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## Austin Rau Honors Portfolio

Austin Thomas Rau

*Minnesota State University - Mankato*

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# Austin Rau

## Austin Rau



## Welcome!

Hello! My name is Austin Rau. I am a geography major at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Geography has been a passion of mine all of my life. I enjoy analyzing the distribution of phenomena over space which I can do with tools such as ArcGIS. My plan is to continue my academic studies in a graduate program so that I can continue to ask tough questions and find the answers to them with research skills I will enhance while in graduate school. I have a strong desire to learn and understand more about topics of interest to me which is why I think graduate school is the right choice for me. During my time as an undergraduate, I aspire to develop myself personally, professionally, and academically by challenging myself in all aspects of my life and taking every opportunity to better myself and make an impact on the community and those around me.

## Mission Statement

I, Austin Rau, will hold myself to high academic standards and will continue to further my learning through experiential learning. I will bring it upon myself to excel in both personal and academic development, and will to the utmost of my ability act in accord to my moral beliefs.

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# Austin Rau

In this section:

[Affiliations](#)

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# Austin Rau

## In this section:

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## Honors Program

Welcome to my Honors page! This page and its contents are related to the Honors program and the three competencies that the program promotes. These competencies are: leadership, research, and global citizenship. The program aspires to have each student develop these competencies during their college career and demonstrate them through activities such as essays, presentations, or other reflective works. There are subheadings for each of the competencies; each one contains an assortment of artifacts I have accumulated which contain demonstrations of my work for each of the competencies.

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# Austin Rau

## In this section:

### Leadership

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## Leadership

Leadership is a special competency to me because of its incredible capacity for change. During the course of my undergraduate career, leadership transformed the way I think, respond to situations and other around me. Each leadership experience I undertook contributed in unique ways to the development of my own leadership philosophy while revealing my strengths and weaknesses. At the core of my leadership philosophy are the qualities of approachability, teamwork, and active listening. Together, these three attributes are the foundation of my leadership philosophy and guide me in my approach to different leadership and teamwork situations.

No leader is perfect. Each has their own set of strengths and weaknesses. However, being aware of one's strengths and weaknesses is a process in and of itself. Through my leadership experience as a [community advisor](#) in the dormitories, I realized that one of my weaknesses is public speaking. I remember that during the first floor meeting I held with my residents that it was very awkward because none of my residents talked. It was just me talking and laughing at my own jokes making it even more awkward. However, this weakness also simultaneously led to a strength of mine which is humor. Through the use of humor and being approachable, I was able to get my residents to feel more comfortable and by the time I had my second floor meeting a week later, people were more willing to share. Approachability is one of my fundamental pieces of my leadership philosophy. In my experience, people are more willing to respond positively to leaders who are approachable and attempt to make a positive environment. It can create a sense of community in a group which makes people care about their common goals or shared spaces. It also makes a leader seem friendlier and human which allows followers to relate to him or her-making a connection.

Teamwork is essential to leadership because how can one be a leader be effective without working with others? In fact, teamwork makes leadership easier because one does not have to go through anything alone and has a support system. My experience as VP of Leadership and Scholarship in the [National Residence Hall Honorary \(NRHH\)](#) was a way in which I used teamwork in order to lead effectively. In this experience, another weakness of mine, lack of confidence, impeded my leadership. For a time, I was not confident in my ability to lead a group of my peers in NRHH. However, by understanding that we were working as a team and that I was not alone made all the difference in that experience. Having a group of supporters and knowing they had my

back helped me improve my confidence and step up to the task. My organizational skills also proved to be a strength in helping me effectively lead my team. By always being up to date and having good communication with team members, I was able to effectively lead my team and give them reason to have faith in me as a leader. In teamwork, it is important that the leader work with the team members as equals and encourage their input. It is also important that the leader establishes that he or she has the skills necessary to lead the team and bring everyone together.

