

With HONORS

A Magazine of the Youngstown State University Sokolov Honors College

LEARNING

LEADING

SERVING

JASON HESS
NAMED FIRST
YSU TRUMAN
SCHOLAR



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Honors is home to international students from 27 countries, such as Nepal, Zimbabwe, Vietnam, Venezuela, and more. Pictured above are students at orientation upon arriving in the United States in Fall 2023.



MISSION STATEMENT
 Inspiring a love of learning through opportunity, community and family

With Honors is an award-winning yearly publication of the Youngstown State University Sokolov Honors College for alumni, students, faculty and staff, parents, and friends. This edition covers events and accomplishments taking place during the 2023 calendar year.

The largely student created publication was recognized by the National Collegiate Honors Council with a first place award in 2021 and a second place award in 2023.

QR codes throughout the magazine can be scanned with a smartphone for quick access to videos and other supplemental digital content.

Honors students and alumni have their class designation after their name. US represents University Scholars from the earlier years of the program; HC stands for Honors College since its formation in 2014.

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DEAN'S LETTER

As we reflect on 2023, I am thrilled to share the remarkable achievements and developments within the Sokolov Honors College. This year has been one of continued growth, student achievement, and expanding efforts with community engagement. All of which underscores honors' commitment to academic distinction and meaningful community impact.

In Fall 2023, we were honored to welcome 367 new students from across the United States and 10 additional countries, expanding our diverse learner community. Overall students represent 31 countries and 24 different US states. This rich geographic diversity enhances the honors academic environment, supporting global perspectives.

Student retention rates have remained robust at approximately 92%, a testament to the supportive and stimulating environment provided by dedicated honors professional staff, faculty, and undergraduate teaching assistants. Additionally, the completion of all honors requirements for students to earn the high honors college distinction has seen an increase of nearly 12%, reflecting our students' dedication and the effectiveness of our academic support systems.



Some of the highlights of student success stories and initiatives include:

- Jason Hess was named YSU's first Truman Scholar, a distinguished honor recognizing his exceptional leadership and commitment to public service.
- Rocco Bruno was one of only six students nationwide to receive the Phi Kappa Phi Marcus Urann Fellowship, a testament to his academic excellence and potential for future scholarly contributions.
- YSU-BaccMed students have the 2nd highest matriculation rate to NEOMED from Ohio institutions.
- Tafadzwa Mapiki was awarded the YSU STEM Co-op for her outstanding research assistantship at the University of Florida, highlighting our students' active engagement in impactful research.
- Honors trustees continued their efforts to support students through fundraising initiatives aimed at endowing scholarships and donating to a chosen community partner.

Community engagement remains a cornerstone of our experiential learning approach. The YSU Transcribing Club continued to provide invaluable service on a national stage with 7,000 hours, and 50,000 documents transcribed, while students enrolled in the Campus Community Partnership Seminar successfully met the needs of 25 community partners in Spring 2023. These initiatives enrich our students' educational experience, giving them differentiating experiences, and strengthen ties to the Youngstown community. Additionally, thanks to the generous support of our corporate sponsor, Shell Polymers Monaca, we have renamed the long-standing Pen Pal Program after Dr. Rashid Abdu. This expansion will enable us to reach more children, fostering literacy and meaningful connections.

Honors also welcomed a new professional staff member, Carrie Clyde, assistant director who brings with her a wealth of experience from 14 years of service at YSU focused on employee wellness. Dr. Mollie Hartup, honors director, was elected vice president of the Ohio Health Professions Advisors.

As we look ahead, honors remains committed to building on these successes, fostering academic excellence, welcoming students from across the globe, and enhancing community engagement. We are forever grateful to our donors, alums, and friends of honors for supporting the learning experiences of our students.

With honors,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Cossentino".

Amy Cossentino, PhD
Associate Provost and Dean



▲ Hess volunteering as coach for his alma mater, Wilmington Area High School.

Jason Hess and Ashley Orr during an interview prep session.



