

Pine Honors  
newsletter:  
the premiere  
(collectible)  
edition



**CURRENT HONORS  
STUDENTS  
INTERVIEWS**



**HONORS EVENTS  
GALORE  
SMART FUN**



**HOLIDAY HUSTLE 5K  
SHIRTS & BREAKFAST**

# EIU HONORS



The weather has finally cooled down, and I am gearing up to run the **Holiday Hustle**, a 5K charity event (see p. 12) started and organized by Honors students. The course runs from Old Main, south around campus, out into the athletic fields, before passing by Booth House (the old home of Honors), and the south end of Pemberton Hall (the new home of Honors) and back to Old Main again. The event is like Honors itself – it takes in the whole university, involves past and present students, and reaches out to give back to the community. And both reward effort with fun and achievement.

Both are also places where individuals are supported as a community as they run their own race. In this issue of the Honors newsletter, we give you a glimpse of some of our most accomplished students, who have made an exceptional effort to take advantage of the many opportunities Eastern offers. Dr. Suzie Park's interviews give us real insight into the quality of our students and their strong relationship with faculty. In future issues we hope to feature alumni, professors (past and present), and also more events. Have ideas for stories for future issues? Want to get involved? Give us a shout.

It has been a busy Fall – we have enjoyed the Pizza Crawl, a Charleston-Mattoon Quiz Bowl Clash, and a very windy Homecoming version of Tea with the Dean. But the Holiday Hustle on December 1<sup>st</sup>

will be the highlight of the Fall semester. I am particularly looking forward to seeing some Honors alumni out at the event and even more to having breakfast with past and current students afterwards. It is marvelous to see the generations get together. Enjoy the newsletter, do get in touch with us with any questions or stories that you have, and I hope to see you (likely ahead of me) at the Holiday Hustle! —Dean Richard England

## INTERVIEWS WITH CURRENT HONORS STUDENTS

**Dr. Suzie Park**, Assistant Dean of the Pine Honors College, conducted four interviews with current Honors students and had her (intellectual) socks blown off. “These are not your run-of-the-mill citizens,” notes Park, “precisely because they are driven to pursue excellence in their unique ways. They follow their passions, really listen to the wise words of mentors and advocates, and seek opportunities to better the world. They do not give up when faced with challenges, and take the creative leap to make their research and thoughtfulness count in a world that is not always friendly to new thoughts and daring ideas. Am I proud? Yes. Yes, I am.”

### Why EIU Honors?

**Audrey Rex:** The common understanding about doing research as a new undergraduate was that it wasn’t possible. I was told, “You won’t research until you’re a junior, if that. Don’t even ask.” This was the case at large research universities. What EIU Honors allowed me to do was not only *ask* to do research, but also actually *gain* immediate research experience.

I have several mentors—particularly female mentors—to thank for opening doors to serious research. Patty Doornbos, my chemistry teacher, and Tim Leffler, Head of the Science Department, opened the earliest doors at Lemont High School.

But it was at my Presidential Scholarship interview that I met Dr. Mary Konkle. I basically demanded to be in Dr. Konkle’s lab—as a freshman. Dr. Konkle really took me in and started from scratch, patiently explaining, “This is a beaker.”

## Audrey Rex Research Rock Star

Senior earning  
dual degrees:  
B.S. in  
Chemistry &  
B.S. in  
Biological  
Sciences



“At EIU Honors,  
I gained  
invaluable  
research  
experience  
starting in my  
freshman year.”

Now, as a Senior applying to Ph.D./Doctor of Veterinary Medicine dual degree programs, I'm benefiting enormously from that extremely early start in research, and from the mentorship I'm lucky enough to receive from Ms. Sara Schmidt, EIU's Coordinator of Honors Student Development, on everything from National Student Exchange to my current doctoral applications.

### ***Research, Research, Research!***

**Suzie Park:** And you haven't had a break in your research experience since your freshman year, have you?

**Rex:** No, not at all! I've loved every minute of it.

**Suzie Park:** So let's recount your research—as an EIU Honors undergraduate—just to get the facts straight. This is only because having so much research on your résumé at your age seems fantastical, and may not be believed by all.