Of all three components in my leadership philosophy, active listening is by far the most important to me because it encompasses so many important qualities: respect, reflection, patience, and calm. All of these qualities are found in the act of listening which makes it key to effective leadership. When I took the Honors [Developing Your Mentor Philosophy](#) class, I actively listened to the group discussions and absorbed all that was said. Through the process of active listening, one is: respecting the time of others by hearing what they have to say, internally reflecting upon the meaning of what was said, patiently waiting to contribute to the conversation, and maintaining a calm environment. Active listening was important to me in that class because I was able to optimize my learning about mentorship and use what was said in discussion to promote critical thinking. For me, I believe in contributing to a conversation only if what I will say is meaningful and beneficial to the discussion. In order to do that, I must spend time actively listening to the discussion so that I may have time to thoughtfully contribute. So I waited until I felt I had listened and thought enough about the discussion to finally contribute to it with my own thoughts and opinions. Another experience where I used active listening was with the [Honors Student Council](#) in hopes of making meetings a productive as possible-also while having fun.

Leadership is something I did not think I had in myself. There was a time in which I was content being a passive follower. Now after all I have experienced and by developing my own leadership philosophy, I enjoy leadership and being an active follower. The challenges of leadership are far outweighed by the rewards and for me that was being able to work with and get to know many amazing people. Everyone I met in my leadership roles made an impact on me one way or another and I am thankful for every experience I had the opportunity to undertake in my undergraduate career.

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# Austin Rau

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and Information](#)[Literacy](#)[Minnesota](#)[Department of Health](#)[Global Citizenship](#)

## Research

Research affected me in ways I could not imagine as I worked through my undergraduate education at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The sheer amount of what I learned and how much I grew in areas such as information literacy, the research process, my knowledge base, and dissemination of research is phenomenal. It is as if my eyes have been opened up to a whole other world that I did not know about and I am thankful to be a part of the community of scholars and to have the honor to contribute to my discipline.

Information literacy is essential if one is to determine what is high quality and reliable information to use to further a research question. I am currently enrolled in an Honors seminar class called [Research and Information Literacy](#) which is providing me extensive information related to information literacy and the research process hence its name. This is being used as I am in the initial stages of developing a literature review for this class. This class is essential for my growth as a researcher because finding reliable information effectively is crucial to the research process. It will also help me become more comfortable in navigating through information and databases. These skills will be transferrable as I prepare to enter graduate school next year and will be expected to know how to find reliable information.

The research process is something I thought I knew, yet discovered I had much more to learn. My landmark research experience as an undergraduate was a project in which I mapped the logistical patterns of Bakken oil accidents in the United States using the geospatial software ArcGIS. In this project, I used accident data collected by the Petroleum and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) and displayed it graphically on a map of the contiguous United States. This was a huge step for me in becoming a researcher as I had to learn and become more familiar with the research process. I discovered that research is not easy and things do not always work out perfectly. There will be new data to incorporate as one is developing a project. The software will not always work. One will have to condense the write up and carefully chose which information to share for a poster presentation because of the poster regulations. I encountered all of this while working on my research project and had to learn how to adapt to these unpredictable circumstances.

I also learned the lesson of finding one's limits with research because while I was working on my Bakken oil project, I was also doing a project in my intermediate GIS



class in which I was mapping the spatial distribution of influenza in Minnesota using data that I requested from the [Minnesota Department of Health](#). Working on two projects simultaneously was a difficult task and put a huge strain on me last year. Yet, I am glad I worked on both projects for they have benefitted me immensely by opening the door to new opportunities and experiences such as academic conferences and networking with professionals in my discipline.

My favorite part to research is the dissemination because it gives me the chance to share my results with others which gives value to my research and hard work. I had the great opportunity to present my research on Bakken oil at three different [conferences](#): The Minnesota Undergraduate Research Symposium, The Minnesota Undergraduate Scholars Conference, and the Association of American Geographers National Conference. This was a great experience for me because I was able to share my research with others and this also lead me to meet professionals in my discipline who are doing interesting work. For example at the association of American geographers meeting in Chicago, I attended some sessions on a new interest of mine, medical geography, and also met some faculty who work in that field. Now I have connections with them and am applying to graduate programs to work with them. From my experience and disseminating research I learned to appreciate sharing my scholarly activity with others. I enjoyed sharing my research project with others and also learned from them as they gave me suggestions as to how I can further my research.

