

FHSU Honors College

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2019



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

We are so pleased to welcome you to this, the inaugural issue of the Fort Hays State University Honors College newsletter! We hope you will find the articles contained inside to be of interest and a source of pride. As the FHSU Honors College completes its fourth year in existence, I offer the following (by no means exhaustive) brief list of accomplishments. Certainly, we have much to celebrate.

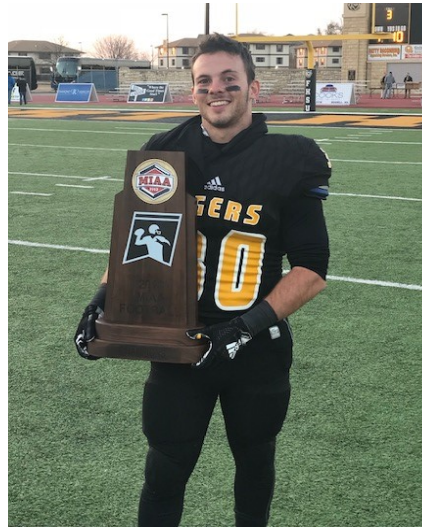
- The 2018-19 academic year began with 82 students in our program and we anticipate being near 100 come August, 2019. Each year our program has grown by double-digit percentage increases and we show no signs of slowing.
- Since launch we have graduated 27 outstanding FHSU students.
- Our program's retention (both program and overall university) rates are among the highest of any academic program at FHSU. We are thrilled our bleeding-edge model, which focuses on personal development and growth, has been met with such devotion.
- Thanks to the generosity of FHSU English faculty emerita Dr. Nancy Vogel, our graduating seniors will receive specially commissioned program medallions for use at commencement. Dr. Vogel taught honors classes in FHSU's previous honors program in the 1970s and remains a loyal and dedicated supporter of our program.
- Another generous donor, Mr. Peter Werth, has established a lasting impact at FHSU (our own Werth College of Science, Technology, and Mathematics is a notable example of this impact) and the establishment of the Werth Honors Scholars scholarship fund has enabled many of our students to receive highly appreciated financial assistance.
- Honors College junior and political science major, Kaytee Wisley, was chosen to be a finalist for the prestigious Truman Scholarship this year. Each year only 200 out of 800 applicants are selected as finalists around the country. The Truman scholarship is the most prestigious nationally competitive scholarship for students seeking a career in public service.
- To this day, nearly 40 FHSU faculty/staff/students participate in Honors College committees, selflessly volunteering their time on behalf of important program functions. The Honors College launched successfully due to an unprecedented university-wide effort and remains successful because it is a true community effort.

Of course, the main reason our program continues to succeed is because of our amazing students and alumni. It is our desire that this newsletter provides you with good news aplenty from these valuable cohorts. Enjoy this issue!

Warmly,
Matt Means, Director, FHSU Honors College

Best of Both Worlds, by Zach Meyer

Playing football while being in the Honors College has been a blessing. I have been able to be in the best of both worlds. I played an incredible sport on a very successful team while being a part of an elite group of intellectuals in the FHSU Honors College. The Honors College has allowed me to diversify my networking abilities while also staying in the sports world. Both the Honors College and football made it easy for me to do both. One of my favorite things about the FHSU Honors College is the ability to make your Honors experience yours, which has allowed me to integrate football into my experience. Although I decided it is time to pursue academics even further this fall (2019) and dive ever deeper in to my biochemistry major with research, I am grateful for being able to pursue both my passions in football and academics while being a part of the FHSU Honors College!



Journey to Italy, by Brenna Erdman

In January of 2019 I traveled to Italy for about a week through the Fort Hays study abroad program (the days all run together between jet lag and time changes!) It was the very first time that I had ever left the country, and I feel so lucky to have gotten this experience. I was extremely nervous, but I had a fantastic time and I think I learned a lot, not only about the Italian culture, but about myself through the journey.

I got to go on this trip with two of my sorority sisters, and they made the week 100 times better. My favorite places that we visited included the Statue of David, the Sistine Chapel and a truffle forest in Tuscany. We actually went to the Statue of David in our off time – it wasn't even part of our guided tour. I was truly amazed by this beautiful piece of art work. I have always loved art, and to see something up close that was so ahead of its time was breathtaking and marvelous. The Sistine Chapel was similar in the way that I was amazed and overwhelmed by the talent of Michelangelo. The moments I spent looking up at the ceiling are some I will never forget, because of the deep appreciation for the artwork and gratefulness to be there that filled my whole body.

One interesting part of the trip that I hadn't anticipated was a morning when we went truffle hunting in a forest in Tuscany. We followed a man (who spoke no English) through a dense clump of trees down the hillside, and watched as his two dogs ran about, sniffing the ground and digging up little truffles. Our guide translated his words to us, and we learned that what the dogs found were worth hundreds of dollars. It was something that I had never witnessed or really thought of before, so I was very intrigued, and we even got to try truffle butter after!

Another memory that sticks out in my mind was a simple night of conversation with my friends on the trip. We were wandering around downtown Florence and came upon a cute little wine bar. The atmosphere inside was relaxed, but really interesting - smooth jazz played loudly and colorful lights were projected on the walls. Artwork lined the whole place, and we learned it used to be an old art studio. We climbed a spiral staircase to a lounge where we sat and reflected on the previous days over a couple carafes of wine. I learned a lot about my friends, and really started to feel lucky to experience this trip of a lifetime with them.