**Rex:**

- In my first semester of freshman year, I applied for the Mindlin Foundation Grant for the purchase of new lab equipment. In my second semester, I was awarded it.
- In the summer after freshman year, I conducted five weeks of research on the spectroscopy of CISD2 proteins, or looking at proteins and how they combine with different reactants to see how they behave. We want to characterize these proteins because they are related to the treatment of Type II diabetes.
- In my sophomore year, I conducted research with Dr. Mary Konkle.
- In the summer after sophomore year, I was named a Snyder Scholar at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I conducted research under the tutelage of Dr. Wilfred van der Donk of UIUC, at the brand new Genomic Biology Lab. With this National Institutes of Health-funded award covering ten weeks of research, along with housing and a stipend, I researched the synthesis of lanthipeptides for eventual, prospective antibiotic uses.
- Fall semester of my junior year was at the University of Georgia. With Ms. Sara Schmidt's guidance, I was able to study at U. Georgia through the **National Student Exchange** program. This allowed me the amazing twin experience of learning firsthand about a campus that I consider my top choice for doctoral study and researching zoonotic diseases in black flies with Dr. Guilherme Verocai.
- Senior year brings me to my current research with Dr. Kai (Billy) Hung at EIU. We are studying the presence of antibiotic resistance in freshwater and wastewater samples from the local waste water treatment plant.

### ***In a nutshell, what did your experience in EIU Honors teach you?***

**Rex:** When you have a very deep passion for anything, you can make each experience count in the most meaningful way. At every turn in my education at EIU, I learned to ask myself: "How can I contribute to solving a problem within a limited range of time (three months, ten months, a semester)?" I learned how important it is to ask myself at the outset of any project or task: "How will I define and measure success?"

# Carlos Collins Sociologist in Action

Senior earning  
B.S. in Sociology  
&  
Minors in  
Criminology and  
Psychology



*“We know the  
causes behind most  
social problems.  
What I want to do  
is find actual  
ways of  
rectifying these  
very real  
problems.”*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Why EIU Honors?**

**Carlos Collins:** Honestly, what brought me to study at Eastern was the feel of the campus. I can’t explain exactly what it was, but, in short, I felt at home, very comfortable, when I first visited. Of course, EIU is incredibly affordable and boasts small classes, which allow for really building personal connections with faculty, staff, and other students. I didn’t want the auditorium-style lecture courses that I would’ve endured at larger universities. Plus, small town living is peaceful.

## **Sociology in Action: Why Research Matters**

**Collins:** Since my research interests lie in improving the lives of urban residents, I’ve sought out internships in Chicago that have afforded me important direct experiences with urban residents. Over the last three summers, I’ve worked for the CHA or Chicago Housing Authority (summers of 2016 and 2017) and for Chicago’s 4<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman Sophia King (summer of 2018).

I didn’t know it at the time, but my work at the CHA (listening to and relaying residents’ concerns about smaller and larger issues within their communities, their buildings, their streets), helped prepare me for thriving in my more hands-on job with the Alderman’s office. I was able to put into practice the skills I acquired in my two summers at the CHA, by going directly into the community and talking face-to-face with community residents.

**Suzie Park:** And did direct contact suit you better than listening to people on the phone?

**Collins:** Oh, most definitely. That experience—of interviewing and really listening to the stories of individuals—is the thing I live for. I love qualitative research. In fact, I conducted an independent study on improving the lives of underprivileged youth in urban areas. I know now how I’ll bring my research and academic interests into the field of actual practice. Eventually, I hope to start a nonprofit organization dedicated to directly addressing the economic and cultural challenges that hinder specific urban

communities from accessing opportunities—in education, in job security, and in living. We know the causes behind most social problems. What I want to do is find actual ways of rectifying these very real problems.

***In a nutshell, what did your experience in EIU Honors teach you?***

**Collins:** I am preparing now to apply to graduate schools for a Ph.D. in Sociology, but it was always a concern of mine that whatever I research, I can take back into the field of real practice. Thus I also have an interest in pursuing a master's degree in Social Sciences Administration. My preparation through EIU Honors classes and Honors reflective projects (like my internships) has helped me bridge the divide between theory and practice. Reflecting on my Honors classes here at EIU, I appreciate being assigned plenty of reading and writing because, like any other student, I need training on how to improve my writing and communication skills.

The subject matter has always been incredibly interesting, too. I remember being entirely captivated and moved by a novel I read with students in Dr. Julie Campbell's Honors English 2099 course (Literature and Human Values). The novel, Haven Kimmel's *The Solace of Leaving Early*, set in a small town in Indiana, gave me a new way to express my attunement to observing and looking for ways of helping those in need.

Coming to Charleston from a rough area in Chicago was a radical departure from the world I knew. It was eye opening to join a small town community that has different but strikingly similar socio-economic problems that we find in inner-city Chicago. Studying literature like Kimmel's novel helped me widen my range of sympathies and understandings of specific social and economic challenges and universal hardships like grief. EIU Honors students like me are preparing to join and improve the world, but in surprising ways.

