

# JACQUELINE TOMAS

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## **Hello & Welcome!**

Thank you for visiting and looking through my portfolio. My name is Jacqueline Tomas. I am an Honors Student at Minnesota State University, Mankato, anticipating to graduate Spring 2021 with a Bachelor's Degree from the College of Education. I am determined to enter the classroom as a well-equipped educator who will fight for issues pertaining to future generations.

## **Mission Statement**

I will always be an advocate for equity and the well-being of others. In order to do this, I strive to be educated, open-minded and bold in the actions I take. I will push myself toward growth, seek new opportunities and do whatever is in my control to make a difference.

[Jacqueline.tomas@mnsu.edu](mailto:Jacqueline.tomas@mnsu.edu)





# Minnesota State University, Mankato Honors Program

<https://www.mnsu.edu/honors/>

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.

Honors has added weight and significance to my academic career. Knowing that I wanted to become a teacher meant it could have been easy to attend Minnesota State University, Mankato and graduate following the path laid out for me. Honors pushed me to get further involved in ways I originally would not have planned to.

It was tempting to enroll in easy courses that were only relevant to growing as a teacher. However, Honors made me consider what professionalism meant through a new light. In an attempt to develop my leadership skills, I took on a job position as a Learning Community Coordinator for the Elementary Program. Unexpectedly, this job paved the way to discovering opportunities my school offered regarding global citizenship; trying to best lead my students meant taking advantage of them. The language requirement of the Honors Program meant I was already deep in the process of trying to learn a new language at the time. As I talked to peers around the world, I was better able to understand some of the difficulties that may lie behind being an English Language Learner in Mankato. While there are numerous difficulties students go through that are still invisible to me, I still carried a new lens. Trying to connect white, English speaking Freshman students to encompassing perspectives was a form of leadership. In my communities, I became more aware of the subcultures that exist within cultures. I am celebrative of these cultures, increasingly better able to navigate them, and aware of the ways in which I am privileged.

Professionally, Honors has given me an edge in being a more well-rounded critical thinker. I feel a part of the academic world, not only surrounding the teaching field, but other sciences as well. Through the Speech and Debate team, I explored issues I cared about through both an academic and creative approach. Due to the encouragement of the Honors department, I felt eager to create pieces that focused on academia, that challenged structures in our society or that emphasized social issues. The work I have created has never been finished; because it is a competitive environment I have been constantly analyzing and reanalyzing what I have done after receiving criticism from judges or coaches. I have gained a sense of confidence and passion regarding research, revision, and sharing ideas. However, I have also come to see research as ever-changing, collaborative, and necessary.

The courses I have taken through Honors have also helped shape my academic experience. One particular class stands out: Research of the Paranormal and Pseudosciences. In this class, I created literature reviews, conducted my own scientific experiments and gained an understanding of what more standardized research looks like. The class has contributed greatly to my ability to reason and was a great learning opportunity provided by honors. My experience at Minnesota State University, Mankato has certainly been enriched by the ways in which the Honors Program pushed me.

Each competency has additional reflections written on the main page.

## Leadership

### Leadership

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

## Research

### 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

### Global Citizenship

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

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## Leadership

**When entering the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, I did not see myself as an overt leader. Nonetheless, I was still eager to try new experiences and see what the Honors Program would have to offer. My early Honors experiences modified my sense of self. Meanwhile, my later reflections challenged me to form new philosophies. I decided to focus my later reflections on being a member of the Minnesota State University, Mankato's Speech Team and being a Learning Community Coordinator for the Elementary Education Program. As a result of my experiences, I have gained a sense of confidence regarding leadership that matches what Honors Students are supposed to exude.**

**My early experiences are all meaningful, but were somewhat brief: a Skills Strengths Finder test that I took, and a volunteer opportunity at a Fall Carnival for Elementary students. I choose to reflect on these experiences, not because I saw myself as a leader when I was experiencing them, but because of the philosophies about leadership they allowed me to have. Discussing my results to the Skills Strengths Finder test showcases my perception of what makes me a leader. The Fall Carnival allowed me early experiences in seeing how a team works together to get something done. This event was related to Learning Communities and was a stepping stone toward forward involvement. These philosophies are the base for how I made decisions in more intensive leadership opportunities down the road.**