JASON HESS NAMED YSU'S FIRST TRUMAN SCHOLAR

By Celeste Kapalin, HC29

Jason Hess, HC28 is the first Younstown State University student to ever receive the Truman Scholarship. From West Middlesex, Pennsylvania, Hess is a Mechanical Engineering major. The Board of Trustees of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation named Hess a 2023 Truman Scholar at the beginning of April. This prestigious graduate scholarship is given to aspiring public service leaders in the United States.

After graduating in Spring 2024, Hess plans to attend Harvard University Kennedy School of Government Affairs in Public Policy with a concentration in International Affairs and Science and Technology. This will allow him to follow his passion and pursue a career in one of the United Nation's global sustainable development goals: space sustainability. He is already a published author on orbital space debris.

On top of that, Hess spends much of his time serving others. At YSU, he is a teaching assistant for three first-year engineering classes and the chief coordinator of YSU Engineering Week. The week includes daily events,

competitions, and a combined food drive, as well as offers opportunities to mentor middle school students. Hess also dedicates 40 hours a week during football season to being a volunteer football coach at Wilmington Area High School.

He returned to his alma mater after his achievement to inspire the next generation of students. "One day your life will flash before your eyes," he told them at a special ceremony. "Make sure that's worth watching. I know that sounds difficult, but nothing worth living for is ever easy. Dream big and go for it, and don't let people tell you you can't do something."

When Hess learned about the scholarship, he reached out to Ron Shaklee, director of National and International Scholarships in the Sokolov Honors College and YSU Truman Scholarship Representative. Shaklee walked him through the process and noted that "Jason remarked on several occasions about how he was proud to represent YSU as a candidate. It exemplifies his humble nature that he portrays himself as a representative of all YSU students."



Hess gathers with his family at YSU to celebrate after receiving the news of his Truman achievement. ▶



Scan the QR code to hear more from Jason about his journey to becoming a Truman Scholar.

“JASON REMARKED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS ABOUT HOW HE WAS PROUD TO REPRESENT YSU AS A CANDIDATE. IT EXEMPLIFIES HIS HUMBLE NATURE THAT HE PORTRAYS HIMSELF AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL YSU STUDENTS.”

– DR. RON SHAKLEE

Several YSU community members came together to help Hess prepare for his in-person interview once he was named a semi-finalist. One such coach and mentor was **Ashley Orr, US18**, YSU’s first Rhodes Scholar, a representative of the Sokolov Honors College Advisory Board, and doctoral candidate at Carnegie Mellon University.

“As an alum, YSU students continue to impress and inspire me with their vision, service, leadership, and scholarship,” Orr said. “Jason, in particular, is an exceptional example of how YSU students make it their mission to make the world a better place.”

Dr. Amy Cossentino, dean of the Sokolov Honors College and associate provost, commends Hess and those who guided him on this journey.

“The receipt of the Truman Award is a testament to Jason’s dedication to learning, leading and serving with the support of his faculty, Dr. Shaklee, his family, peers and extended community,” said Cossentino. “Hess’ accomplishment shines a light on the many ways honors students live the mission of the Sokolov Honors College.”

SINCERELY, YOUR PEN PAL

By Celeste Kapalin, HC29

On Thursday, Sept. 7, the Sokolov Honors College held a pen pal kickoff event in the Rossi Room of Kilcawley Center at Youngstown State University. The presentation revealed the naming of the program as the Dr. Abdu Pen Pals Program.

Dr. Rashid Abdu, MD was a tutor at Harding Elementary School, which led to the creation of the YSU Penguin Pen Pal Program. The program continues to pair honors students with students at Harding, alongside Brookfield Elementary and Girard Intermediate.

Natalie Dando, HC29, junior Chemical Engineering and Mathematics double major, is the current coordinator for Pen Pals. She coordinates with the honors college and elementary teachers to assign journals, which travel between the schools and university each week. This gives honors students the opportunity to earn volunteer hours by writing bi-weekly.