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*Honors Alumni, do you have an  
Honors College story to share?  
Know of extraordinary Honors  
alumni and current students? Contact  
Suzie Park at [sapark@eiu.edu](mailto:sapark@eiu.edu)!*



### ***Why EIU Honors?***

**Kaitlyn Ebert:** I was recruited to Eastern all the way from Foley, Alabama. Coach Jessica Sommerfeld wanted me as a javelin thrower for the EIU Women's Track and Field Team; plus, I was offered a Presidential Scholarship from the Honors College. Eastern was the only school that offered me both academic and athletic scholarships, so it was a tough offer to refuse. I'm incredibly lucky to have chosen Eastern for many, many reasons. One is that as a female athlete, I have taken my competitive attitude to my academic work. I have learned how to manage time and take criticism and continually try and try again. Rejection and failure is not the end of the world. I have been blessed with wonderful professors here, like Dr. Chris Wixson and Dr. Melinda Mueller, who have constantly encouraged me in my academic and professional pursuits.

### ***The World Is Your Oyster, or The Inestimable Value of Flexibility and Preparation***

**Ebert:** I am thankful that EIU made it possible for me to pursue two degrees—in Political Science and in Public Relations—plus a Minor in Broadcast Communication. This will help broaden the scope of jobs I would be qualified for. My goal is to work in politics, and the mix of my degrees makes a nice cocktail for a lobbyist. I would like to lobby on behalf of education reform since most of my family consists of teachers, so working for an association/interest group in that area would be ideal. I will begin my journey as an intern or staffer on Capitol Hill, but with two degrees I'll double my chances of finding a position there. Jobs in my field are incredibly competitive, and one of the most valuable skills I can offer is the ability to adapt to challenging assignments and new environments. The world of politics is very unpredictable, so I must always be on my toes and ready for what's next. That is why I pushed myself so hard in college; the real world isn't going to get any easier, so I wanted to test myself at school to see if I could handle it.

**Suzie Park:** You're adaptable and driven. How have you prepared yourself for landing your next job or starting the next stage in your inevitable rise?

**Ebert:** I have spent one summer working at my state capitol in Alabama for the Secretary of State, and one summer in Washington D.C. for a professional lobbyist. D.C. was the right

*Kaitlyn  
Ebert  
From the  
Gulf Coast  
to The Hill*

*Senior earning  
dual degrees:  
B.A. in Political  
Science &  
B.A. in Public  
Relations &  
Minor in  
Broadcast  
Communication*



*"I can speak. I  
can write. I can  
go for anything."*

fit for me. Not only was I surrounded by gorgeous historic buildings and able to eat tons of great food, but the people there have the same mindset as I do. Everyone seems to be going after a big dream there. The city is filled with people transplanted from different states and countries, so I didn't feel like an outsider. It's pretty cool; young adults from about 26-34 years old are basically running the city. They are the ones calling the shots and writing policies, which fires me up!

**Suzie Park:** And your plans for your illustrious future?

**Ebert:** My plan after graduation is to go back to D.C. and intern for either my District Representative or Senator for the summer. I am also going to pursue a master's program in Europe in the realm of international education policy/international relations. I am specifically looking at programs in Spain. This will serve as a way to gain another degree, work on my second language, and take a year to explore the world. I am excited for the future, but I want to say how grateful I am for today.

***In a nutshell, what did your experience in EIU Honors teach you?***

**Ebert:** I'm far from a genius. The way I succeed is purely by working very hard. My interpersonal skills and networking style have opened many doors. If my lobbyist dreams don't come true, I could go into corporate PR and I'd be very happy. I can speak. I can write. I can go for anything. EIU has set me up for success, and has fully convinced me of my abilities. I've always felt that everyone is positioned on the same level of opportunity here.

Again, the world is seriously your oyster. Treat the world like an adventure and don't let fear hold you back from living life to the fullest. Last year especially I realized how precious and short life is when my track and field teammate from high school was killed in a car crash. The news rocked me to the core. It made me realize that every day is not promised, and that you need to take hold of the opportunities given to you and appreciate the good people around you.



***Why EIU Honors?***

**Logan Klepzig:** Charleston has always been home to me, so the value of an EIU education was familiar to me. What's more, I have had career aspirations to work in Springfield politics since I was very young. Eastern affords me the opportunity of attaining an excellent education in political science while remaining very active in the political scene—both locally and at the state level. An internship at the City of Charleston has stoked my interest in becoming a city manager.

### ***Raising a Ruckus: Making Every Voice Count***

**Klepzig:** The budget impasse really galvanized my efforts to get up to speed on the funding of schools in our state. I ended up writing a K-12 school funding formula, one that got the attention of lawmakers on both the Republican and Democratic sides. Of course, I appealed to WCIA news station in Champaign and this helped me bring more attention to the funding formula, which State Senators Dale Righter (pictured to the right, Republican) and Andy Manar (Democrat) consulted.

