

## Morgan Cooper

Human Resources Management major  
at Minnesota State Univeristy Mankato



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# Welcome

## My Honors Program Mission Statement

As a graduate of Minnesota State University Mankato's Honors Program, my mission is to use the skills I have developed through the program to be a better professional and better person.

Leadership

Research, Scholarly, & Creative Activity

Global Citizenship/Intercultural Engagement

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# About Me

Welcome to my e-portfolio! I am a senior student at Minnesota State University Mankato pursuing my bachelor's degree in management with an emphasis in human resources. I will graduate this May. I have been a member of the MNSU Honors Program since August 2020.



## Career Interests

Once I graduate, I hope to receive a compliance focused human resources position in the St. Paul/Minneapolis region. My goal is to one day become the head of human resources for a Fortune 500 company. For now, I hope to continue gaining experience in all aspects of the human resources field.

## Personal Life

I grew up in Galesville, Wisconsin, a small town only a few miles from the Mississippi River. Family and friends have always been important to me. I have three younger sisters, who have helped make me the person I am today. I enjoy playing card games, dancing, and spending time outside. Growing up on a farm taught me to appreciate nature and animals, as I still do today.



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# Honors Program

Here is description of the program provided on the [MNSU Honors Program Page](#):

Honors students are committed to developing in several competency areas such as leadership, research, and intercultural engagement. The program provides class experiences designed to support competency development and a variety of co-curricular activities to enrich their growth. Students demonstrate their emerging competencies through electronic portfolios in which they document their activities and engage in meaningful reflection about their learning. The Honors Program challenges students to move outside of their comfort zones and to think critically about the world and their personal contributions to the communities in which they live.

## The Three Competencies



Leadership



Research, Scholarly, & Creative Activity



Global  
Citizenship/Intercultural  
Engagement

## "Why Honors" Essays



PDF

HONR 375

Essays written in my Honors courses that explain why I am in the Honors Program and how it has affected my experience at MNSU.



PDF

HONR 475



## Leadership

Leadership is a subject I believed I knew everything about as I entered college. I am the firstborn of four daughters and naturally fit the stereotype. Oldest daughters are known as responsible, bossy, and leaders. I have often found myself in leadership roles (both by choice and not) within school, work, and community activities. However, it was not until I joined the Honors program that I thought about what leadership truly means to me. The program pushed me to explore this aspect of myself that was a large part of my identity, yet I knew little about.

The first step of this exploration was taking the [Strengths-Finder](#) assessment. This assessment provided me with personalized results on my strengths and weaknesses as a leader. I believe this information is an extremely important starting point for any leader's development. It is vital to understand what skills to utilize and what to strengthen. Without this understanding, a leader cannot know where to begin in their improvement. Then, one can begin to work on their leadership philosophy.

My leadership philosophy is derived from my experience in the two jobs I had during my college career: [Walmart Team Lead](#) and [Bridges MN HR Coordinator](#). These two jobs contrast each other in many ways, which is excellent for evolving a well-rounded theory. The philosophy I have developed throughout my experiences is that leadership should be practiced situationally. There is no correct style that will work for every situation and every follower. This is evident in my differing experiences between my two jobs, as very different leadership styles were necessary there. At Walmart, I often needed to choose between an authoritative and a laissez-faire style due to how each of my staff reacted to authority. At Bridges, I lead large groups in participative discussions but also lead through mentoring. Every situation requires strategic thinking as to what leadership style is appropriate. It is incredibly important while considering which style to use to take in consideration what each individual follower needs and wants. This is why I also believe that a diverse team is essential to a leader's success. A diverse team pushes the leader to practice multiple forms of leadership, making them a more experienced situational leader. Again, this importance of diversity is highlighted in both of my job experiences, as I have worked with many people with varying backgrounds and demographics. My participation in the honors program assisted me in my leadership philosophy development, but the work is not done.

Now that I understand what leadership means to me, I need to put my theory to practice and develop my skills further. Because I know as a situational leader that I need to be proficient in every leadership skill, I must improve upon my weaknesses indicated in my StrengthsFinder assessment. The best way to develop these skills is through active practice, which is what I hope to do in my future career.