The work on my research projects also extended my knowledge base. Now after finishing my projects, I know more about the software ArcGIS, Bakken oil, and the influenza virus than I ever did before. This knowledge was essential for me to develop my research projects and create new knowledge that I can share with the academic community. This knowledge is also important to my discipline as it demonstrates how GIS can be used to map nationwide trends like with my Bakken project. It also helps strengthen the connection between geographic techniques and public health. This relationship is relevant due to the rising popularity of a subfield in geography called medical geography.

Research was something I thought I was familiar with, yet I found there is much more to research than just gathering information about a given topic and writing it up in a paper. Research is about getting a foundation of knowledge and then applying this to a research question that does not have exact answer. It requires long hours of work, constant revision, editing, and motivation. It is a great opportunity for one to become more involved in a discipline and allows one to build upon the work that has been done by those before him. Through my research experience I have come to enjoy research and I want to continue in graduate studies so I can continue to ask tough questions and learn the knowledge and skills needed to find answers to them.





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# Austin Rau

## In this section:

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a Global Citizen](#)

## Global Citizenship

Global citizenship is an important competency to me because has been an essential component to my personal growth and understanding of culture. Through classes and study abroad experiences, I have gained a better understanding of what culture is and how I can excel personally and professionally in an increasingly interconnected and multicultural society.

When I first began the Honors Program I did not think that as an American I had any culture. This perspective changed with the help of the Honors seminar [Intro to Becoming a Global Citizen](#). In this course, the main objective was developing a better understanding and definition of culture. In the exercises and reflective paper I completed for the course, I was able to come to the realization that I do in fact have culture. Culture is a hierarchical concept and includes levels from a macro to micro scale. I prefer to break down culture in the following way: Nation, region, state, city, family, and individual. Culture exists in each level and it was important for me to identify how I have culture at each level. I was unaware of this concept of culture before this class and I am glad I learned about it.

Being a student at MSU has also helped me recognize my own cultural rules and biases along with the complexities of understanding cultural differences. Mankato has a strong presence of different cultural groups and international students. Something I have struggled with is the communication barrier between me and non-native English speakers. It is often difficult to understand what students speaking English as a second language are saying to me and I am never sure if they understand what I am saying to them. This makes it even more important to listen carefully during conversation and ask for something to be repeated if one does not understand.

Even though I got frustrated with the communication barrier in the United States, my study abroad trip to [France](#) in the summer of 2015 opened my eyes to a new perspective. In my trip, I had to make a conscious effort to formulate my responses in French to get the information I wanted when speaking with a French person. Sometimes this meant saying things multiple times to get it right or resorting to speaking English to get the message across. Thankfully I was in a place where English could be used if I absolutely could not communicate. This is not the case for other languages. I have a greater sense of empathy and respect for those who can speak a foreign language. It is a long and arduous process to learn a second language and in America it can be all too

easy to give up and think English is good enough. That is why I have a great deal of reverence for anyone who has struggled with the process of learning a second language and did not give up. I also understand that the French people I talked to may have had similar feelings I got when I spoke with non-native English speakers in America. The French people may have gotten frustrated just as I have with trying to communicate with someone who does not speak the language fluently. Taking a step back and remembering this is helping me be more patient and empathetic to people I speak with who are still in the process of learning English.

My own experiences in learning French has been a great way for me to become conversationally fluent in French and get a different perspective in the French culture. I feel that learning French has even improved my English with all the focus and grammar and sentence structure. I also was able to partake in the French cinematic culture through the intermediate sequence of French which was taught using French films as a way to learn the language. It was also a cultural experience to watch these movies and see what the French value. My study abroad trip also allowed me to appreciate the French culture by seeing dozens of monuments including architecture and art which were truly amazing to see.

