

Pine Honors
newsletter:
Summer 2019
edition



HONORS STUDENTS
AND ALUMNI
INTERVIEWS



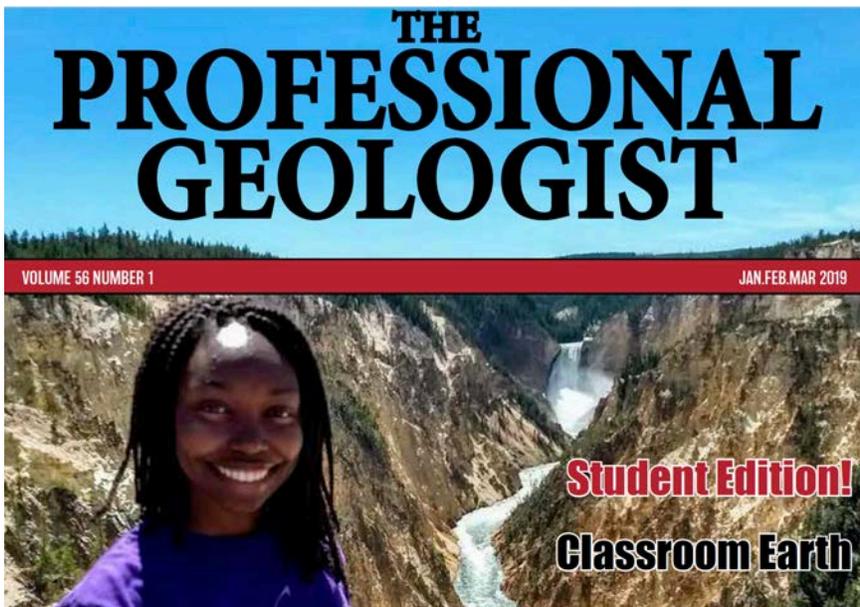
HONORS EVENTS
GALORE
SMART FUN



NEW HONORS
MENTORSHIP
PROGRAM

Sandra & Jack Pine HONORS COLLEGE

What does Honors do for students? Interviews in this issue with graduating seniors and alumni have made me question this question. Really, the question is: what do students *do* with Honors? University offers many opportunities and these grads let us know how they took advantage of them and found the passion that drove them forward. The foundation is a great community of strong students and faculty and classes that drive discussion connecting the academic with the lived world. The structure built on that foundation might be research, a registered student organization, or study abroad. Each of these interviewees tells their story of how Honors connected them with the particular opportunities that have shaped their lives. Along the way they have learned something essential about reflection, perseverance, open-mindedness and many other virtues. Honors was just part of the great EIU environment which nurtured them and helped them find their own way. Enjoy the summer and this issue of the Honors newsletter! —Dean Richard England



Have ideas for stories for future issues? Want to get involved? Give us a shout.

See what's new in the world of the Pine Honors College at our Facebook page: @eiuhonors

And please share what's new with you at the Honors College Alumni page: www.eiu.edu/honors/Alumni.php

INTERVIEWS WITH HONORS STUDENTS and ALUMNI

What does Honors mean to students and alumni? Madelyn Loellke, Spring Intern for the Honors College, asked two Honors graduating seniors and two alumni to find out.

Why EIU Honors?

Loellke: You have travelled a great deal for your education, both by crossing halfway around the world for your university, but also by going all over the U.S. for field studies. What brought you to EIU?

Mensah: I chose geology so that I could go into the petroleum sector and work in the oil and gas industry when I return to Ghana. Many of the younger generations are realizing that a lot of foreigners are currently in control of our petroleum, which means we have no control over our economy. If we want to truly improve our economy, native Ghanaians have to learn this field, rather than let our government continuously outsource leadership positions in the oil and gas business. We need to be in control as it is our oil and our people who are most affected by its development. I want to help my country grow in this way.

I had originally begun college in my home country, but I soon realized that I would need to go abroad to really excel and succeed in the oil industry. Eastern was the most affordable option for me, but I didn't join the Pine Honors College right away, mostly because I didn't know it existed or what it was. There were no "Honors classes" in my first University. Sara Schmidt reached out to me and invited me to join. And I did!

Geological Studies

Loellke: You certainly take every opportunity to improve in your studies with a great deal of passion, and it seems that lately you have begun to see all of the payoff. Can you tell me about some of your research while at EIU?

Mensah: In 2018, I researched morphological changes on Eastern's campus over the past eighty years by studying aerial images through the decades to observe changes over the years. I later presented my research at the Geological Society of America's annual conference in Indiana.

