



OLIVIA MARTH



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Welcome

Hello! My name is Olivia Marth and I am currently a senior at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I am nearly finished with my Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and have recently completed my Spanish minor and graduated from the Honors Program!

Mission Statement

As an educator, it is my mission to promote and practice equitable teaching pedagogy; as a citizen, to stand up and speak up for those who have been silenced; and as a human, to care, love, and share peace with all.



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About Me

I am currently a senior at Minnesota State University, Mankato, majoring in Elementary Education, minoring in Spanish. I'm originally from a smaller suburb of the Twin Cities called Waconia. There I attended Waconia High School where I participated in marching band, concert band, show band, jazz band, pep band, and percussion ensemble. I also took 5 years of Spanish classes, the fifth of which I took through the University of Minnesota.

Throughout high school, I worked at my local community center as a lifeguard and I taught private piano lessons from my home. Outside of school and work, I took piano lessons and attended state competitions and contests through the Minnesota Music Teachers' Association. In 2013, 2015, and 2016, I was invited to play at the Honors Concert in Minneapolis for my playing. I was also actively involved in my church's youth group, music ministry, and children's ministry, where I served as the pianist as well as an assistant teacher in the lower elementary classrooms.

Now, I have recently been married to the love of my life. We complement one another in every way and are so excited for what the future has in store for us. He studies mechanical engineering at Bethany Lutheran College, so we're both a couple busy bees, but we always find time for each other.

I chose to pursue education because I have always loved learning new things and understanding different perspectives, and school has always been a joy for me. Working with my piano students and my church's youth group grew that passion even more. Education is one of the most powerful tools a person can have, and I cannot wait to be able to share it with future generations.



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Education

Waconia High School

- Class of 2016
- Achievements:
 - Director's Award for Band 2016
 - Academic Lettering 2012-2016
 - Band Lettering 2012-2016
 - Honor Roll 2012-2016
- Clubs, Organizations, & Involvement:
 - National Honor Society 2013-2016
 - Waconia Marching Band 2012-2016
 - Power Company Show Choir Band 2013-2016
 - Waconia Jazz I 2013-2016
 - Varsity Band 2012-2013
 - Concert Band 2013-2014
 - Wind Ensemble 2014-2016
 - Percussion Ensemble 2012-2016
 - Pep Band 2012-2016



Minnesota State University, Mankato

- Achievements:
 - Dean's List 2016-2019
 - College of Education Vivian B. Rippin Scholarship 2017 & 2020
 - College of Education Scholarship 2018
 - Minnesota Undergraduate Scholars Conference Participant and 1st Place Oral Presentation Winner 2019 -- St. Cloud, MN
 - Undergraduate Research Symposium Participant and 1st Place Oral Presentation 2019 -- Mankato, MN
 - World Congress of Undergraduate Research Participant 2019 -- Oldenburg, Germany
 - Honors Program Competency Grant Winner 2019
 - Highland Hills Apartments Scholarship Winner 2019
 - National Conference for Undergraduate Research Participant 2020 -- Bozeman, MT** (COVID-19)
- Clubs, Organizations, & University Involvement:
 - Honors Program 2016-2018
 - Honors Learning Community 2016-2018
 - Maverick Machine Marching Band 2016-2017
 - Percussion Ensemble 2016-2018
 - Maverick Steel Band 2018
 - Crawford B4 Community Council 2016-2017
 - IEP Tutor 2016-2017
 - Spanish Club 2017
 - Alpha Mu Gamma Honor Society 2018-2019
 - Campus Recreation Lifeguard and Employee 2016-2018
 - Cultural Understanding, Learning, and Teaching Club Member 2018-2019
 - Dr. Sandell's Undergraduate Research Team 2018-2020
- Community Involvement:
 - YMCA Lifeguard & Swim Lesson Instructor 2017-2019
 - Harry Meyering Center Volunteer 2018