Both groups benefit greatly from the program. The elementary students have the opportunity to form a bond with a college student, who serves as a role model for them. On top of having fun, they also improve their reading and writing skills. The project resonates with YSU students as well. **Ashley Orr, US18**, honors alum and former Pen Pals Coordinator, said, "I love this program. I think it was one of the most impactful things that I did when I was a YSU student."

Hannah Gordon, HC28, is an honors student who volunteered for the project during the 2022-2023 academic year. She "had such a great time getting to interact with young students... and see their reading and writing skills develop." Other students who reflected on their experience whole-heartedly agreed with her.

Shell Polymers Monaca sponsored the naming of the program. "Being able to help

Dr. Abdu's dream become a wide-spread reality is an honor. This program will not only create lifelong friends, but also deliver a myriad of educational benefits to all who participate," said director of corporate relations, Curtis Thomas.

Dr. Abdu is a continuous supporter of the YSU and Youngtown community. He is a member of the Sokolov Honors College Advisory Board and mentors students on pre-health pathways. Several of the Rose Melnick Medical Museum medical artifacts have been donated by him. Since 2016, he has been an honorary member of the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi.

He is most well-known, however, for his dedication to the fight against breast cancer. In honor of his late wife, he established the Joanie Abdu Comprehensive Breast Care Center in 2011. The annual Panerathon raises money for Joanie's Promise Fund at the Mercy Health Foundation Mahoning Valley.



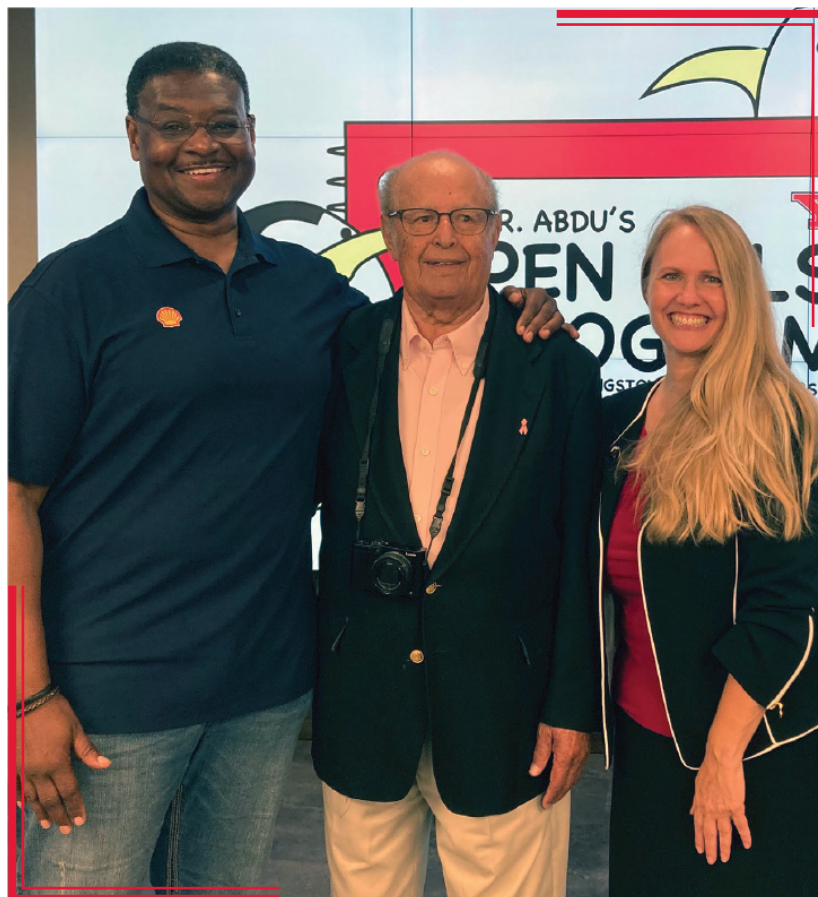
YSU student and alumni pen pals gather with Dr. Abdu on the occasion of the naming of the program.

