

# Honors Outlook

## A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW

by **Norah Walsh, Class of 2024**

Even though university admission is declining, the UMW Honors Program thrives, welcoming about 12% of the UMW student body into the Program. As the standard for honors programs is usually 5–10% of the student body, the responsibilities and roles have outgrown the capacity of Dr. Mara Scanlon and Dr. Kelli Slunt who work part-time as directors of the Honors Program in addition to teaching English and chemistry, respectively.

So, when UMW expected to welcome its largest incoming freshman class in Honors Program history in the fall of 2023, this number raised an alarm in the Honors Program, as there weren't enough hands on deck to be able to fulfill the numerous responsibilities and roles that the Program requires.

In light of this, Scanlon and Slunt spoke with the director of Virginia State University's Honors Program at one of the meetings of the Virginias Collegiate Honor Council. There, they were recommended to take the same step as some other honors programs, which was to establish a post-baccalaureate fellowship.



**Honors Fellow Ava  
Spencer, UMW 2023**

Considering the array of positive effects that this role could have on the Honors Program, Slunt and Scanlon began to craft the responsibilities of the Honors Post-Baccalaureate Fellow, and they sent out the job posting via email at the end of the spring 2023 semester to recent alumni.

Flash forward a couple of months, and Ava Spencer, a 2023 graduate in environmental science on the social track, was hired to be the first post-baccalaureate fellow for UMW's Honors Program. In this position, her role pertains to assisting in the City as Text program, which welcomes incoming Honors students to campus early and leads them through an array of projects and activities; facilitating discussion in the

Honors Service Learning course, which is a required course in the Honors Program; attending Admissions events as a representative and alumna of the Honors Program; and establishing an alumni affinity group to better connect with Honors alumni and keep them involved in the UMW community. In addition, Spencer also acts as a liaison to the Honors Student Advisory Council (HSAC) and plans community activities, which often involves cooperating with other student groups on campus.

*Continued on the next page*



### HONORS PROGRAM STAFF

Kelli Slunt

Director, Honors Program

Professor of Chemistry

Mara Scanlon

Assoc. Director, Honors Program

Professor of English

Kasey Morello

Honors Program Coordinator

Ava Spencer

Honors Program Fellow

### CONTACT US

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### FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

Instagram – [@umwhonors](https://www.instagram.com/umwhonors)

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WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/  
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## Honors Post-Baccalaureate Fellow *continued*

However, this position is twofold in its educational opportunities, as it offers an extra level of support to the Honors Program in their endeavors as well as helping the fellow gain workplace experience. According to Slunt, this fellowship offers a useful step into the post-baccalaureate world, allowing the fellow to become comfortable in the professional skills that they learned through UMW's liberal arts education.

From the perspective of Spencer, who is the inaugural Honors Program fellow, the position has utilized a lot of the skills she developed while completing her undergraduate degree working in the Office of Admissions, running various Instagram accounts for clubs on campus, being a peer mentor and interning with the Office of Sustainability.

One of the strongest aspects of this fellowship is its development of alumni relations, according to Slunt. For this work, Spencer collaborates with Phillip Duggins, the associate director of regional alumni engagement, and Mark Thaden, the executive director of alumni relations and advancement communications. Together, they implemented an Honors affinity group, which helps bring alumni back to campus to facilitate conversations and connections between current and graduated Honors scholars.

As an alumna, Spencer reflected on her work with the Office of Alumni Relations. She said she was excited about these connections, as "even after this position, there'll be opportunities for me to be involved. Because I love UMW, and I love the Honors Program."

Spencer also noted the success of the fellowship and delved into the aspect of alumni relations for Honors alumni.

"The goal for [the Honors affinity group], I think, is that they'll be so self-sufficient—hopefully pretty soon—so that when I leave, it doesn't just sort of stop," said Spencer. "And that I think the goal is to sort of make the alumni know that we still want them to be a part of the community, that they're still a valued part of the Honors Program and to help them getting engaged on campus or online as best as possible."

