



Honors Annual Report 2023-2024

EKU
HONORS

A Tradition of Excellence: EKU Honors and the NCHC



Since 1990, more than 1100 students from EKU Honors have made presentations at the annual conference of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC)—a total that exceeds that of any other university in the nation. At the November 2023 annual NCHC meeting in Chicago, IL, our student delegation built further upon that tradition of achievement.

Two students from EKU Honors were recognized in the “Best Research Poster” competition. This was the first time ever that we brought home two such awards from the same NCHC conference, and we were one of only a small handful of universities nationally who had multiple awardees.

Senior Broadcast and Electronic Media major Rosemary Kelley took first place in the Social Sciences category for her poster (based on her honors thesis) titled “Mountain (Grand)Mamas: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren During the Opioid Epidemic in Appalachia America and Their Portrayal in Media.”

Senior History and Sociology major John Dyer took second place in the Humanities category for his poster (also based on his honors thesis research) titled “Godzilla Around the World: A Comprehensive Look at Interpretations and Meanings of Godzilla.”

Also at the 2023 NCHC in Chicago, EKU Honors senior Nursing major Ximena Patiño Enríquez was among the nominees for NCHC National Student of the Year, and EKU Honors sophomore Graphic Design major Kat Walker was elected to serve a two-year term as a student representative on the NCHC Executive Board (the first EKU student to serve in this capacity in more than a decade).

Sidewalk U./Cultural Trip 2024

Montgomery, Alabama



EKU Honors' innovative annual "Sidewalk U." & Cultural Trip program in January 2024 took 35 students to Montgomery, Alabama for three days of interactive learning in the cradle of the US Civil Rights Movement. This year, EKU Honors collaborated with the EKU Center for Inclusive Excellence and Global Engagement (CIEGE), which provided seven of the 35 students (the other 28 were from EKU Honors). Students had the choice do the trip either in conjunction with a spring 2024 semester HON 320 seminar "HBCUs in US Culture" (taught by EKU VP of Student Affairs Dr. Dannie Moore, who co-led the trip with EKU Honors Executive Director David Coleman), or simply go on the trip as a cultural experience.



Highlights of the trip included the following: a visit to the Equal Justice Initiative's groundbreaking Legacy Museum and Lynching Memorial in Montgomery; a pizza night with students and faculty from the W.E.B Dubois Honors Program at Alabama State University; a public art and murals tour of downtown Montgomery led by local arts community leader Kalonji Gilchrist; a visit and talk with American treasure Dr. Valda Harris Montgomery (who grew up in the 1950s three doors down from the home of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., with whom her father was close friends); a tour of the Tuskegee University campus led by Tuskegee students; and a visit to the Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma, Alabama and National Park Service memorial sites associated with the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery Voting Rights march.



Student Spotlight:

Jenna Barlage's Honors Adventures Around the World

In her two years in ECU Honors, rising junior Health Services Administration major and Psychology minor Jenna Barlage from Edgewood, KY has energetically pursued extraordinary learning opportunities in ways that exemplify the spirit of our program. Following a perfect 4.0 GPA first year of college, Jenna flew to Ireland for a summer program of study and travel. Returning to campus early last August, she served energetically and creatively as a "Peer Mentor" and group leader for our "Honors Launch" leadership and community development camp for our new incoming first-year honors students. Following another successful semester last fall, Jenna traveled to a winter break art and culture study program in Oaxaca, Mexico. At the end of her sophomore year, Jenna received an ECU Honors Trailblazer Grant as well as a stipend from the Southern Regional Honors Council (SRHC) to participate in the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) "Partners in the Parks" service-learning program on the Appalachian Trail in North Georgia, working with honors students from all across the United States.

Jenna explains what ECU Honors has meant in her college experience: "The honors program has provided me a community of friends, mentors, and connections that made my transition into college so easy and continues to introduce me to new experiences and opportunities for growth. Through the honors program I have found not only great learning experiences and caring teachers, but also wonderful friends to walk with me through my college journey." The generosity of our donors and alumni helps make these sorts of experiences possible for students like Jenna.



Honors Launch Grows as We Welcome Our Largest-Ever Incoming Class

In its second year, our August 2023 Honors Launch leadership-development and community-building camp welcomed to campus our largest-ever class of 128 incoming first-year honors students. Led by fourteen current ECU Honors sophomore, junior, and senior "Peer Mentors," our new incoming honors first-year students enjoyed three days of leadership development and community building activities. Activities included team-building exercises on ECU's low ropes challenge course as well as a campus scavenger hunt and a team-based song-and-dance skit show. Joining us for the Honors Launch closing banquet were twelve of our fabulous ECU Honors alumni from every era of the program's thirty-five year history. Our first-year students continue to rave about how effective and important Honors Launch has been to them in terms of providing connection and scholarly community right from the start of their time at ECU, and once again several of our rising sophomores who attended Honors Launch as new students last summer will be serving as Honors Launch Peer Mentors this coming August as we welcome our incoming fall 2024 new honors students.



EKU Honors Students Experiencing the Arts

More than a thousand ECU Honors students over the past 35 years have journeyed with our program to Louisville's magnificent Brown Theater to take in a production by the Kentucky Opera—and for many if not most of our students, it was the first opera that they ever attended. This rich tradition in ECU Honors was started in part because of our wonderful foundation endowment donors Charles and Jane Boyer. In addition to being on the ECU Board of Regents, the late Mrs. Boyer also served on the Executive Board for the Kentucky Opera, and exposing ECU Honors students to the opera was very important to her.