**Suzie Park:** You say that the political scene has fascinated you since you were five years old. Why is that?

**Klepzig:** One of my siblings is a disabled resident of a group home in Springfield. My parents have always done their best to take care of her, and they are still her guardians. But I learned that tens of thousands of disabled people are technically and actually wards of the state. Their guardians are the state of Illinois.

This has enormous consequences that most of us are completely unaware of. For instance, I learned that staff at group homes were conducting their own investigations of the quality of care at these homes. This is a problem centered on the lack of true oversight of the care of people like my sister. This issue is personal for me, but it's one that more people ought to know about.

***In a nutshell, what did your experience in EIU Honors teach you?***

**Klepzig:** I serve as President of the Political Science Association on Eastern's campus. We have been quite active in organizing speaker events and voter registration drives.

I think that a functioning, well-managed government is the responsibility of everyone. It's not just the business of political science majors, politicians, or state employees. It's part of being a good citizen. Everybody can do this and everybody should in a democratic society.

*Logan  
Klepzig  
Good  
Citizen*

*Sophomore earning  
B.A. in Political  
Science*



*"A functioning,  
well-managed  
government is the  
responsibility of  
everyone. It's part  
of being a good  
citizen."*



# *Honors Events Galore ✧ Smart Fun*

## *Honors Welcome Back Picnic 8/22/18*

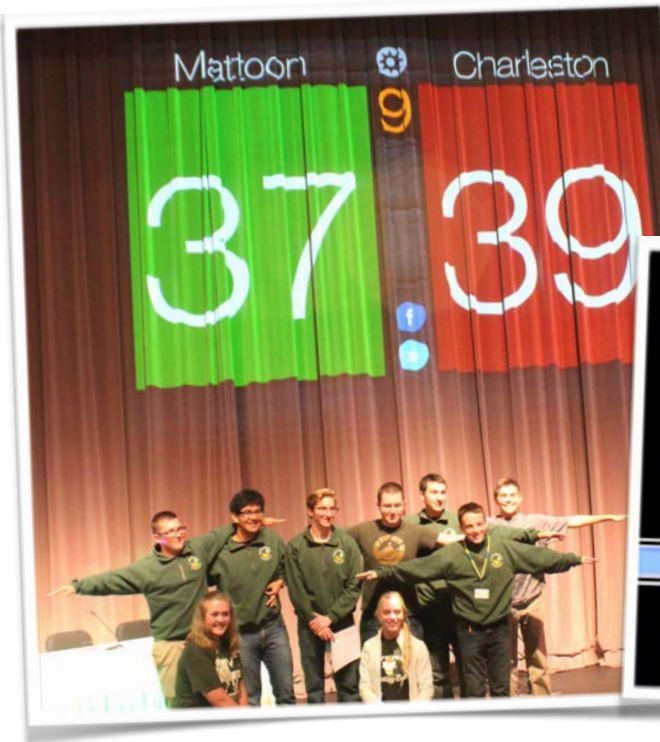


## *Honors Ice Cream Social 8/28/18*





*Coles County Clash Scholastic Bowl: Mattoon vs. Charleston H.S. 9/14/18*



*Rising Stars Reception for EIU sophomores with top GPAs 9/27/18*







*Association of  
Honors Students  
Pizza Crawl  
10/8/18*



*The weekly Tea with the Dean gives students a fun “second home” retreat.*



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**Or send a check to: EIU Foundation (Honors College), 600 Lincoln Ave, Charleston, IL 61920**

### *Holiday Hustle 5K: Dec. 1, 2018*

**Are You Ready to Hustle?** Put on your running shoes, Pine Honors College alums! On Saturday, December 1, EIU will host the Holiday Hustle 5K. This year, former and current students of the Honors College will be running *en masse* in the event. It's for a great cause: all proceeds from the race go to One Stop Community Christmas, an organization dedicated to helping families throughout central Illinois who find themselves in need during the Holiday Season. Would you like to get in on it? Sign up at <https://eiuholidayhustle.wordpress.com/>. And here are some added incentives to help you participate: after you sign up, if you **email the Honors College ([sapark@eiu.edu](mailto:sapark@eiu.edu)) by 11/20/18 with your name, and unisex shirt size, we'll have a spiffy t-shirt available for your pickup at the race site!** Plus, the Honors College will take you out for breakfast after the race. Just let us know you'd like to attend the post-race breakfast. Start training now, sign up for the race, and get ready for great fun!