From the perspective of the Honors Program, the fellowship has been successful in helping them fulfill the responsibilities that help enrich the Program, most notably the alumni affinity group.

The position is set up to extend over a 10-month period, beginning at the end of the summer with the Honors City as Text Program and ending with graduation in May. While it is technically a renewable position, the intent behind this fellowship is to welcome a new recent alumna each year, and the continuation of the fellowship depends on the funding and administrative approval for the position.



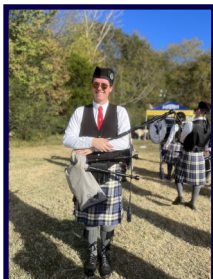
Honors alum with program staff at inaugural Honors Program Alumni Affinity Group gathering

***If you are interested in joining the Honors Program Alumni Affinity Group, please contact Ava Spencer at [aspence6@umw.edu](mailto:aspence6@umw.edu).***



# First Person Singular: What/Why I Do

by AJ Gluchowski, Class of 2024



AJ in the Eagle Pipe Band

Hello! My name is Alexander (AJ) Gluchowski! I am a current senior at UMW, and a member of the Honors Program. I chose UMW for their diverse student population, and their wide variety of majors, but also because I am a bagpiper, and was excited to perform with the Eagle Pipe Band. My story for discovering my love for the pipes is not as interesting as you might suspect. I started playing trumpet in fourth grade, and continued through the end of eighth grade, where I then auditioned for (and made it into) the Liberty High School Grenadier Band. However, I was falling out of love with the trumpet at that point, and my mother suggested the bagpipes, as I had grown up seeing the Liberty High School Bagpipe Corps perform around my hometown. I joined the “diaper pipers” program after eighth grade, and continued playing bagpipes through my senior year. In 2019, I was titled Pipe Major of the LHS Pipe Corps. I was incredibly passionate about the bagpipes, and centralized my college search around universities at which I could continue piping.

My first tour of the Mary Washington was with a student bagpiper whom I had been in contact with. He informed the UMW Eagle Pipe Band of my visit, and they put together an impromptu practice that evening so I could meet everyone and get a taste of their music. I began attending UMW in the Fall of 2020, and in the Fall of 2022, I began working at the Digital Knowledge Center. I had been trained by a DKC consultant on our 3D printers, as I was mildly interested in learning how to print little things that I had found online. After a week or two, I was curious about the 3D modeling process, and wanted to design something of my own to print. I didn’t have to rack my brain too much to come to the conclusion that I wanted to start printing bagpipes.

I started small; bagpipers don’t always practice on the full pipes. We use a smaller, handheld instrument called a practice chanter, and that’s what I started working on. I used a web-based 3D modeling program called OnShape, and with a couple of YouTube tutorials, and many hours of trial and error, I designed a practice chanter from scratch. With the support of the Digital Knowledge Center and the Eagle Pipe Band, I mass produced them for the members of the pipe band, each engraved with their name, and the band’s name as well.

I spent the Spring of 2023 abroad in Scotland, studying bagpiping and bagpipe manufacturing, so that I could come back to UMW this Fall and begin working on a full set of 3D printed bagpipes, which I will later turn into my Honors Capstone. All of this to say—you can never have too many passions because who knows? A few of them might click together and turn into something rather impressive.



In the Scottish Highlands

# Coming Back to the Table

by Knox McKinley, Class of 2026

In early November of this semester, ten honors students were welcomed into Dr. Slunt’s home for the first Honors Program lottery dinner since the pandemic. Attending alongside us students were Dr. Scanlon and our new post-baccalaureate Fellow, Ava Spencer. Over a beautifully home-cooked meal, students got the opportunity to ask Drs. Slunt and Scanlon any questions we had while also sharing our experiences at school and in the program with the group. The levels of excitement in the room were high as we all knew that this dinner marked such an awesome and special milestone. Although I personally was not at UMW during the pandemic when things were getting cancelled left and right, I knew that this meant a lot to everyone who was here pre-COVID. The meal led to discussion pertaining to classes, dorm experiences, campus legends, and even hearing about our own directors’ vast experiences at the school.



