

Nicole Jecha

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Welcome!

A bit about me:

Welcome to my portfolio! My name is Nicole Jecha. I am studying Biology with an emphasis in Zoology at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

In this portfolio you will find information about my involvement in the Honors Program at Minnesota state, my work experience, as well as my future aspirations.

My mission statement:

My goal in my coursework and my work experience is to be my best self and to help others be their best. I want to be able to encourage myself as well as others to be a great version of who they are.

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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."

Freshman Year Learning Plan

August 2017- May 2018

Freshman

Sophomore Year Learning Plan

August 2018- May 2019

Sophomore

Junior Year Learning Plan

August 2019- May 2020

Junior



[Click to learn more about the Honors Program!](#)

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Leadership

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

[Honors FYEX](#)

[Learning Community](#)

[HONR401: Mentor](#)

[Wildlife Internship](#)

Before starting college, I had very little experience with leadership and how I could be an effective leader. I was not fully aware of what I looked for in a leader and who I wanted to be as a leader. These past four years in the Honors Program has helped me tremendously with growing as a leader and professional. Through various educational and real-life experiences, I have been able to develop my leadership philosophy and practice working in teams with effective leadership.

In the [Honors First Year Experience class](#), I spent time finding my own values in leadership by taking the Strengths Finder assessment. I analyzed what each of my themes meant and how I can apply these themes in various leadership settings. I also looked at how these traits or themes can be applied to team settings. I developed a baseline of leadership through this experience.

Another experience building off of this baseline was the [Honors Learning Community](#). As a learning community, we expanded on the value themes we each had and developed our experiences working in teams and working toward a common goal. An example of this would be the rope course event we had. This was my first real experience taking the values I had recently learned and seeing how I can apply them within a team. It was some trial and error of finding out how we can each communicate with each other effectively. We all had common goals in the activities we did, but how we worked together to accomplish these goals strengthened our bond. I took this concept of working towards a common goal and also applied it in working towards my performance for HONR401: Performance and Social Justice.

In the [HONR401 class: Developing Your Mentor Philosophy](#), I dived into a deeper understanding of values and teams and spent more time looking at effective and ineffective leadership styles through emotional intelligence. We got to use another real-life scenario by mentoring first-year honors students. I applied my effective leadership styles to help the first-year student transition to MNSU and the Honors Program. My mentee did not need a lot of help adjusting to college life so it was not a lot of experience with me helping her. At the end of the class, I was able to identify my personal leadership philosophy to work collaboratively with other people and tap into what I had learned about emotional intelligence to gauge how I can contribute to a group.

The last experience I had further solidified how I work and lead in teams. I did an [internship at The Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Minnesota](#) where I worked with fellow interns and volunteers to help take care of young birds that were brought in. I relied a lot on working with my other interns to complete the tasks we were assigned to everyday. We all worked collaboratively together and would switch leadership roles, so everyone had an equal experience. I had already identified my leadership philosophy that I could apply, and I really was able to look at how I can work with others who may not have the same philosophy as I do.

As I move on to graduate from MNSU and the Honors Program, I will continue to develop my leadership philosophy in more professional settings. I will have more opportunities to work with other people toward a common goal and build relationships along the way. Leadership is always changing, but our core values do not. I am thankful for the opportunity to find my values now so I can be prepared for the future.

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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."

[Honors FYEX](#)

[Art as Politics](#)

[Animal Behavior](#)

[HONR401: Performance](#)

[Developmental Biology](#)

[Independent Research](#)

When I first started in the Honors Program, research sounded like a daunting competency to fulfill. The idea of having to find my own original research and be able to present it by the time I graduated was definitely overwhelming and scary. As I went through the competency and started gaining experiences, I realized that having my own research was not as scary of a task as I initially thought. Being a Biology major, I have gained a lot of experience looking for sources and putting that knowledge into my own research, but I wanted to do something a little bit different than lab research. I developed a project that was outside of my major of study, but it was still very interesting to me, nonetheless.

I started learning about correctly citing and finding credible sources in my [Honors FYEX](#) class. I got a basic idea of where I can find these sources and be able to check their credibility. This set the foundation for the citations and references I would have to create in the upcoming years. In my [Art as Politics](#) class, I started to practice organizing information from scholarly sources for later use in my term paper. I found that being able to organize all of the information I have when I am doing research is crucial for a successful project. It is more impactful to be able to easily go back to a source or quotation to emphasize the point I want to make.

