations and deeply value living in the moment and being present to others no matter their schedule. I believe this is an important lesson that the American culture could benefit from to better appreciate life and its many gifts. I also realized during my time in Belize that fully understanding other cultures is difficult because of our biases and beliefs that are the result of our own cultural influences. Having awareness and keeping an open mind will help break the barrier and allow for growth.

After learning about my own culture and understanding the need to continue to build relations with others who are different than myself, I became a *Language Partners Tutor* through the Intense Language Program offered to international students at MNSU. It was in these tutoring sessions that I helped my tutees increase their English speaking and writing skills along with familiarizing them with the American culture by sharing my own experiences and answering their questions. I was also able to learn about the different countries that my tutees were from, including Hong Kong, Kuwait, and Russia, and their unique cultures and practices. From this experience, I realized the complexity of culture and the influence on where and how we were raised can greatly contribute to one's beliefs and ways of life. These interactions helped open my mind for other cultures and grow in my appreciation for diversity.

Language is an essential component of culture and helps form one's identity at a young age. Through my *Spanish Language Learning* I learned about the Spanish language through different readings, projects, and presentations. I realized that although there are several cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication between languages, such as proper greetings or ways of addressing others, there are also similarities that tie all languages together. For example, all languages are used as a means of communicating and have appropriate grammar rules to make this happen efficiently. My understanding and proficiency of Spanish continued to grow during my *service learning trip to Costa Rica's National Children's Hospital*. It was in this primarily Spanish speaking country that I had ample opportunity to practice the language in very unfamiliar situations and interact and form relationships with many different individuals, including my host family and the children in the hospital I cared for. I learned many valuable things about the beautiful Costa Rican culture through asking about and discussing more complex topics, such as religion, government, and healthcare. This experience pushed me in interacting and learning about the practices and perspectives of others and growing as a competent global citizen as a result.

These experiences have significantly helped me grow in my awareness of my own culture, knowledge and understanding of other cultures, and the ability to communicate in a second language and learn the connection between language and culture. I learned many important lessons about how to be a global citizen and its relation in being an educated student and individual in this diverse world. I will use these experiences and the knowledge I have gained to continue to learn about my own culture and interact with those of other cultures during my time in graduate school and in the healthcare profession.

MADDISON HAJEK



I am the type of person who always thought I knew what I wanted to be when I grew up, even though it changed about fifteen times until I finally decided on my current field of study. As a child, I wanted to be a cheerleader, then it switched to a vet, a nanny, and all the way to a teacher. Once I started to really reflect on what I wanted to do with my life around my junior year of high school, a job in the medical field consistently came to mind. I thought of tackling medical school and being a pediatrician, but I decided I wanted to have more direct and interactive patient care. Nursing then crept into my mind, until I realized that I would have to deal with blood and other bodily fluids that make me sick to my stomach even thinking about. Finally, about half way through my senior year, the notion of being a physical therapist developed in my mind; I loved exercise, being at the gym, making "fitness plans" for my family members, and encouraging others to reach their goals. Being a physical therapist actually sounded like a logical idea. After doing some job shadowing and talking to my hometown physical therapists, I decided with both my mind and heart that I was passionate about this growing field and wanted to pursue an Exercise Science degree with an emphasis in Pre-Physical Therapy. Although it has required extremely hard work and dedication, I believe that I am equipped to pursue this field of study. I have the heart, work ethic, and outside support to be successful. I have two sub-pages, PT/OT Club and observation hours, for more information and activities participated in during my time at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I have greatly enjoyed this amazing adventure of college and all the memories and lessons learned along the way and am excited to continue my education in South Dakota.