Personally, I really enjoyed the dinner. In addition to the amazing meal, I had a wonderful time getting to know my fellow Honors Program peers. As a first semester Track B Honors student, it can be hard to connect with others in the program. This dinner gave me the opportunity to meet people of all classes in the program with me, and to make personal connections with them. I learned so much about different cultures, languages, and majors through just a few hours of conversation. I especially enjoyed hearing about the other Honors-designated classes that my peers were in. It was an opportunity to learn how so many of us are using this program differently to understand our respective fields of studies further. All in all, I am so grateful to the Slunts for hosting us as well as the entire Honors Program team for making our first post-pandemic lottery dinner a massive success!



Dinner crowd, Knox front center



## Honors City as Text 2023

*The national City as Text honors pedagogy has been adapted at UMW for our signature orientation experience for new Honors students, which continues through the first eight weeks of the semester as HONR 101.*



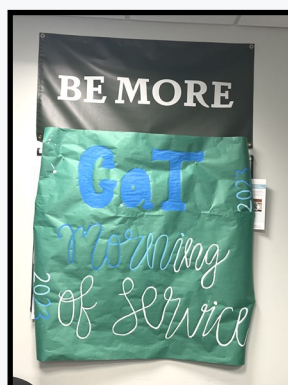
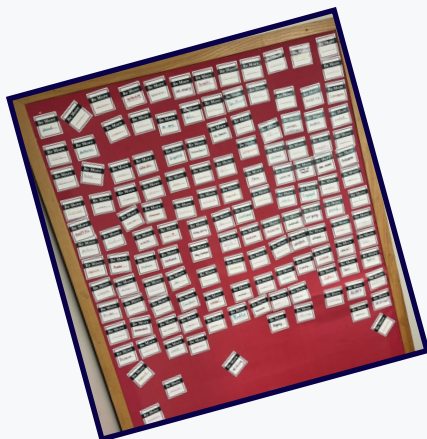
*CaT has continued to grow and change each year as we find fresh ways to forge connections between our scholars and the city and to reinforce our central values as a program, including service and curiosity. In 2023, our CaT curriculum added an impactful session on the new Fredericksburg Civil Rights Trail, led by UMW's Mr. Chris Williams and Ms. Victoria Matthews from the city. Additionally, we began two new traditions for CaT on campus: a morning of service in conjunction with the Office of Community Engagement, led by Sarah Dewees with Kasey Morello, in which our students completed projects serving the unhoused, local children, the National Park Service, Tree Fredericksburg, and many more; and a reflective session on our Honors slogan, BE MORE, in which participants defined for themselves core goals for the coming year.*

### BE MORE

**by Valerie Palomares Torres, Class of 2027**

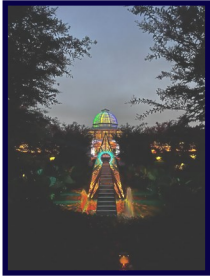


"Be More." This was on the stickers that they handed out for us to fill in during City As Text. As I pondered it, the two words kept making me overthink. I was considering what situation would merit for these stickers to come to mind, but I immediately found that the City as Text experience had me thinking about the stickers even more. This is because I found it very noticeable how CAT did their best to try and make sure that the past relationship of Fredericksburg (and VA overall) with POC communities, especially with African and Native Americans, is shown to us new UMW students. I had never seen this activity before experiencing CAT. It felt like CAT and the Honors Program were finally addressing this important issue, which felt refreshing and reassuring to me about what I was going into in my higher education. One of the biggest shows about their initiative to address the past treatment of Native Americans was the module in the Canvas class page where they outlined the land that UMW and Fredericksburg is on, which belonged to the Patowomeck and Manahoac peoples. I came from a school that was very insensitive to the Monacan people even though our high school was named after them. And to see there being a respectful acknowledgement in writing and in speaking of the original and rightful owners of the land is a nice refresher. I also really liked the fact that CAT wanted us to know about the Auction Block that was used in the enslavement of human beings, and they wanted us to learn about it because it is the story of Fredericksburg, and it has a significant impact to keep with forever. The CAT experience and the Honors program allowed me to realize that the Be More stickers were meant for us to grow as a person and grow from history, especially the history around you. And the action that CAT and Honors took to exemplify the lessons of history and personal growth were important to me, so I feel confident in my future in the program and look forward to more.