**Being a Learning Community Coordinator and member on the Speech team were ongoing experiences that allowed me to create my own definition of what leadership is. I held positions in these communities that I am extremely thankful to have had. Both roles allowed me to receive individual feedback about my leadership skills and, most importantly, implement what I had learned. In this way, I was no longer dissecting leadership as something that was abstract but concrete. I learned that I often needed to adapt how I do things and, also, how to speak up when I believe things to be wrong. Questions I asked myself about my leadership became more personal: what motivates my leadership? Am I responsible for making leaders out of others? My experiences at Minnesota, State University, Mankato have given me a sense of responsibility to always seek leadership opportunities. To lead well means to constantly be reflecting and taking responsibility for things that need to be done. I plan to expand on what I have learned about Leadership as I discover new opportunities in the future. In a classroom, I plan to use what I have learned about leadership to be reflective, ambitious, and most importantly, courageous.**

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## Research

Knowing the research process has been critical to building my integrity as an academic. My experiences include early-level class projects, academically crafted scripts for the University Speech Team and research projects for a research-focused Honors class. My understanding of research was built through learning about research efficacy and receiving support about conducting research from professors and coaches. As I developed these skills, I became more confident in synthesizing findings to test my own theories. In these later experiences, I learn to make sure that the sources I use accurately reflect truth and that I am investigating subjects thoroughly.

Being on the speech team supplied me with resources on finding credible sources while early class projects taught me how to create my own arguments. My Freshman year on the speech team was the first time that I created my own arguments from academic sources with complete free choice. I had written small research projects, but was not engaged in them authentically. For early research projects, one of my earliest experiences that went past a basic lesson was creating my own experiment in a biology course on auditory recall. While the project was low stakes, it acts as an early experience to help me assess if data is credible or not.

After taking Honors 401, I was able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of what research was by continuing to create more high-level experiments and by critically reflecting. As a result, I identified the ways my participation on the speech team was demonstrating this same high level of research skills. In both the Honors class and in speech, I have learned to synthesize and assess multiple sources with greater scrutiny. I create theses in both activities only after extensive investigation. In speech, I am able to receive feedback during tournaments and am showing my creative work to a large number of people. Speech competitions that I attend allow me to disseminate my work. The ability to navigate information ethically and to continue asking questions is something that I have certainly gained confidence doing from my experiences. I have become a critical thinker and will make research-based decisions in my classroom so that I am best serving my students. As a teacher, I will continue to ask research questions based on classroom observations. I will continue conducting my own research and will continue being skeptical of the data that I find and what it means.



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## Global Citizenship

**Global Citizenship is something I can be reflective of in all settings. Regardless of where I am, there are numerous cultural dynamics at play. The experiences I selected for my Portfolio are significant because they have allowed me to be more articulate and predictive of how to respond ethically to different scenarios. Additionally, these experiences have helped me understand my own identity in a global context. My experiences build upon one another to describe how deeply I play a role in global power dynamics. First, I discuss what I know about the significance of inequity before tackling my understanding of the differences in people's cultures. As a final experience, I share what role I should play as a teacher.**

**When I first came to school I had some conservancy with cultures outside of my own. My French Language reflection addresses my family's involvement in Haiti. While my dad's continuous involvement in a non-profit allows this experience to be on-going, traveling and speaking French in a country, where French could be considered an elitist language, has revealed how language creates power dynamics. Additionally, I discuss my contribution to racial and social class power dynamics here as well as in my Cultural Autobiography. My cultural autobiography addresses various permeative experiences in my life that have changed how I think about my own culture. I reflect on my upbringing and how global experiences shift my perception of what parts of my identity are important to who I am. These reflections set a precedent for why awareness of global citizenship is important.**

**I grow in my ability to articulate an understanding for the cultures of others in my reflections for first year experience, my reflection on French classes, and for specific speeches written for Forensics competitions. Individual Stories and Diversity Discussions are both projects I completed freshman year that model my understanding toward the internal importance people place on their culture. In these experiences, I acknowledge what culture is and why it is crucial. Taking French and being immersed in language through travel, allows me to articulate how communication is a form of establishing status within different communities. I took French in highschool, two semesters in college and have experience speaking with my family. I also note the extraneous lengths English Language Learners have to go through and reflect on why this is relevant for future students in my classroom. This also allows me to address inequity on an interpersonal level.**

**Currently, I am in the classroom and have multiple opportunities to teach others to be global citizens. The responsibilities that come along with teaching make it imperative I am able to understand other's identities and the intersectionality that comes along with it. I have created several projects that demonstrate ways I plan to acknowledge racism, ableism and other identities in my life moving forward.**