



EKU Honors Annual Report 2019-2020

EKU

A Tradition of National Leadership in Honors Education

2019 Annual Meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council

Since 1990, more than one thousand students from EKU Honors have presented research or creative projects at the annual meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC)—a total that far outdistances that of any other honors college or honors program in the entire nation.

Our current generation of honors students continued that tradition of national leadership at the 2019 annual meeting in New Orleans. Twenty-nine of our students made the trip in November, and they presented on topics ranging from migrant education in the American Southwest, to technologies for removing excess carbon from our atmosphere, to the unique challenges of pursuing community service-based honors thesis projects. Five of the students were involved in the NCHC’s Drama “Master Class,” performing an original short drama and a comedic sketch that originated in a recent honors seminar in the arts.

As is the case every year, the experience was funded entirely by our honors endowment, which has been created through the generosity of program alumni and benefactors. ■





Breanna Bowling

2020 Truman Scholar Finalist

Breanna Bowling, an ECU Honors Program junior, public health/pre-medicine major, became the first ECU student in nearly a decade to be named a finalist for the prestigious and nationally competitive Harry S. Truman Scholarship.

During her time at Eastern, Bowling has demonstrated a passion for equal healthcare access, using her leadership skills to further the cause. She participated in the Courier Program, a public health service learning opportunity focusing on Appalachian health disparities; the Area Health Education Scholar Program, a two-year program dedicated to preparing students to serve rural and underserved areas; and other health disparity research. Additionally, she served as Vice President of Service for Alpha Phi Omega for two years and is a hospice volunteer. She currently serves as an intern for a U.S. Senate campaign. After graduating from ECU, Bowling plans to obtain a dual MD/MPH degree to serve at-risk communities, transform public health policy, and increase access to care for Appalachia and other underserved areas. ■

EKU Undergraduate Research Awards for Honors Thesis Projects

The EKU Honors Program's Honors Thesis Seminar has long been the most productive engine of top-notch undergraduate research achievement on our campus. In 2019-2020, a total of 104 students successfully presented their honors thesis projects. Two of those theses received recognition as the 1st and 2nd place winners in the EKU Library's 2020 Undergraduate Research Award competition. First place went to Lisa Wier, a senior Homeland Security major from Dayton, Ohio, for her thesis, titled "Reality vs. Fantasy: An Analysis of Emergency Management Practices Portrayed in Disaster Movies." Second place went to Rachel Clements, a senior Biomedical Sciences major from Louisville, KY. Her thesis was titled "Investigating the Proteolysis of p75NTR in Response to Oxidative Stress in Dopaminergic Neurons."

Lisa's and Rachel's recognitions further strengthened an emerging tradition of EKU Honors predominance in this competition. In its seven years of existence, the EKU Library's Undergraduate Research Award has recognized a total of 21 projects (three each year) as prize winners. Of that total, 17 (i.e. all but four) have been honors thesis projects. ■



2020 EKU Honors Scholar graduate Lisa Wier



2020 EKU Honors Scholar graduate Rachel Clements

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stories.eku.edu



COVID-19 Pandemic and EKV Response

At EKV and at colleges and universities across the country and around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic brought a rapid halt to on-campus instruction and activities. As higher education moved entirely online for the final two months of the spring 2020 semester, our students, faculty, and staff responded with the innovative and resilient spirit that has characterized EKV Honors since its start more than three decades ago.

Particularly challenged by the new circumstances were our graduating EKV Honors Scholars Class of 2020. They were not able to have the traditional honors convocation and EKV graduation ceremonies enjoyed by previous generations of our honors graduates. In lieu of our traditional celebrations, EKV Honors organized a month-long virtual honors convocation, highlighting on our social media platforms the achievements of three of our individual honors scholar graduates each day, closing in early May with virtual award presentations and a lengthy musical slideshow that collected and showcased the experiences and achievements of our Class of 2020 graduates in their years with us. ■

Max Hargett

Criminal Justice Major
Psychology Minor



- Member, Alpha Tau Omega
- Former President, Residence Hall Association
- Member, Phi Kappa Phi