Later on, I was able to start into my own research by designing and performing my own research experiment for my [Animal Behavior](#) class. I came up with my own research question, made my own experiment with testing, and got the results to make my conclusion. This was a great experience for me to learn more about the research process by doing original research. For my experiment, I tested female Betta fish behaviors in the presence of another female and a male. Through this, I learned the importance of having a large test group to reduce bias and variability. My groups were too small, and it did not give me as much data as I would have needed to have adequate results. There are always errors in experiments, but this is how we learn and develop. It is not science without constant evolution. On top of this project, I did a final semester project for my [Developmental Biology](#) class where I really developed my information literacy. Most of this project included researching sources from different journals and publishers. I developed techniques for finding peer-reviewed sources to add to my project. I took all of this information to develop my knowledge of my project to later on accomplish my research goal with my partner.

The last two experiences go hand in hand with each other in my development. I took the [Honors 401 class: Performance and Social Justice](#). During this class, I spent time researching a racially charged event in Minnesota. In the end, I made a video about this event and how it is impacted Minnesota today. When I was researching this project, the information that I found was very different from my perspectives. Having all of these perspectives and narratives helped me develop my own research question and narrative about this event. I dove in with the process of information synthesis to really analyze the sources I had found and to think about how I wanted to use them for my own research. I took this project a step further and developing my own [independent research](#). I looked at 100 years of racial history in Minnesota to see what has changed and what has not changed. I also made a video of my findings to disseminate at the URS.

As I go on to graduate and begin my profession, I will be using my research the skills I have developed the past four years. I will be able to effectively look for sources and apply them to my job. I also hope to do some more original research of my own as I progress through my career.

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Global Citizenship

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

Honors FYEX

ForGE

Taboo Language

HONR401: Performance

Poetry Festival

When I first came to college and started the honors program, I really did not have a good idea of what global citizenship is. I grew up in a very white predominant suburb where I was definitely sheltered from social issues. It was in the honors [FYEX class](#) where I started looking into my own culture and how it differs from other cultures. I thought more about where I lived and how that impacted my perspectives. I spent more time looking at different cultures through the [RSO ForGE](#). We talked about how some girls cannot afford education or they do not have access to education. In some of their cultures they were expected to go to school. This was example of contrasting their culture from my own and looking at different ways people live.

Since I completed my second language requirement by taking college level language in high school, I had to find another event that would help my communication in college. I chose to participate in the [International Poetry Festival](#). I learned and recited a poem in French and submitted a recording of myself to put into the festival. This experience showed me a different perspective of French culture. I learned more about how poetry differs between languages and cultures. Poetry is an art form in itself, but it shows a different viewpoint of a culture that not many can see. It was very cool to see other people express themselves in their own native languages or just a second language. It showed a different meaning than just speaking in a conversation.

I continued to strengthen my self-awareness in my [taboo language class](#). We spent time during class talking with exchange students about what is considered taboo in their culture. There were a lot of instances where it was a norm in their cultures to respect and take care of their elders. This is not the case in American culture. I learned how to ask uncomfortable questions about someone else's culture through talking about taboo language. I increased my self-awareness of what my culture considers taboo and how that may be different from another culture.

My knowledge and understanding was solidified in my [HONR401 class: Performance and Social Justice](#). We spent time using the "Write on Race" journal prompts made by the Mankato diversity council to guide our conversations. These prompts helped me look at different theories and instances of racial oppressions. I was able to look at my own privilege in society and it really hit home for me that I am blinded by my own privilege. There are other people that do not have the same privilege and experiences that I do on a daily basis. I was able to talk with some of my other classmates about the discrimination they face every day. I am never looked down upon in society because of my skin color. I am not living in fear because of my skin color. I learned how to effectively ask productive questions about race without having a negative bias. I have also become more conscious about having informative conversations about race.

As I move forward, I will continue to be more aware of social issues and that role I play in society. I have more of understanding of cultures that are not my own and how I learn more about different cultures by asking questions. As we progress through social injustice and as I grow and develop in my career, I will be more sensitive to what I can do to be a part of the change.

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