Shirley Mensah

from Accra,
Ghana

Senior earning
B.S. in Geology
&
Minor in
Geographic
Information
Sciences



"As an international student, a woman, and a minority, I will get to promote diversity and inspire others."

Loellke: And they are not the only organization you have been recognized by.

Mensah: I joined the American Institute of Professional Geologists (AIPG) my freshman year, and ended up applying for a scholarship that requires recipients to write an article for their quarterly magazine, *The Professional Geologist*. The article was about my field experience in the Black Hills of South Dakota, where we learned about how landscapes develop and improved our mapping skills. I was quite nervous about my article, but despite my nerves they really liked it! AIPG's editor ended up asking to use my photo for the cover of the magazine, and offered me the position of Student Correspondent, which means I now have to write an article for every issue. Apparently, my article was funny and "full of sparkle," which may be the best compliment you can get!

I am proud of how many people will get to see me and hear my story from this article. As an international student, a woman, and a minority, I will get to promote diversity in the organization and to whomever this magazine reaches. I hope this will lead to inspiring others to branch out and join organizations, and will also promote diversity in the sciences.

Loellke: You've come so far in your studies. How do you keep going seemingly non-stop?

Mensah: I am motivated in all of my studies and pursuits by my family; seeing where we started and where I want to take them. I didn't decide to go into the oil industry because it was lucrative. With petroleum, your prospects can change entirely in a day. It's not about the money, but about helping my country. My mom always told me that if it must be done, it must be done well; whatever you go for in life, go for the best. That drive was instilled in me from a young age, and I can thank her for that.

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

Mensah: Seeing how I've changed through my time at EIU, I think the most powerful lesson I've received is that one should never be afraid to speak out, or to grab hold of the opportunities that come one's way. Every opportunity I have had has helped me grow, and I don't know who or where I would be if I hadn't taken them.

I haven't gone home yet, since most breaks I try to use for experience and research. Plus, with the current political situation, I don't know if I would be able to return the America, and I don't want to lose all of my opportunities in these next few years.

I'm grateful for all of the opportunities and success that I have found in my Honors education thus far, but I do feel that there is a great deal yet for me to do. It breaks my heart sometimes that I must leave Eastern, as it has become my home away from home, but EIU has also helped me get this far, and has done a great job preparing me for the next step, so I am very grateful. This summer, I will be doing research with Stanford University, and in the Fall, I am coming back to EIU to finish an accelerated professional science master's program in GIS. After, I will venture off into a master's degree in petroleum geology.

I am very thankful to have been a part of the EIU Pine Honors College.

Sami Boomgarden

Senior earning
B.A. in
Psychology
&
Minors in
Neuroscience and
Chemistry



“The Pine Honors College has taught me a great deal about myself, particularly just how much I love learning, and I have had that opportunity in spades at Eastern.”

Why EIU Honors?

Boomgarden: When I first stepped on campus, I had already contacted some of the Admissions Officers, and they planned a whole day for me to get to know Eastern. I remember thinking, *Wow! Everyone’s so genuine; they want me here!* We were already making connections, and it felt like family to me from the moment that I first walked in. So, when they offered the Presidential Scholarship to me, it just sealed the deal!

I took many advanced classes in high school. I knew I wanted to be in an Honors program at whatever university I ended up in because I feel that being around like-minded people was beneficial to my education. The Pine Honors College gave me a great opportunity to talk to other people who love learning and a perfect way to find community at Eastern.

Research!

Loellke: You’ve had a lot of research opportunities at EIU. I’ve heard that you’ve had quite a bit of news lately.

Boomgarden: Yes, absolutely! I actually just received word back from a journal that they want me to revise and resubmit a manuscript, which is really exciting because that’s the next step before being published! It originated as a project in my Research Methods class, and a Psychology professor, Dr. Daniele Nardi, encouraged me to adapt it into a manuscript and continue my research on the subject. I researched the phenomenon of “stereotype threat,” which occurs when a person reminded of a stereotype—particularly a negative one—about their social group, performs worse on whatever type of assessment they are about to do. There ended up being no significant enough difference in the results to support my thesis, which means that while the data was not entirely conclusive, there is still enough to question and develop a deeper understanding of the topic. Last semester, I was also fortunate to be one of the two students in Illinois to receive the Lincoln Academy Student Laureate Award. This award recognizes students who are exemplary both in their academic fields and in their extracurricular pursuits. I was chosen for my work with Holiday Hustle on campus, EIU’s New Student programs, and my research.