In fall 2023, Honors Associate Director Dr. Erik Liddell continued this proud tradition by taking 33 of our current honors students to the Kentucky Opera's production of Engelbert Humperdinck's Hansel and Gretel. Following the Sunday matinee show, the students enjoyed supper together at Impellizzeri's Pizzeria.



Over the past decade, we have built an additional arts outing tradition in ECU Honors with occasional "Honors Nights" at the ECU Center for the Arts. This year's Honors Night saw fourteen of our students enjoy a traveling production of the classic Broadway hit Annie at the ECU Center.



Honoring Academic Excellence

The ECU Library's Research Award for Undergraduates

The ECU Library's Research Award for Undergraduates (LRAU) competition each spring recognizes the very best research projects produced by ECU students campus-wide over the preceding year. Over the eleven years that these awards have been given, the overwhelming number of student winners have come from ECU Honors. Such was the case again this year, as students from ECU Honors swept these awards. First place in that competition this year went to Junior History and Anthropology major James Nash for his honors thesis project titled "Richard Hakluyt: Elizabethan Propaganda, English Identity, and the 'Black Legend'." The runner-up was Senior Psychology major Austin Arroyo for his honors thesis project titled "Exploring Selective Mutism and Determining the Best Treatment Options."



Dean's Award: Kiara Tomlinson

At the Spring 2024 ECU Scholar's Assembly, ECU Honors senior Kiara Tomlinson received the ECU College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences Dean's Award, recognizing her as this year's top graduate from the college. Kiara is a Sociology and Criminal Justice double major from Broadalbin, NY.



By the Numbers

365

FALL 2023 TOTAL
NUMBER OF
STUDENTS

1100+

STUDENT
PRESENTERS AT
NCHC SINCE 1990
(LEADS NATION)

128

INCOMING FIRST-
YEAR HONORS
STUDENTS FALL
2023 (OUR LARGEST
CLASS EVER)

18%

OF EKU HONORS PROGRAM STUDENTS ARE
FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

45

EKU HONORS STUDENTS MADE RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS AT NATIONAL,
REGIONAL, AND STATE CONFERENCES IN 2023-2024

\$2.5 MILLION+

EKU HONORS ENDOWMENT FUNDS AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS,
TRAVEL, AND RESEARCH



Honors and Study Abroad

A total of 35 students from EKU Honors participated in study abroad programs between summer 2023 and spring 2024 (slightly up from 31 last year). They visited a total of 15 different countries. Sixteen of these students were supported by Trailblazer Study Abroad grants (ranging from \$1000 to \$2500) from EKU Honors.

An interesting statistical fact about EKU Honors and Study Abroad: Although students in EKU Honors comprise only about 3 percent of the EKU undergraduate student body as a whole, they include a little over 18 percent of EKU students who have studied abroad in the past year.

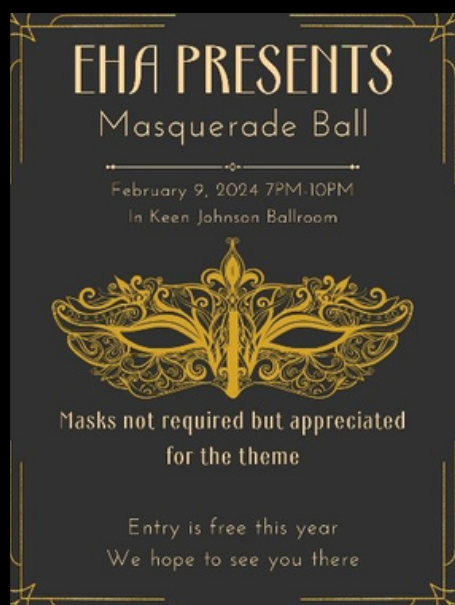


The Eastern Honors Association (EHA)



The Eastern Honors Association (EHA) is our honors student governance organization. EHA organizes social events and student community service outreach programs. They also assist at honors recruiting events and build relationships between current students in ECU Honors and our wonderful alumni.

EHA had a particularly busy and productive year in 2023-2024. At Homecoming last fall, ECU made the Honors Program the feature academic unit for publicity all week, culminating in the home football game. Not only did our students have the chance to take the field to throw T-shirts to the crowd, but they also were featured in a brief video about ECU Honors that aired on the stadium jumbotron.



That video can be viewed at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bec0_k0kV0g.



Again this year, EHA also put together a fabulous winter dance—this time with a “Masquerade” theme. More than 160 honors students attended and enjoyed a fun evening of music, dance, and lights.

Building Opportunity

Give to ECU Honors

You can directly support students in ECU Honors by giving to the Bonnie Gray Society Endowment. Established by alumni at the time of founding director Dr. Bonnie Gray's retirement in 2008, this endowment provides a permanent source of financial assistance for students who attend our Cultural Trips and/or "Sidewalk U." study away programs each year. These trips take students on learning adventures to locales across America and even into Canada and Mexico. Lives are changed and horizons broadened by these cultural odysseys, and the Bonnie Gray Society Endowment helps make them possible each year.

► Visit go.ecu.edu/give-Honors to make a gift to the Bonnie Gray Society Endowment.





EKU HONORS PROGRAM

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