Honors Thesis

"The Cost of Healthy Living:
Pharmaceutical and Healthcare
Crimes"

mentored by
Dr. Victoria Collins

By the Numbers

461

FALL 2019
TOTAL NUMBER
OF STUDENTS

94%

AVERAGE FIRST-YEAR
RETENTION IN
HONORS, 2019-2020

1000+

STUDENT
PRESENTERS AT
NCHC SINCE 1990

98 TOTAL 2019-2020 HONORS
SCHOLAR GRADUATES

130% INCREASE IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND
HISPANIC STUDENTS OVER LAST 6 YEARS

2 MILLION + EKU HONORS ENDOWMENT FUNDS AVAILABLE TO
SUPPORT STUDENT TRAVEL AND RESEARCH



A Culture of Service



2020 ECU Honors Scholar Graduate Peyton Brock

EKU Honors' informal program motto in recent years has been: "Dream, Persist, Serve." We value deeply the cultivation of a spirit of service in our students and across our honors community. One expression of this spirit is our annual "Jane Boyer Distinguished Service Award," presented annually to the graduating ECU Honors Scholar whose time at ECU best exemplifies the high public service standard set by longtime ECU Board of Regents member and benefactor of the ECU Honors Program's initial endowment, Mrs. Jane Boyer of Louisville, KY.

In May 2020, we presented the Jane Boyer Distinguished Service Award to two of our graduating seniors: Peyton Brock, a Biomedical Sciences major from Middlesboro, KY; and Jennifer Kaylyn Perkins, a Journalism & History double major from London, KY.



2020 ECU Honors Scholar Graduate Jennifer Kaylyn Perkins

Peyton Brock served tirelessly throughout her time at ECU as a Student Alumni Ambassador as well as in medical volunteer activities with Richmond's Health Now Free Clinic and Ronald McDonald House in Lexington. Her service work also extended overseas. She completed an internship in the summer of 2019 in a clinical outreach program in a village in the north of Thailand.

Throughout her time at ECU, Kaylyn Perkins was an energetic leader in student journalism and a tireless advocate for press freedom and open public records. As senior editor of the *Eastern Progress* student newspaper her junior and senior years, her brave advocacy of transparency in ECU administrative records led to her being named 2018 Communications Professional of the Year by the Kentucky Communication Association. ■

Sidewalk U. Traverses the U.S.- Mexico Border in Arizona and Sonora

EKU Honors' distinctive Sidewalk U. program returned to the border communities of Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora, Mexico for the third consecutive year in January 2020. Fifteen honors students and three faculty traveled across the border to spend two days working with the staff, children, and families of the HEPAC children's center and migrant shelter on the Mexican side of the border wall. On the U.S. side, students had the opportunity to speak with local law enforcement officials in Nogales, Arizona about their experiences working in a border community.

New this year was the addition to the itinerary of a visit to a different migrant aid center in Agua Prieta—another Mexican border community eighty miles east of Nogales. Near Agua Prieta, students also had the opportunity to visit a working historic ranch on the Arizona side immediately adjacent to the border vehicle barrier. There, they spoke with the couple that manages the ranch about living and working along the border fence.

On returning from the borderlands, each student completed a research project to probe for answers to questions raised by their experiences while travelling. The students also cooperated on a t-shirt fundraiser that resulted in an \$800 donation from the class to the HEPAC migrant shelter.

