



Honors Annual Report 2021-2022

EKU

A Tradition of National Leadership in Honors Education: Honors Conferences

Following a year in which all in-person conferences were cancelled due to COVID, the 2021-2022 academic year saw the gradual return of opportunities for our students to travel and present research projects live at honors conferences.

Over the past three decades, more than 1,100 ECU Honors students have presented their work at the annual meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC)—a total that far surpasses that of any other honors college or honors program in the nation. In October 2021, ten ECU Honors students resumed that distinguished tradition with presentations at NCHC in Orlando, Florida. Senior music education major Sydney Amos brought home an NCHC award for Best Research Poster in the Arts and Humanities.

In February 2022, 15 students presented work at the biannual meeting of the Kentucky Honors Roundtable hosted this year by our friends and colleagues in the Murray State University Honors College. Finally, in March 2022, 13 of our students presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Regional Honors Council (SRHC) in Birmingham, Alabama.



Benjamin Gilman Scholar Emily Burcham

Junior art education major Emily Burcham from Hamilton, OH is the latest in a long line of ECU Honors students who have won the prestigious and nationally competitive Benjamin Gilman Scholarship. The Gilman Scholars Program is designed to help high-achieving college students from low-income backgrounds access transformative study abroad experiences. Emily used her Gilman Scholarship funding to study in Berlin and Barcelona in the summer of 2022. A future high school art teacher, Emily explained: "Both cities obviously have rich and deep histories in the arts, and I am so excited to be able to explore and learn where it all happened. This opportunity means being able to do things that I thought were impossible for me." In addition to the Gilman Scholarship, Emily's study abroad experience was also supported by a Trailblazer Grant from ECU Honors, as well as a Kennamer Study Abroad Scholarship from ECU's College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences.



Christian White Wins Post-Baccalaureate Research Fellowship from the National Institutes of Health

Christian White, a 2021 Honors Scholar graduate from Alexandria, KY, received the Post-Baccalaureate Intramural Training Fellowship from the National Institutes of Health. He is working as a member of the lab team at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development on an ongoing project titled "Cholesterol Homeostasis and Lysosomal Disorders." This project is providing fundamental biochemical understanding essential to the pursuit of cures for a variety of neurodegenerative and cognitive impairment disorders in children.

"Working as part of a team of scientists in the NIH's state-of-the-art labs to fight diseases is an invaluable experience," White said. "This constitutes an important next step toward an MD/Ph.D. program and my goal of a career as a medical research scientist."

His honors thesis examined the role played by the ACE2 enzyme in the tissue-damaging effects of COVID-19. "Christian was a fun and talented student to work with," said Dr. Oliver Oakley, ECU biology professor, who also served as White's thesis mentor. "In all my years teaching undergraduate students, I have never encountered a student that I was more confident would be very successful in medical research."

Dr. David Coleman, Executive Director of the ECU Honors Program, explained: "Throughout his time in ECU Honors, Christian was an achiever—not only in our classrooms and labs, but also on a study abroad experience in Thailand. He is also one of many ECU students who have benefitted from the remarkable facilities in ECU's Science Building and the expertise of our fabulous faculty in the College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, who have, in recent years, worked so hard to gear up ECU's undergraduate research opportunities in the sciences."



EKU Honors Senior Spends Year Gaining Professional Experience at Home and Abroad

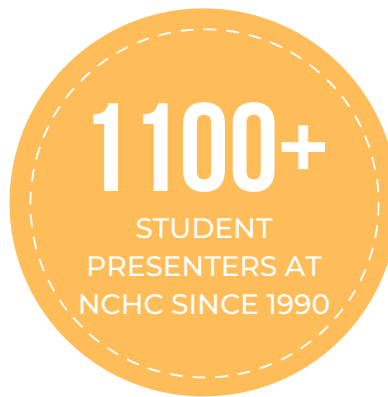
Homeland security and globalization and international affairs double major Jazmine Gardner from Lexington, KY had an unforgettable senior year in 2021-2022. Following a prestigious internship in the FBI's Louisville field office in Summer 2021, she spent the entirety of the 2021-2022 academic year studying international relations and the Arabic language in Meknes, Morocco.

While abroad she also completed her honors thesis, titled "Assessing the Impacts of Juvenile Incarceration in Adult Correctional Facilities" and presented it via Zoom in November 2021.

Jazmine returned to campus just in time to serve as the College of Justice, Safety, and Military Sciences student speaker during the Spring 2022 commencement exercises. Reflecting upon the pandemic that affected the final 2+ years of college for her and all of her Class of 2022 classmates, she explained, "All of us here today—we looked fears straight in the face and we kicked down the door and we took back the reins. We have persisted and given our best efforts to be here today receiving our diplomas. Continue to face your fears and hold the key to your fate."



By The Numbers



15%

OF EKU HONORS PROGRAM STUDENTS ARE
FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

120%

INCREASE IN AFRICAN AMERICAN AND LATINX
STUDENTS OVER THE PAST 8 YEARS

\$2.1 MILLION+

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

Sidewalk U. Montgomery and Selma, Alabama

Following cancellation of our annual Sidewalk U. program in 2021 due to COVID, ECU Honors returned to its signature study-away program in 2022. Not finished with its surprises, however, COVID's return in the form of the omicron variant forced postponement of our originally planned January 2022 trip to spring break week in March.