In the end, the most important thing I realized during my trip is this- Life is about experiences. When you are laying in your bed at 90, no longer able to do what you could when you were young, the number in your bank account or your title in the workplace is not what will have mattered – it will be the memories in your head and the people by your side who will have made life worth it. After this trip, I promised myself I would stop worrying over trivial things. I would stop counting the days, and start making my days count.



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For the 2018 - 2019 academic year I have been fortunate enough to study at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. At UHH I have had the opportunity not only to take courses not offered at FHSU, learn about Hawaiian culture, and go on amazing adventures, but also grow as a person.

I came to Hawai'i to take marine science courses not available at FHSU due to the landlocked nature of Kansas. Through my Biology of Marine Invertebrates course I truly began to fall in love with the ocean. I learned so much about coral reefs; snorkeling and free diving quickly became one of my favorite activities. I also gained firsthand knowledge of what pollution is doing to our oceans. It makes me so sad to see litter on a beach or bleached coral. While on island I have been working to do my part to help the environment by using recyclable bags and biodegradable food containers, practicing safe and respectful diving, and even participating in beach clean ups.

In addition to learning about coral reefs and island environment, I have also learned a lot about Hawaiian culture. I have experienced many culturally significant aspects of Hawaiian life. I have visited a Heiau, or temple; toured a coffee farm for which Kona, a city on the Big Island, is famous for; made mochi, a Japanese desert; attended a hula festival; and so much more. Perhaps the most important aspect of island life is the spirit of Aloha. This is a way of living on the island that embodies respect for people and the land, relaxation, joy, and living in the present. Through my time on the Big Island I have become much more joyous, confident in my body and abilities, and stress free.

I have also had the opportunity to go on many amazing adventures. I have visited all but one of the national parks on the islands; camped; zip lined; cliff jumped; hiked Mauna Kea, the tallest mountain in the world (not to be confused with Mt. Everest the highest mountain in the world); and even flew in a helicopter for the first time.

The experiences I have had in Hawai'i would not have been possible without the generosity of the Werth family, and their generous scholarship. For that I owe them a great thanks.



A brief look at the life of an Honors College student-athlete majoring in nursing at FHSU

by Grace Philop

Every student at Fort Hays State University has a unique, irreplaceable four years as an undergrad, no matter what discipline they are in, what organizations that they are a part of, or what sports teams they are on. Many of them elect to participate in some or all of these activities to make the most of the short time that they have in college. For me, I chose to do a little bit of everything: I am an Honors College student; I am a member of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, or SAAC; I am a student-athlete on the softball team; and I am a nursing major about to begin the program this fall. Needless to say, my undergraduate career has been a bustling one, and it will only get busier as I work deeper into my academic program and get more involved in the organizations that I am a part of.

Most FHSU students will share some of these same stressors as they delve deeper into their college career, but the majority of them will not simultaneously be meeting the demands of being a student-athlete on campus. Granted, student-athletes do make the decision to partake in their sport at the collegiate level, so the hardships that they face are somewhat by choice. They make the commitments to go to practice for several hours every day, to go to weights multiple times per week, and to maintain a certain GPA to stay eligible, for example. Managing these things quickly becomes second nature for student-athletes, especially in the off-season. In my second year as a collegiate softball player, I adjusted to this routine rather quickly. In the fall, I would get up and go to class from 9:30 until 1:30 each day, then head to practice and weights for three or four hours after that, and lastly, I would study or do homework at the library for the rest of the evening. The structure of the off-season makes being a student-athlete much like a job or other commitment that a non-student-athlete might similarly partake in.

However, the in-season demands such as having constant schedule changes, missing class for games, or having practices go later than expected are some circumstances that make athletics different from any other student commitment on campus. As softball is an outdoor sport in the springtime, our team's games are frequently rescheduled or cancelled altogether due to weather. Other on-campus students, and even student-athletes who play indoor sports, do not have to face as many rapid adjustments as outdoor athletes do when it comes to their weekly schedules. The in-season inconsistencies can become especially grueling to handle when students pursue more rigorous academic programs, such as nursing, or are a part of multiple student organizations, like the Honors College and SAAC.

Being a collegiate student-athlete can therefore be fatiguing, straining, and stressful all at the same time, no matter how well they balance the varied facets of their college life. Yet, when provided with the opportunity to play the sport that they love for four more seasons, student-athletes seldom turn it down. The struggles that are so frequently faced are no match for the successes that collegiate athletics brings, whether it is out on the playing field, in the classroom, or in life. My life story has been centered around being a student first, but nevertheless an athlete second; it has been a key part of the person that I have become today. So, what's your story?



Photo by Allie Schweizer

Honors in numbers:

- There were 5 Honors College seniors nominated for the 2019 Torch Award
- At least 6 students are studying abroad this summer and fall
- There are 8 Honors College students on the FHSU VIP Ambassador team
- The Honors College received a record number of applicants this year- 52 total
- Over \$40,000 were awarded for Honors College Werth STM Scholarships