## Research, Scholarly, & Creative Activity

When I first learned about the research competency requirement of MNSU's honors program, I was worried. Up to that point, all my experiences with research were science related; a subject I do not favor. As a business major, I felt this competency would be very difficult for me to complete, let alone enjoy. However, throughout my time in the honors program, I have learned that research is not just conducting science experiments. People conduct research informally each day in their own lives, and research is used to explore every aspect of life, not just science. Not only have I learned how to evaluate business-related research, but I have conducted business-related research of my own. It was the honors program that pushed me to explore this part of my major, and I am grateful it did.

Despite having taken only two science courses at MNSU, I have completed several research papers in my business courses. One paper that stands out to me was from my leadership class where I defined the differences between leaders and managers. While collecting sources for this paper, I got a glimpse into how much research has been conducted on leadership in the business field. Scholars have been studying the characteristics of leaders for hundreds of years. There are many theories related to leadership, such as how to lead or when to lead, and all these theories are backed by research conducted by scientists as well as business professionals. In my paper, I combed through these different perspectives and stated what I believed a leader was based on my findings. As a business professional, I need to know how to find reliable sources of information and then make the best decision based on my findings. While I knew before the honors program that this would be an important aspect of managing, I never knew that this was technically research.

Even though I completed these research papers, I never thought that I would have the opportunity to conduct a traditional research study related to business. In Spring 2022, I was accepted into MNSU's undergraduate research apprenticeship program (RAP). This program allows students with no research experience to be paired with a professor to begin their journey into conducting research. Through this program, I developed research questions, distributed a survey, evaluated my survey findings, and then presented at a professional conference. I also thoroughly enjoyed the project since the topic was generational differences in the workplace. This experience was a true turning point in my relationship with research. I learned that research can be interesting and important in the business world.

Although my time with the honors program is done, my experiences with research will not end. As I have progressed in my major, the importance of research in human resources has only been stressed more. HR professionals conduct research often, from training needs assessments, to job analyses, to finding trending recruitment methods. I know that I will be able to use the research skills I have gained to conduct this HR research, which will be a career advantage.



## Global Citizenship/Intercultural Engagement

I grew up in a small town with a population of around 1,500 people. Most everyone in the town had the same identities: white, straight, Christian Americans of Norwegian descent. It was not until moving to Mankato for college that I witnessed diversity for myself. Although I did try to educate myself on different cultures, I never had the opportunities to learn directly from others. The honors program pushed me to become a global citizen and expand my knowledge on other cultures as well as my own.

The first step in my journey to becoming interculturally engaged was to explore other cultures. I was able to do this through my [Elementary Spanish 2](#) and [Beginning American Sign Language](#) courses. In both classes, we spent a great deal of time learning the languages (an important cultural aspect) as well as exploring other parts of their cultures like history and food. I especially enjoyed my Spanish class because we got to pair up online with students from Mexico who were learning English. We were able to chat about our hobbies and interests in two separate languages! My participation in both these courses has made me think about how many different cultures there are in the world, and how I participate in my own culture. When you grow up in a place where everyone is culturally similar, it is hard to see that the way you live is a part of your culture. It is not until you explore the way others live that you can better understand your own life.

The second step in my journey to becoming a global citizen was to deepen my understanding of how my culture interacts with others. I did this by attending four seminars presented by the [Maverick Diversity Institute](#). These seminars taught me about the privileges I receive due to my identities and the ways my actions can harm marginalized cultures. Although it is uncomfortable to admit that I have many privileges granted to me, I have learned that it is best to recognize this and then learn how to become a better ally for marginalized people. It is through this understanding that I have developed my personal framework for intercultural engagement: listen and learn. As a person who is not a marginalized member of society (at least in the Midwest), it is not my duty to speak when it comes to cultural engagement. I must listen to others different from me and then learn from their experiences. This is how I become a better global citizen.

As a future HR professional, I will be dedicated to becoming an even better global citizen. I know that I will constantly be working with others who come from diverse cultural backgrounds, so it is unacceptable to stop furthering my growth. HR professionals must be advocates for their staff, therefore I need to understand my staff and their actions. I believe that people's actions are heavily influenced by their cultural backgrounds. So, being aware of different cultures and how they interact with my own is incredibly important. I want to continue to attend seminars where I can learn about how to be a better ally as well as learn more about different cultures directly from those a part of them.