Loellke: You’ve clearly done a great deal in your field in only a few years—it’s incredible! What comes next for you, after graduation?

Boomgarden: While there are several topics in psychology that interest me, I hope that next I will get to focus primarily on the transition into nursing homes, and see what in particular makes

the transition easier, such as social supports, and what preexisting conditions can be worsened through the transition. I hope we can discover ways to help people through any depression and anxiety, no matter when it began, that they may encounter through this process. I work with new EIU students, helping them to make a transition, and I would like to learn more about helping people make this different kind of transition later in life. I hope to explore it going forward, perhaps with intergenerational programs.

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

Boomgarden: I have always wanted to help people, which is a broad and clichéd statement, but that's the best way to describe the difference that I want to make in the world. How I have done that has changed throughout my life, but it still drives me. Whether it is through researching different ways I can help people through therapy, or through organizations, the intent remains the same.

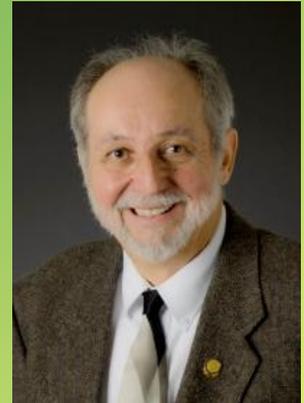
The Pine Honors College at Eastern has taught me a great deal about myself, particularly just how much I love learning, and I have had that opportunity in spades at Eastern, both in my field and even in literature general education classes. It's opened my eyes to how much I enjoyed taking in information and how it all stays with me. It's part of why I am so excited to be entering grad school next, as it is combining so many things that I love and am passionate about. I'm looking forward to my next chapter of research with the older generations.

Donors' Corner

Here we feature donors who have shared so generously with the Pine Honors College.

“In retirement, as I reflect on all the wonderful experiences I had teaching Honors College students, I realize that it is important for me to give back, so that today's professors and students will have all the same opportunities I enjoyed.”

*-Dr. John Best, EIU Professor
Emeritus of the Psychology Department*



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

Why did you choose to attend EIU?

Multiple features drew me to EIU. The reasonable tuition and fees were attractive, and scholarships from honors and my departments made it even more affordable. There was more than financial aid guiding me towards EIU, though. My sister was already a student at EIU (she majored in mathematics and minored in physics), and she thought her professors were top notch educators. I knew the more personal atmosphere at EIU would lead to more one-on-one interactions with faculty and ultimately more enriching experiences. I was not disappointed!

Can you tell me about how your experience in Honors helped you succeed?

Motivational speakers are always telling us that we are the average of the closest company we keep, and I have found this to be true. Honors connected me with students and faculty that pushed me to be successful inside and out of the classroom. In honors classes and housing, the college provided me with an extra concentration of engaged students to help me rise to the challenges I faced at EIU and afterwards. To this day, I remain in close contact with students and faculty I met in my time in the Honors College. In fact the very weekend I am writing this, I am meeting up with a friend from EIU honors who is visiting my current town of Scottsdale, Arizona.

What was the most important lesson you learned at Eastern?

The most important lesson was one I learned late in my time at Eastern, and it is perhaps obvious to many. The lesson is: good can come from failure. I spent a considerable amount of time the summer before my senior year and during my senior year applying for international scholarships. My goal was to secure funding for a one year degree in applied mathematics at Cambridge. I worked diligently with Sara Schmidt to write application essays and to prepare for interviews. While I was accepted to the academic program, none of my scholarship applications were successful, so I ended up not attending. However, the process of distilling why I was studying mathematics and physics into a few short pages and interview responses really gave me clarity and purpose as I charged forward to graduate school applications. I was the sort of person that usually wouldn't try something new if I didn't think I'd be good at it, but now that I've reaped benefits from a process that was in some sense "unsuccessful," I'm more open to opportunities that will form me into a more intentional person.

What came next for you?

After EIU, I began doctoral studies in Physics at the University of California, Santa Barbara. There I studied the physics of accreting white dwarf stars, punctuated with a few sailing classes and occasional walks to the beach. I ultimately received my Ph.D. in 2017.

*Bill
Wolf
2010
alumnus*

*B.S. in Physics
&
B.S. in
Mathematics*



"Now that I've reaped benefits from a process that was in some sense 'unsuccessful,' I'm more open to opportunities that will form me into a more intentional person."

What is some advice you think EIU's Honors students should hear before they graduate?