"I am humbled by this honor which I do not deserve by myself, because it takes more than one person to do anything, it always takes that village."

~Dr. Rashid Abdu



Scan this QR code to learn more about Dr. Abdu's Pen Pals Program



From left, Curtis Thomas, Dr. Rashid Abdu, and Dr. Amy Cossentino

What I Should Have Said- *by Rashid Abdu*

On September 7, 2023, I was supposed to attend the annual Penguin Pen Pal meeting, usually held on the first floor of the Kilcawley Center, at Youngstown State University (YSU). The kids and I sit on the bleachers. But this time, Dr. Amy Cossentino, dean of the Sokolov Honors College, led us to the second floor. On entering the room, I saw my daughter, Elaine, and her husband, David, along with my son, Rodman, and Gina Marinelli in the front row. My first reaction was "what the heck is this?" I was like a deer facing car headlights! Then I saw more of my dear friends and a group of honors students, all sitting in rows of chairs, about 60, in all. Somebody said that they all came to honor me! For what, I did not know, and that the event had been in the making for at least 2 months! Needless to say, I was numb and speechless. I could not believe it. I did not expect it and did not deserve it! My dear friend, Curtis Thomas, gave an eloquent and emotional speech and on behalf of the Shell Co. pledged an annual donation of \$ 25,000 for the Penguin Pen Pal program. His remarks touched the hearts of many, especially mine. The moment of truth came when I was asked to speak. As I said, I was speechless. I can't remember what I said, but on reflection, I know what I should have said: They were honoring the wrong person! The right person stood far on the side of the room: Dr. Amy Cossentino. All I did 11 years ago, was throw the ball. But it was Amy who caught it and made the home run! Without Amy, there would have been no Penguin Pen Pals program. Without Amy, the number of students would never have increased from forty 5th graders at Harding Elementary to around 500 today in three different schools. Without Amy, the number of honors students would never have increased from around 300 in 2012, to around 1,200, today— quadrupled over 10 years. How many would love to have their stock portfolio quadruple in 10 years! Without Amy, we would never have been here today! Just before we walked to the Kilcawley Center, we visited the Sokolov Honors College building. It was a piece of art, rich in history that could never be duplicated. I met Presley Bowser, honors assistant director and alum who showed me her Pen Pals journal with a little girl I will call "Mary." I saw interesting drawings by the little hands, and on one page Mary wrote that she wanted to become a surgeon. She saw a promising future after she got to know Presley, her pen pal and role model. I feel proud, privileged, and honored to see YSU honors students connect with their pen pals as mentors, teachers, friends, and role models. Helping these mostly disadvantaged children is community engagement at its finest. Yes, they are the role models. The children look up to them and see a path to a promising future. They can see themselves as honors students at YSU someday and continue to perpetuate the Penguin Pen Pal legacy for generations to come.

Thank you, Amy. I shall remain forever grateful.

Your Pen Pal,
Rashid Abdu, M.D. F.A.C.S.





The process is the prize on the road to Carnegie

◀ Sara Khan, HC29, presenting her research study that explores the home/school connection in partnership with the Rich Center for Autism

Honors at the heart of community engagement at YSU

Since inception, community engagement has been an important part of the honors experience at YSU. Given the university-wide commitment to our community, YSU has been working towards a goal of earning the Carnegie Foundation Elective Classification for Community Engagement. Though the application for the 2026 cycle isn't due until April 2025, work to capture information on current community engagement efforts is ongoing.

Community Engagement Conference

Honors and the Office of Community Engagement worked to host a campus-wide Community Engagement Conference in Spring 2023 to showcase engaged scholarship by students, faculty, staff, and community partners. The event featured oral and poster presentations.

Honors Campus Community Partnerships

A large portion of the poster presentations came from the honors seminar Campus Community Partnerships. During the seminar, more than 300 honors freshmen engaged with 25 community partners to meet their needs, something that was appreciated by the organizations and students.

"The experience overall was incredible. The students were devoted, energetic, and passionate and their patients love them," said Chary Hively, representing a local hospice organization.