# Incanto: Honors Fall 2023 Field Trip

by Sarah Tyree-Herrmann, Rin Northedge, and Allie Schwartz, Class of 2027



This September, the three of us had the wonderful opportunity to go to the Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens in Richmond with some fellow Honors Scholars. As Freshmen, we were very excited to embark on our first trip with the Honors Program and looked forward to forging more personal bonds with classmates as well as staff. After having a quick dinner outside the gardens, the three of us were somewhat left to our devices and encouraged to explore what intrigued us most. To get us started, we asked Dr. Scanlon and Dr. Slunt where they would recommend we begin, and they told us to follow the paths in a circle around the entire garden. Walking past an elaborate light show, we first entered the domed conservatory filled with scents and sights of exotic florals. We walked among the butterflies and birds throughout the greenhouse, bonding with each other through shared conversation. This field trip was early into the semester, where we were still finding our footing, so unique experiences like this helped facilitate new friendships in an organic way. The paths we chose took us to Lotus Bridge, where we were greeted by distant live music and the welcoming sound of children playing—comforting noises rarely heard on our college campus. We made our way to the farm garden, where we could see evidence of child's play—which we definitely took up ourselves—among the miniature farming toys and model farmhouses. Our final journey that night was one that continued our trend of reliving our childhood, this time walking a winding path up to a tower that felt out of a storybook. Once inside, we immediately were drawn to a spiral staircase that led to a ledge overlooking the glistening, moonlit water. The natural serenity was undermined slightly by our loud, buoyant laughter, but none of us minded. This experience helped us to realize that despite being away from home, we are just as close to some amazing experiences, and we could not be more grateful to have gotten this opportunity with the Honors Program. This memory will be engrained in our brains just like the beautiful lights were imprinted into our vision.



Honors at Incanto: an Oasis of Lyrical Sculpture at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. Rin, Sarah, and Allie front center.

## Scenes from the Honors Community, Fall 2023



S'Mores



Crocheting Granny Squares



Pumpkin Carving



Gingerbread Contest



Hike at Motts Run



Root Beer Study Break





## ***Honors Scholars***

***thank all who are offering HN classes this year!***

Marie McAllister, Jason James, Lynn Lewis, Emily Crosby, Susan Fernsebner, Suzanne Sumner, Kristin Marsh, April Wynn, Dawn Bowen, Christine Henry, Janie Lee, Kashef Majid, Jared McDonald, Hillary Stebbins, Mara Scanlon, Melody Denhere, Bridgette Dennett, Kelli Slunt, Michael Benson, Victoria Scrimmer, Leanna Giancarlo, Janet Asper, Grant Woodwell, Eric Lorentzen, Pam Grothe, Melissa Wells, Nicole Crowder, Zach Whalen, Gary Richards, Eric Gable, Jeff McClurken, Brooks Kuykendall, Miriam Liss, Mary Beth Mathews, Kate Haffey, Laura Mentore, Angela Pitts, Jennifer Polack, Prasheet Chandrasekar, Melina Patterson, Steve Hanna, Nabil Al-Tikriti, Claudine Ferrell, Leslie Martin, Paul Fallon, and Kevin McCluskey

***From our home to yours, have a safe and peaceful Winter Break!***