Our EKU Honors alumni have for years generously donated to an EKU Foundation fund, titled the "Bonnie Gray Society Fund" in honor of our founding director, EKU Professor Emerita of Philosophy Dr. Bonnie Gray. This fund is used to subsidize Sidewalk U. each year in order to keep the experience affordable for our honors students. ■





Trailblazer Grants and Study Abroad

EKU Honors Trailblazer Grants are designed to assist honors students in their second and third years with the cost of an education abroad or education away program. This year, 14 students received Trailblazer Grants. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic led to the cancellation of all of ECU's Summer 2020 study abroad programs, and most had to postpone their plans. Before the arrival of the pandemic, however, 2019-2020 had been a banner year for study abroad in our program, with 50 students—or about 11 percent of our total honors enrollment—participating in an education abroad experience of some sort between Summer 2019 and Spring 2020. ■



Partners in the Parks

Our Trailblazer Grants also assist students who attend the National Collegiate Honors Council's (NCHC) innovative "Partners in the Parks" experiential educational programs in America's national parks. In Summer 2019, three ECU Honors students—Samantha Tamplin, Lorna Martin, and Ciara Sandefur—received Trailblazer Grants to attend the NCHC Partners in the Parks program at Crater Lake National Park in Oregon. Each also received a stipend from the Southern Regional Honors Council to help fund travel. ■

**#EKUHONORS
STUDY ABROAD:**

50

STUDENTS STUDIED
ABROAD SUMMER
2019-SPRING 2020

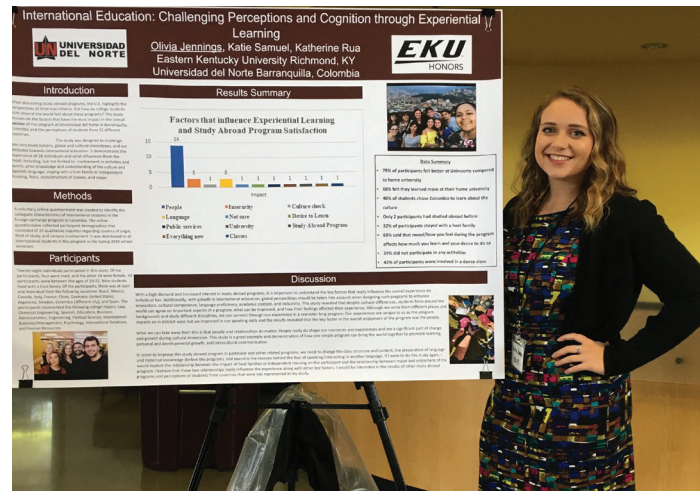
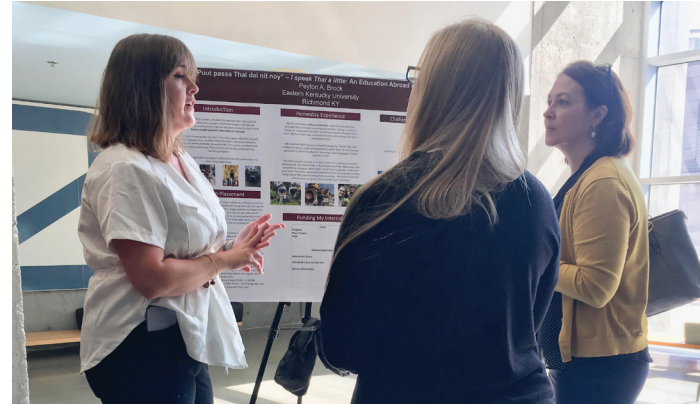
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DIFFERENT
COUNTRIES
VISITED

Hosting the Fall 2019 Kentucky Honors Roundtable

Once every four years, EKU Honors hosts the biannual statewide meeting of the Kentucky Honors Roundtable (KHR). In September 2019, more than 150 students and faculty from honors colleges and honors programs across the state gathered on our campus to share research and creative presentations and discuss issues affecting honors education nationally. For the traditional Friday evening supper, our students organized an interactive 1980s pop culture-themed “whodunit” murder mystery starring EKU Honors students and faculty, with prizes going to the table that accurately solved the “crime.” Many of our guests embraced our invitation to come in 1980s attire, and prizes were also given to those with the best 80s garb.

On Saturday, EKU’s New Science Building was the venue for more than 70 KHR presentations and performances from honors students from across the state. Proud institutional members of KHR since the establishment of the EKU Honors Program in 1988, we succeeded in putting together one of the organization’s most enjoyable meetings in recent memory. ■



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.eku.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.



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HONORS

EKU HONORS PROGRAM

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