Scan to see highlights from the 2023 Community Engagement Conference



Other community engaged learning courses

Two other honors seminars offer community engaged learning experiences. In Fall 2023, students in the Honors Magazine Editing and Production Seminar partnered with the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office (MCPO). Students in the class learned about the organization's many facets and wrote stories which were later published in their newsletter, the Justice Journal. Students told stories about Hope the therapy dog, the second chances possible through Mahoning County Drug Court, and the challenges the civil side faced in the aftermath of assisting in the East Palestine train derailment cleanup.

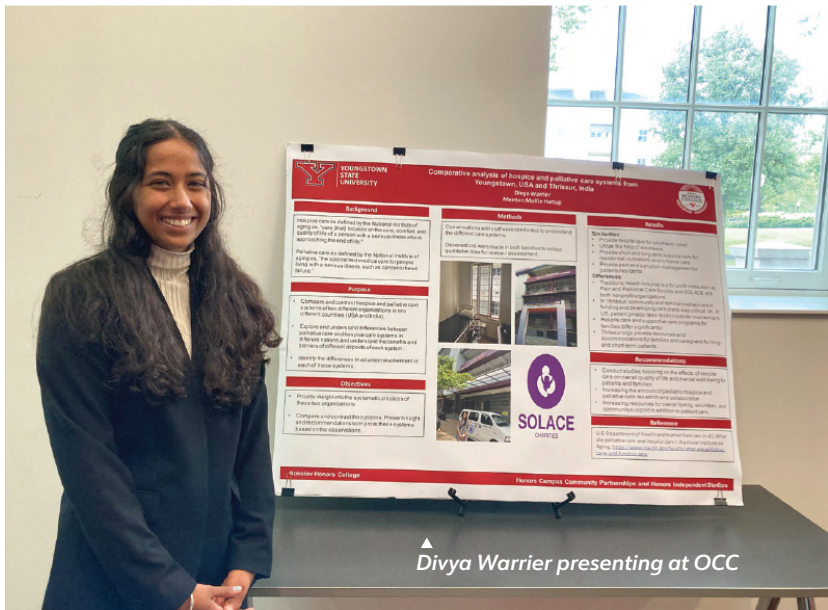
Students and the MCPO joined forces to host a news conference to share the project with the larger community to tell other organizations what types of collaborations are possible.

Community engaged learning can also occur through the Honors Independent Study Seminar. Last year, **Divya Warriar, HC28**, a second year YSU-BaccMed student, compared and contrasted hospice and palliative care facilities in the United States and India. Warriar was selected to present her work at the Ohio Campus Compact conference in August 2023. **Sara Khan, HC29**, a third year YSU-BaccMed student, developed a research study to explore the home-school connection in partnership with the Rich Center for Autism. Khan was selected to receive a Student Small Research Grant and later was a finalist for Best of Quest.

"In all of these experiences, the common thread is a shared experience, co-created by YSU and community partners," said Dr. Amy Cossentino, associate provost and dean. "When we listen to the needs of the community, the opportunities for experiential learning are endless."



Hope therapy dog and Allan



Divya Warriar presenting at OCC



Magazine students and MCPO at joint news conference

LET KNOWLEDGE FILL OUR HEARTS YSU and AHA join forces to Go Red for Women

By Daniella Mendel, HC30



Through a partnership with the American Heart Association (AHA), honors students had opportunities to learn, lead, and serve while raising awareness and funds to benefit heart health. Collective efforts and the generosity of the Sokolov family matching a portion of donated funds, allowed the Sokolov Honors College to become a gold sponsor of the Tri-County Go Red for Women Movement, chaired this year by associate provost and dean of the Sokolov Honors College, Dr. Amy Cossentino. "In education we refer to knowledge as power. Therefore, a successful campaign will result in awareness and action to a lifestyle supportive of greater heart health," said Cossentino. She incorporated the heart health education effort into the Intro to Honors classroom where all freshmen had an opportunity to brainstorm, develop, and execute a fundraising project to benefit AHA. Carrie Clyde, assistant director, instructor, and member of the AHA Executive Leadership Team articulates her perspective on the group projects.