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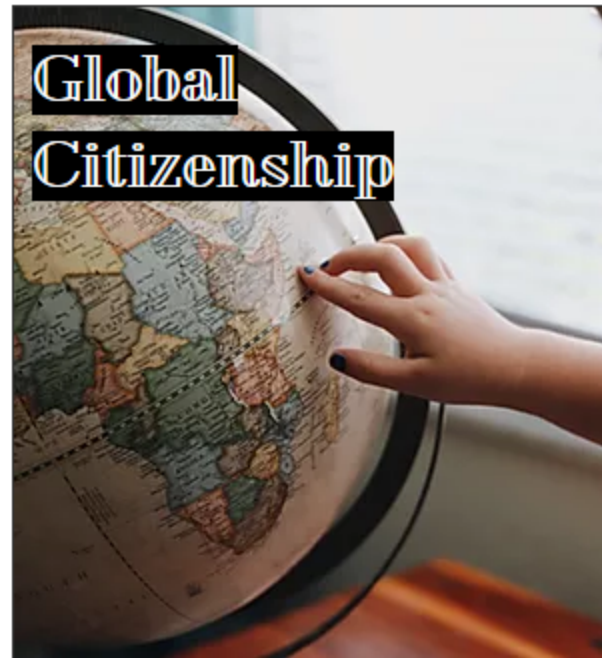
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Honors Program

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.



Learning Plans



2016-2017



2017-2018



2018-2019



2019-2020



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Leadership

Leadership has always been a daunting concept for me. I consider myself an introverted listener with few social and problem-solving skills, and from my schema of the idea of leadership, those attributes prevented me from being an effective leader. I joined the Honors Program at MSU with much fear and anxiety about whether or not I would be good enough to be considered a leader, and if it weren't for my mother's encouragement, I probably would feel the same today.

Fortunately, the program is set up to introduce students like me to what complex notions like "leadership" really mean; the [Honors First Year Experience](#) was a class designed to break down the competencies. Using the StrengthsFinder, I learned that I actually do have leadership strengths of my own, including harmony, adaptability, empathy, learning, and connectedness. The class also encouraged self-examination and reflection, where I explored my own strengths and determined my leadership values include empathy, adaptability, and trust. This revelation opened the door for me to perceive myself as a leader and determine how I might use those strengths and values in my own way.

During this time, I was also participating in the [Maverick Machine Marching Band](#), the athletic band here at MSU. I participated in the snare line and began to notice how identifying roles in the band deepened my understanding of leadership. Marching bands are meant to be unified in every sense of the word, and each member has their own skills and abilities that enhances each performance. I started to consider the different aspects of a band and was able to relate those roles, strengths, and skills to my job.

I have been a lifeguard since I was 16, and [lifeguarding](#) requires extreme trust and is all about working as a team to ensure safety of swimmers. As I started to consider my leadership competency more, I reflected on my lifeguard team and realized how my leadership values and strengths showed up in my work. Not only do we work together with our physical strengths, but there are official leaders in a lifeguard community. I started to evaluate my swim lesson coordinator and aquatics director on their own leadership styles and compared their strengths and values with my own. This understanding allowed me to be a leader at work without doing it the same way as my superiors.

These connections started to resonate with me, and during my sophomore year, I took an Honors seminar class called [Social Movements, Justice, and Collective Action](#). The final project for this class required us to work in groups to create our own social justice project. For me, this was essentially the culmination of my leadership competency because I had to use my own personal leadership values and strengths to work in a group toward a common goal. Upon reflection, I determined my own personal theory and philosophy on leadership to help guide my future social justice action. In other words, when I become a professional educator, I can utilize my leadership strengths, values, and philosophy to decide how to run a classroom.

To me, a classroom is a social movement in itself. As a teacher, I will be fighting for racial equity, social justice, and opportunities for all students every single day. I said before that I value empathy, adaptability, and trust in a leader. I will show empathy to each student and colleague because after all, we're human. I will be adaptable to change and collaboration, and differentiate instruction based on student needs, and I will teach my students to do the same. Finally, I will be a leader and teacher of transparency; truth and honesty will be valued and encouraged. This is how I will lead; this is how I will teach.