Culture is not an easy concept to grasp and it is a long and difficult process to move forward in cultural competency. Experience is the best way to improve upon cultural competency and can allow one to reflect upon one's own beliefs and values. My experiences in classes and in France impacted me incredibly in cultural competency and understanding. I believe I am more attuned to culture in society and have a more positive attitude toward cultural differences as it is a bridge to understanding how the world and all of its inhabitants are very unique and that all of these differences should be respected.

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# Austin Rau

In this section:

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## Geography

Welcome to my Geography page. This page is specifically dedicated to maps I developed in different GISc courses I have taken at MSU. The maps shown were developed in GISc classes and individual research and are intended to showcase my GISc skills. I will continue to add final project maps as I continue taking GISc courses. Please feel free to contact me for more information on the projects or for more maps related to these projects.

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# Austin Rau

## In this section:

- Accomplishments
- Education
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- Experiences
- Skills

## Career Portfolio

I have a strong desire to make an impact on the world. I want to do important work that impacts society and helps people live better lives. Thus, I am interested in pursuing a public health career at the state or federal government level, I am also contemplating a Ph D. and work as a university professor. I believe I can accomplish my goals and become a successful professional through my strong work ethic, determination, and skills I acquired through undergraduate education.

Please browse the contents of my portfolio and my resume to gain an understanding of who I am as a person and the many experiences I participated in over the years. Please feel free to [Contact](#) me with any questions or for further information.

Thank you for your time.

## Resume

### Austin Rau

1801 Monks Avenue Unit 213 Mankato, MN 56001 ~ 651.431.1612 ~  
[austin.rau@mnsu.edu](mailto:austin.rau@mnsu.edu)

### **Objective:**

To obtain a career in a public health department at the state or federal government level, or a career as a university professor.

### **Education:**

Minnesota State University, Mankato

BA - Geography: 2016

Certificate - Geographic Information Systems

### **Technical Skills:**

- GRASS GIS
- ArcGIS 10.1
- Erdas IMAGINE 2015
- Garmin 76CSX GPS
- Trimble Juno SB
- ArcPad 10

### **Research**

- Bakken oil and the Logistics of the American Petroleum Industry

*Presented at the following venues:*

- Minnesota State University, Mankato Undergraduate Research Symposium: April 2015
- Minnesota Undergraduate Scholars Conference: April 2015
- Association of American Geographers National meeting: April 2015
- The Spatial Distribution of Influenza in Minnesota 2009 - 2013

*Presented at the following venue:*

- Minnesota Department of Health: May 2015

### **Awards**

- Maverick scholarship recipient
- Carkoski Endowment recipient
- Dean's List recipient fall 2013, spring 2014, fall 2014, spring 2015
- Honors Competency Development Grant recipient
- Mary T. Dooley Geography Endowment recipient
- Gamma Theta Upsilon Richason scholarship recipient
- Mary T. Dooley GIS Day 1st Place Undergraduate Map

### **Extracurricular Involvement**

- Have been involved in the following student organization: Community Council, Student Events Team, Residential Life Leadership Experience Class, Student Ambassadors, Geography Club, Honors Program, Undergraduate Research Center Student Council
- National Residence Hall Honorary member / VP of Leadership & Scholarship:
  - Organized a campus wide leadership development event and scholarship promotion event
- Honors Program senior class representative of the Honors Student Council:
  - Communicated with Honors Senior class to address their concerns, attended meetings and honors functions

### **Work Experience**

- Cashier: Rainbow Fresh Store: 08/12 - 06/13
  - Customer service, product checkout, cart attendant
- Hand packaging technician: Tapemark: 06/13 - present
  - Packaged sensitive pharmaceutical product, documented

manufacturing output, adhered to packaging protocol

- Community Advisor: Minnesota State University, Mankato: 08/14 - 05/15
  - Promoted social and academic success, created events, established positive relationships with residents, enforced policy, documented floor activities
- Student consulting on teaching (SCOT): 09/15 - present
  - Consulted with teachers on classroom environment and teaching
- Peer tutor: 09/15 - present
  - Tutored students in into to physical geography

### **Summary of Qualifications**

- Strong leadership and teamwork skills
- Highly motivated with strong work ethic
- Analytical thinking and research skills
- Technical skills
- Exceptional writing skills

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