"The collaboration with the American Heart Association was great because it gave students the hands on experiences of promoting, educating, and fundraising for heart health initiatives and healthy lifestyle behaviors," said Clyde.

Many students have even pioneered fundraising initiatives within their respective communities. For example, one group orchestrated a jump rope event at a local high school, while others organized fast-food fundraisers, such as Chipotle. Furthermore, numerous students adopted diverse approaches on campus, such as organizing events like baked goods drives.

Honors student teaching assistants and all honors freshmen also learned Hands Only CPR, a potentially lifesaving technique. Dr. Nancy Landgraff, PT, Ph.D., and the YSU DPT students provided the training to all first-year honors classes.



Intro to Honors students learning hands-only CPR

Honors trustees efforts, including the Pete and Y driveway fundraiser, contributed to overall AHA funds. Honors alumni **Sevasti and Alex Gedra** are longtime supporters of the effort as shown in "then and now" photos. The collaboration between AHA and the YSU Honors College not only educates and raises awareness about heart health among students but also empowers them to lead and serve.

Through a YSU-BaccMed leadership group, AHA has also provided opportunities for advocacy, creating awareness, and fundraising. This group gathered regularly to brainstorm strategies for educating others about AHA's initiatives. They created social media campaigns and led a project to create a special "Penguins Have Heart" shirt in partnership with Youngstown Clothing Company with all proceeds benefitting AHA.



Then and now: honors alumni Sevasti and Alex Gedra captured their future penguins; Emelia pictured above in 2016 and Emelia and Michael below in 2023



[Scan to see all the ways students, faculty, and staff came together to raise awareness and funds for American Heart Association's Tri County Go Red for Women movement!](#)

FUTURE PHYSICIANS GAIN EXPERIENCE ON THE JOURNEY TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

By Bronson DeAngelo, HC28

The road to medical school is only the beginning of the journey to becoming a doctor. However, the first and most critical step for every student is to confirm that this is the path for them. One way to help make that determination is by gaining exposure to the field through hands on experiences, which honors makes available to all honors students interested in a health-related career, including our YSU-BaccMed students.

Honors students interested in a career as a physician attended two premiere events to connect with doctors and other medical students and professionals last fall. The two experiential learning opportunities included a visit by YSU alum, Dr. Amy Acton, and a field excursion to Ohio Medical Education Day for pre-medical students across the state.

Dr. Acton, who visited Stambaugh Auditorium to present at Youngstown State University's Centofanti Symposium, held a special session for YSU-BaccMed and honors pre-health students. She shared insights into her career of over 30 years of executive leadership, public service, and teaching as a licensed physician in preventive medicine and public health. As the former director of the Ohio Department of Health, Acton shared her experience in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic and her objective to later mobilize federal and state resources to promote health for all Ohio citizens.

Students praised Dr. Acton for her courageous journey through life and the challenges she faced along the way. "She is one of the reasons I decided being a doctor was a possibility for me. I've heard her speak before and we come from similar backgrounds. Hearing her speak again at this lecture taught me that resilience always paves a way," said **Alexandra Long, HC31** and first year YSU-BaccMed student.

Students learned more about their own medical school journey and the

application process with the annual Ohio Medical Education Day's conference taking place at NEOMED in 2023. This daylong event featured multiple speakers as well opportunities to engage with medical students and representatives from the medical schools in Ohio and surrounding states. The conference educated students on the application process, how to differentiate themselves, and allowed students to tour the medical school. "OMED is a jam-packed but incredibly rewarding day of learning all aspects about medical school application and your future as a student," said **Zoe Wolff, HC31** and first year YSU-BaccMed student. "The faculty present are committed to giving you any



Students learn basic suture techniques at a US Army sponsored suture workshop

information you need to succeed and there are multiple schools in attendance across different states, so any student is sure to find a good fit." OMED is organized annually by the Ohio Health Professions Advisors, for which Dr. Mollie Hartup, Sokolov Honors College Director, serves as vice-president.