HONORS FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE CLASS

LIFEGUARDING

MAVERICK MACHINE MARCHING BAND

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, JUSTICE, AND COLLECTIVE ACTION





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Global Citizenship

At first glance, global citizenship seemed like the simplest competency for me to achieve in the Honors Program. I had already been speaking a second language for five years when I arrived and I considered myself an open-minded, empathetic individual. Upon further investigation and self-reflection, however, I learned that global citizenship is, in fact, the least achievable competency. I would dare to say that it is *never* truly achievable for anyone. While that sounds negative, global citizenship is so much more than learning a language and favoring diversity. It's about people. It's about relationships. It's about recognizing one's own culture and biases, learning about those of another, and taking it all in with neither judgment nor superiority.

I didn't really understand that concept, or even recognize its existence, before taking a class titled Human Relations in a Multicultural Society. Throughout this course, we were exposed to and interacted with people who came from all sorts of cultural groups. We engaged in service learning, mentorship, language partnerships, and deep self-reflection. The reflection piece of the class culminated in a paper our professor called a [Cultural Autobiography](#). This autobiography was my steppingstone to begin to understand what global citizenship is and how my experiences and cultures fit into it, ultimately providing me stronger self-awareness.

Before taking the human relations class, I volunteered to be an English-language tutor for international students. I signed up my freshman year and ended up participating the following year as well. The tutorship was put on by the Intensive English Program on campus and it was my job, as the [IEP Tutor](#), to assist my partners with their English skills. My first year, I was paired with a man from Saudi Arabia and a man from Mauritania. Before meeting them, I assumed that it would be pretty straightforward; like tutoring math or Spanish. Instead, I felt as though I was the one being tutored.

My partners were nearly proficient in their speaking, listening, and reading skills and needed minor assistance with writing, but they knew so much more about the world than I. To be fair, they were both older than I was at the time and had traveled way more. Nevertheless, they shared so much about their worlds with me and it opened my eyes to how people outside the US work and live and dream. During my sophomore year of tutoring, I was partnered with a woman from Japan. Her English skills were not as strong as my partners the previous year, but I still felt like I learned more from her than she did from me! My knowledge and understanding of culture and other places and people were expanded dramatically, and my worldview had shifted. Before, I only had my perspective and beliefs in mind when making decisions and walking through life. After tutoring English for two years, I can begin to think about how my decisions and actions affect people who may not think the same way as me.

As I mentioned before, I had taken five years of Spanish classes before coming to MSU. I thought that would really boost my global citizenship, and to an extent it gave me a step up to achieve my minor, but my high school Spanish classes didn't really teach me anything about the people who spoke the language. In my classes here at MSU, I've learned so much more about what it means to communicate with people in their own languages. For one of my projects in a Spanish literature class, I analyzed a poem written by a Spanish-speaking author and investigated his life. My poem was called [Oda al tomate](#), which seemed humorous to me at first. Who writes an ode to a tomato? However, the investigative aspect of the project led to learning more about personification and symbols in the author's culture. The communication of the state of humanity's fragility was hidden in a tomato, and the author's linguistic and culinary culture provided his poetry a platform.

Another project from a Spanish class that advanced my communication competency in the Spanish language was an investigative presentation, and one of the requirements was to interview someone, in Spanish, about the research topic. I chose to investigate [La música afrocubana](#), Afro-Cuban music, and I interviewed three cultural and musical insiders. The first was a teacher from Mexico who had a background in Latin American history. The second was an African American professor and musician who I met after he played an Afro-Cuban piece with his band at the cultural festival at MSU. Finally, I interviewed my percussion professor at the time; we had been playing Afro-Cuban percussive pieces for percussion ensemble and he had knowledge of the history behind the music. I learned so much about Afro-Cuban music and it provided me the opportunity to use my Spanish speaking skills in an investigative way while learning about culture and music at the same time.

I am still not a perfect global citizen. I speak another language, have traveled to another country, have met people from all over, have interacted with all kinds of humans, and yet I have so much to learn. Part of being a global citizen is recognizing that and seeking out opportunities to grow. In my future classroom, I hope I not only interact with my students in a culturally appropriate way, but that I teach them how learning about one another is a positive. Not understanding means we need to ask questions. Feeling judgmental about others means we need to step back and think about ourselves, ask ourselves questions. I will keep reflecting, and I will never stop asking questions.

[CULTURAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY](#)[IEP TUTORING & LANGUAGE PARTNERSHIP](#)[ODA AL TOMATE](#)[LA MÚSICA AFROCUBANA](#)



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Research

The research competency was the part of the Honors Program I was looking forward to the least when I joined; I knew I was going into education and had only ever knew research as something scientists or engineers do. The first two pieces of the competency, information literacy and information synthesis, were pretty clear and simple, but creating my own, original research project and disseminating the results in front of people was terrifying to me.

In our First Year Experience class for the Honors Program, I had my first experience with the research competency at the university level. We took a day to visit the library and [Meet with a Reference Librarian](#). That meeting was a hands-on experience at the computer where the reference librarian taught my peers and I how to access information effectively, efficiently, and critically by using the resources available to us as MSU students. The timing of this could not have been more perfect because a few weeks afterwards, I had to utilize the university's resources to complete research projects in my classes.

For my [SPAN 210-W](#) class, we were assigned a research paper to explore a comparison of a cultural practice between the United States and a Spanish-speaking country. I researched the norms surrounding the celebration of Christmas. This required ethical use of information to ensure I was gathering sources that were culturally accurate. At the same time, I was taking English 101 and our final project was a [Multi-Genre Research Project](#), which required organizations of ideas from diverse sources about a single topic. Once the information was gathered, I coherently and creatively synthesized information into multiple pieces of writing, each of a different genre. This project ultimately led to reflection on the process of gathering and synthesizing information, and a deeper understanding about the research process itself.

The following year, I took [SPAN 355](#) and our final project was another research paper. For this project, I had to create an annotated bibliography in which I evaluated the information I collected for each source I used in my paper. I explored the political climate in Spain, which sparked some reflection on my own nation's politics. This project was extremely revealing of the importance of effectively and ethically gathering information with a critical mindset.

At this point, I knew I needed to begin working on an original research project, but I didn't know where to start. I was taking a human relations class that was required for my major during the spring semester of my sophomore year and learned that my professor, Dr. Elizabeth Sandell, had been conducting research within the field of education. That was my chance. I asked her about her work and learned she had been researching intercultural competency, which was something she had been teaching the class about all semester. My relationship with her and learning more about her work led me to pursue [Undergraduate Research with Dr. Sandell](#), which was one of the most rewarding experiences I have had at MSU.

After conducting research with Dr. Sandell and disseminating our findings at multiple local, national, and international conferences, I chose to continue research efforts this year. I have been working with Dr. Sandell and another one of my professors, Dr. Ellingson, to learn more about normalized racism in educational settings. While I do not necessarily plan to continue doing formal research, I will constantly be doing research on my students by collecting, interpreting, analyzing, and synthesizing data on their learning to help improve my teaching. Their test scores provide quantitative data about their learning and understanding, and my verbal interview and observations of students provides me with qualitative data about their learning and understanding. The research competency has shown me that it's not all test tubes and experiments; research is about answering questions and finding what works best.

[MEET WITH REFERENCE LIBRARIAN](#) [SPANISH RESEARCH PAPER \(SPAN 210-W\)](#) [SPANISH RESEARCH PAPER \(SPAN 355\)](#)

[MULTIGENRE RESEARCH PROJECT](#) [UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH WITH DR. SANDELL](#)





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Field Experience

In the Elementary & Literacy Education program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, all teacher candidates must complete four semesters of field experience, each of which focus on different aspects of the teaching profession. Every semester, the teacher candidates are placed in various public school districts in Southern Minnesota.

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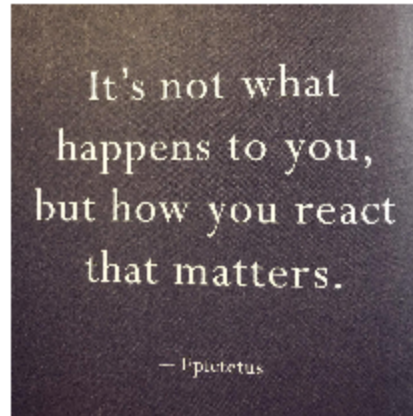
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