You absolutely must do some sort of creative or mind-opening experience while at EIU. Maybe it's a semester abroad, a research internship, or starting a business. The more of these experiences you have, the more prepared you will be after EIU to work on something you are both passionate about and very talented at. On a more practical note, these sorts of experiences give you something to talk about in job interviews or graduate school applications that show your dedication to being a lifelong learner. Certainly my summer research internship informed application committees that I was capable of conducting research, and it proved to me that I could enjoy it, too!

How did Eastern prepare you for your jobs and roadblocks you've encountered from graduation to now?

Since I went straight to graduate school, the most important preparation I received was in the form of actual course content. The upper division mathematics and physics courses I took at EIU were immediately put to use as I began taking the hardest courses of my life. While nothing could have prepared me for all of the material that was thrown at me, the rigor of the classes at EIU gave me a solid foundation, and my experience working hard prepared me for the many long nights of working on problem sets and final exams in graduate school. Additionally, EIU gave me my first experiences in academic research. From initial research opportunities in the Physics department, to setting me up for an NSF-funded Research Experience for Undergraduates, through writing an honors thesis for departmental honors in Mathematics, I came to UC Santa Barbara with both eyes wide open, and I think the admissions committee there saw that, too.

What are you doing now – and did you imagine that this might be where you would end up when you started at EIU?

I am a postdoctoral researcher at Arizona State University and an adjunct professor of Astronomy at the Maricopa County Community Colleges. This fall, though, I will start a tenure-track faculty position in the Physics and Astronomy department at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. While my career could have taken many paths, something like this was more or less what I was hoping for when I started at EIU. The stability of my career goals (and their subsequent achievement) surprises even me, since many of my friends at EIU eventually adjusted their academic trajectories as they better pinpointed their interests and talents.

Any favorite Honors memories?

I distinctly remember working many long afternoons with Sara Schmidt back in Booth House (the old home of the Honors College) to prepare my application materials for the various scholarships I was applying for. Her enthusiasm made everything much more enjoyable, and her helpful suggestions and edits complimented my writing style perfectly, helping me to elucidate the impetus behind my academic goals.

Is there anything else you would like to share that we may have missed?

I have another story that isn't really honors related, but it immediately impressed upon me the student-centered nature of EIU. In the fall of 2006 during my first days on campus, I trekked from Thomas Hall to textbook rental's old location next to Pemberton Hall. With arms full of the semester's textbooks, I began the slow walk back to Thomas Hall when I was promptly greeted by a man in a golf cart who offered to give me a ride. I of course accepted, and we were off. The driver was very friendly and interested in my future plans at EIU; he

made me feel even more certain of my decision to come to EIU. Only when he dropped me off did he reveal that he was (then) University President Lou Hencken. It wasn't a monumental gesture, but having the president of the university out and about helping students getting started at EIU was the first of many signs that my education and sense of belonging were important concerns even for the person at the top of the hierarchy.

Why did you choose to attend EIU?

I was the first person in my family to go to a university. I'd been offered a full-ride at my local community college and a scholarship through the math department at Eastern. I was weighing these options with my high school counselor, when I saw a sign that said, "What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?" As cheesy as it sounds, I took the advice, ignored my fears, and went for Eastern. I'm very happy that I did. The small class sizes, supportive staff, and the outlets provided by registered student organizations made it an amazing four years.

Can you tell me about how your experience in Honors helped you succeed?

Honors kept me in the loop. There were a lot of scholarship and internship opportunities shared through the newsletters that kept me involved and interested in academics.

What was the most important lesson you learned at Eastern?

I think the most important lesson was not to be afraid of making mistakes. It's easy to let that fear hold you back.

What came next for you?

After I graduated Eastern I attended DePaul and earned my Master's in Urban Education. I did a year long student teaching and became certified to teach middle school through high school math.

What is some advice you think EIU's Honors students should hear before they graduate?

Get involved. Find an RSO that really speaks to you and get passionate about it. You're in an incredible part of your lives where you can really focus your energy and make significant change. So many of the great services on and off campus are a result of students and staff coming together to advocate for change.

How did Eastern prepare you for your jobs and roadblocks you've encountered from graduation to now?

I learned a lot about perseverance. My first year as a teacher was one

*Jason
Haarmann
2015
alumnus*

*B.A. in
Mathematics*



"The small class sizes, supportive staff, and the outlets provided by registered student organizations made it an amazing four years."

of the most difficult years of my life, but Eastern taught me a lot about finding mentors who can lend you their strength and teach you how to push through. Now I'm finding myself on the other side and providing a guiding hand for first year teachers.

What are you doing now—and did you imagine that this might be where you would end up when you started at EIU?