Pre-health students also had a chance to sharpen their suture skills thanks to workshops hosted by the Army Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP). This is one of the ways students gain hands on experiences to help prepare them for their future careers.

Delegation of honors pre-health and YSU-BaccMed students at Ohio Medical Education Day at NEOMED in October 2023



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: JACK AULBACH FUTURE CERTIFIED ANESTHESIOLOGIST ASSISTANT

Honors graduate **Jack Aulbach, HC28**, was admitted as one of 14 students pursuing a master's of Anesthesiology Assistant at NEOMED. While an honors student, Aulbach considered careers as a doctor and a physician assistant before discovering a passion for a future as a Certified Anesthesiologist Assistant.



Scan the QR code to hear about Jack's pre-health journey in his own words.



Honors alumni return to Cafaro, Christman

Honors alumni representing US1 through HC23 gathered in June 2023 for a reunion at Cafaro House and Christman Dining Common. Alumni shared memories of their time as a University Scholar or honors student. Reflections centered around the experience being foundational in their lives, the gratitude they feel today for having been part of the program, and a desire to give back. Honors student **Avinab De** shares his reflections on attending the alumni reunion.

By Avinab De, HC30



When I heard that the Sokolov Honors College offered me the opportunity to volunteer at the Alumni Dinner this summer I was overjoyed! I was excited to meet YSU graduates, hear their stories, and even the different paths they all had taken in their careers. The event was planned and coordinated well. I enjoyed the heartfelt interactions I got to share with the alumni as I greeted them at our very own Christman Dining Hall. Notably, the energy of the ceremony was electric. Even as a freshman, I felt a special connection with all the talented and accomplished Sokolov Honors College graduates in attendance. Hearing their fun stories of late study sessions at Cafaro and accompanying them on their nostalgic residence hall tours were definite highlights for me.

All of us understand and

try to practice the pillars of the Honors College in our academic and professional lives, but actually witnessing our alumni accomplish so much in their careers and be an active voice of change in the community was very inspiring. I met one of the Sokolov Honors College's celebrated graduates, Rhodes Scholar recipient, **Ms. Ashley Orr, US18**. I got to hear her story of attending Oxford University, and her current work of giving back to the community with special research focuses on poverty, labor, and urban economics. Coupled with a delicious dinner in Christman Dining Hall, I really enjoyed being a part of this event. It was a welcome break from the summer Organic Chemistry classes I was taking back then.

I hope to volunteer at a similar event soon and hear even more interesting stories and diverse career paths our Penguins are undertaking. Go Guins!

Phone-a-thon returns!

Meanwhile, honors trustees brought back a long-standing honors tradition of Phone-a-thon. Thanks to those alumni and friends who answered the phone, reminisced with current students, and contributed generously.



◀ Avinab De, HC30 at alumni dinner



▶ Bronson DeAngelo, HC28

Love music

By Celeste Kapalin, HC29

The memory of Dr. Stephen L. Gage lives on in the hearts of many who came out to celebrate his life at a memorial concert at Stambaugh Auditorium last May. A beloved music professor whose career spanned several decades, Gage served as director of bands and orchestra at Youngstown State University's Dana School of Music. Attendees came from across the country and even Naples, Italy, to keep his memory alive and celebrate his legacy. Students who went on to perform or teach, as well as those following other career paths, all came together to make music and pay tribute to the man who inspired them all.

Madeline Grimes, HC22, assisted with the marketing, planning, and fundraising for the event. She met Dr. Gage at an audition as an eighth grader and then spent her high school years working with him as a Youngstown Symphony Youth Orchestra member. As she journeyed into college, he continued to support both her musical and academic endeavors.

"Dr. Gage always cared enough to listen and to take me seriously. He saw in his students and colleagues the capacity to be earnest and to use music as their voice when words are insufficient," said Grimes. "He inspired countless young people because he believed in them."