This year's Sidewalk U. trip both challenged and inspired students as they encountered and engaged issues of civil rights struggles in the United States past and present. Highlights included an afternoon with American treasure Dr. Valda Harris Montgomery, who still lives in the house in Montgomery where she grew up in the 1950s and 1960s—three doors down from the home of her parents' dear friends Dr. Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King. They also learned about connections between past and present through Bryan Stevenson's and the Equal Justice Initiative's Legacy Museum. Particularly intriguing to the students were the public art and mural cultures of Montgomery and Selma, exploration of which provided the students rich insight into debates about the meaning and legacies of Alabama's (and America's) longstanding struggles with civil rights issues and memory.

ECU Honors' Sidewalk U. program is made possible and affordable each year by the Bonnie Gray Society Endowment—a cooperative endowed fund established by ECU Honors alumni in honors of our founding director Dr. Bonnie Gray.



EKU Honors Students Achieving at the Highest Levels

The Honors Thesis seminar has long been the most important engine of top-rank undergraduate research on the ECU campus. This year, honors thesis projects once again swept the top three places in the ECU Library's Research Award for Undergraduates competition, which recognizes the top student research achievements on our campus each year. First place went to senior psychology major Samantha Neuhaus for her thesis, "Shy or Anxious? Examining the Efficacy of School-Based Interventions for Childhood Social Anxiety." The second-place winner was senior forensic science major Cassidy Laney for her thesis, "Peeling Off the Proof: Using Peel-Away Polymer Technology in the Collection of Ignitable Liquids During Arson Investigations." Third place went to senior English major Kaitlyn VanWay for her thesis, "Prescriptivism, Privilege, and Power: How Standard Language Education Empowers and Devalues Learners."

ECU Honors students also received awards as this year's top graduate in three of ECU's six academic colleges. Lindsay Volpenhein, a double-major in communication studies and English, won the Dean's Award as top 2022 graduate in ECU's College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences. Marketing major Josiah Stendel received distinction as this year's top graduate from ECU's College of Business. Finally, fire, arson, and explosion investigation major Ethan Fowlie was named top 2022 graduate from ECU's College of Justice, Safety, and Military Science.



Creativity and Engagement Inside and Outside of Honors Seminar Classrooms

Our honors interdisciplinary seminars remain centers of innovative and engaged teaching and learning. New offerings this year included Dr. Heather Fox's honors seminar titled "Learning in Place." Students engaged in community outreach and investigative projects in conjunction with ECU Archives and Special Collections alongside community archives across the state and region. Students shared projects at the end of the Fall 2021 semester in a public forum in the ECU Library. Selected projects from the course were then presented at the Spring 2022 annual meetings of the Kentucky Honors Roundtable and Southern Regional Honors Council. Projects included an original oral history collection for Junction City, KY and an intensive case-based study of educational practices in Kentucky prisons.

For the second straight year, Professors Julie Hensley and Bernardo Scarambone collaborated on an interdisciplinary creative arts class titled, "The Creative Imagination: Death and Life." Student projects ranged from musical performance to painting to modern interpretive dance to quilting. The course culminated in a public exhibition and show in the Pearl Buchanan Theater in the Keen Johnson Building.



In Memoriam

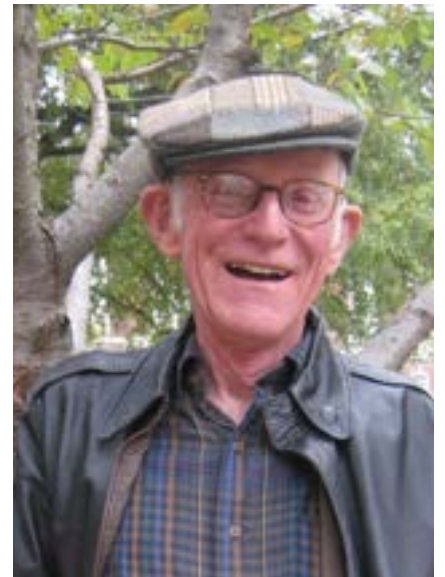
In October 2021, dozens of honors alumni returned to campus for two memorial services at which we honored the legacies of two of ECU Honors' founding faculty figures who had passed away over the previous months: Dr. Bruce MacLaren and Dr. Frank Williams. A few weeks later in November 2021 came the tragic news of an accident that had taken the life of another longtime and beloved faculty leader in our honors community, Dr. Suzanne Byrd. All three are sorely missed, and they leave an indelible legacy of excellence in teaching, learning, and mentoring that fundamentally shaped the first 3+ decades of ECU Honors Program history.



Dr. Bruce MacLaren



Dr. Suzanne Byrd



Dr. Frank Williams

Building Opportunity

Give to ECU Honors

You can directly support ECU Honors students 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 the innovative Sidewalk U. study away programs each year. Sidewalk U. takes 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 www.alumni.ecu.edu to give to the Bonnie Gray Society Endowment.
- ▶ Click "Make a Gift," choose to "view all giving opportunities," and search for "honors" to easily find the endowment.





EKU HONORS PROGRAM

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