I'm currently teaching high school geometry in CPS. When I started at Eastern my goal was to pursue a Ph.D. in math, but during my senior year I realized that my passions aligned more with teaching and community work. Eastern allowed me to explore both of these passions through my work as a tutor in the math department and as a member of EIU Pride. I was finally pushed in the right direction and decided to pursue a career in education, and I couldn't be happier.

Any favorite Honors memories?

The pizza crawl for sure.



Pine Honors College Mentorship Program

Assistant Dean Suzie Park and Dean Richard England launched a new Honors College Mentorship Program, which will be in full swing this coming Fall 2019 semester. The program brings together current experienced Honors students with new Honors students. The idea is to ensure a smooth transition into college life as well as provide ongoing mentorship in pursuing academic goals and engaging in social activities. We believe that being involved in campus life is integral to enjoying a rich and full life as well as achieving academic success. Our 30 selected Honors Mentors will connect with their mentees over the summer, meet mentees throughout the school year, provide a personal contact for questions, and help introduce new students to several social and academic events for the Pine Honors College and the university as a whole. Our Honors Mentors are extremely excited about helping new students make the most out of their time at Eastern! See details at <https://www.eiu.edu/honors/mentorship.php>

Honors Events Galore * Smart Fun

*Booth Library welcomes Ann Over of
NASA 2/28/19*



*Dungeons
and
Dragons
2/28/19*



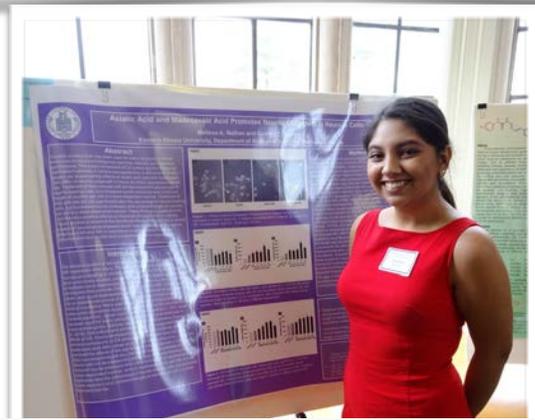
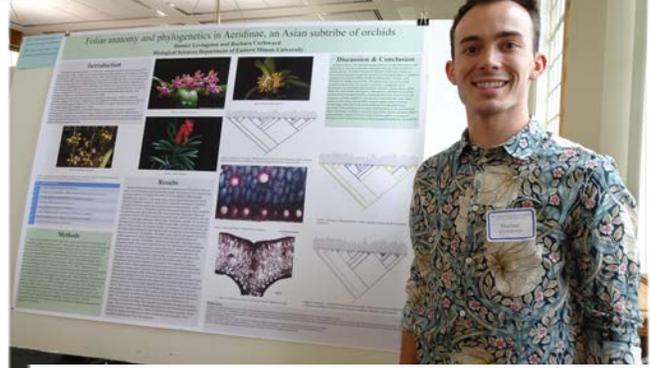
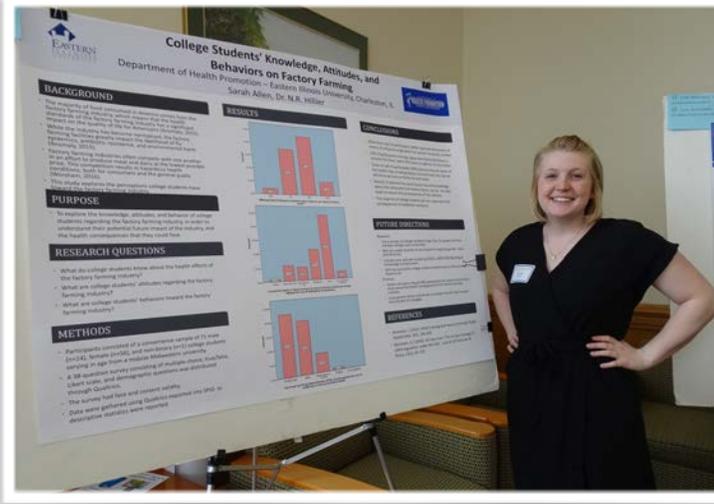
*Presidential Scholar Interview
Event 2/1/19*



*Pizza Discussion
Focus Groups*



Student Research and Creative Activity Conference 4/5/19





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*Invest in the future of EIU Honors students. Give
today at www.eiu.edu/giving.php*

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



*Congratulations to 2019 Honors graduate Carlos
Collins for his acceptance into the Master's
Program in Sociology at the University of
Chicago.*