The event's crowd of about 1,300 people is a testament to that. Dr. Gage influenced a variety of students, including many honors alumni. Grimes still loves playing the flute, even though her career is in digital marketing and product management. Other alumni in attendance included Brett Miller, US3, Flight Chief and Principal horn of the USAF Concert Band and now retired voice of the YSU Marching Pride, Matthew Vansuch, US6, who is also a partner at a local law firm.

Two of Dr. Gage's children, **Claudia, US20**, and **Brendan, HC24**, were also heavily involved in the occasion. They recruited former students who are now professional musicians to "recreate the ensemble that Steve tried to have onstage, with the same number of musicians in each section." They also curated a selection of music that had been meaningful to their father. His repertoire is quite large, though, and the concert featuring his favorites was just under two hours long.

Three of the pieces selected were ones written for his children. Additionally, his wife often had Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia sing "Still the One" by Orleans during their Valentine's Day fundraising events, so members of the music fraternity performed an arrangement.

"We miss our dad in ways that are impossible to describe with words," Brendan said, "but the collection of musicians that came together onstage proved that gone is not forgotten, and that spirit of his artistry, passion, and love for music lives on in played under his baton."

Remembering
Dr. Gage and
his legacy



Editor's note

Properly paying tribute to Dr. Gage's life and the impact he had on countless lives has been a tremendous challenge. How do you put into words someone who has inspired generations of students to go on to inspire thousands more students of their own?

Dr. Gage's impact is simply exponential, and his memory will live on forever through those whose lives he touched. Even musicians who studied under Dr. Gage who pursued professions outside of music remember and appreciate his positive influence on their lives, including me.

As a middle school student in the 90s, I played violin in the Youngstown Symphony Youth Orchestra with Dr. Gage as conductor. Decades later, our paths crossed professionally at YSU. Every time I saw him on campus, he would greet me with a smile and a new question about how a different former student was doing. He remembered his students, cared deeply about them, and worked tirelessly to make an impact on their lives. I am grateful to be one of thousands to have had the opportunity to have my life impacted by Dr. Gage.

~Mollie Hartup, US6

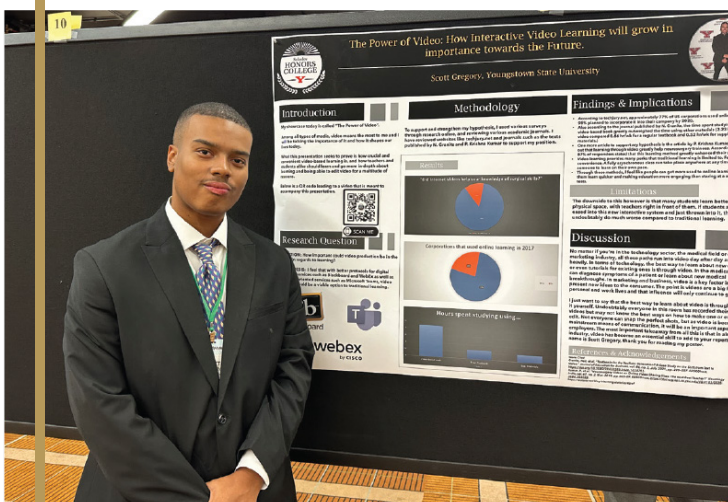


HONORS STUDENTS

BRING HOME AWARD FROM NATIONAL CONFERENCE

By Molly Leonard

During the 2023 Fall semester, four Sokolov Honors College students presented their scholarly work at the National Collegiate Honors Council conference in Chicago, IL. The students gained valuable experiences from the conference and accepted a national award highlighting the excellence of the Sokolov Honors College. The diverse range of presentations reflected the breadth of talent within the college. **Scott Gregory, HC28**, a junior Information Technology major and three-year honors student staff videographer, presented his research titled *The Power of Video*, exploring the benefits of video learning. **Tafadzwa Mapiki, HC28**, a senior Biology Pre-Medicine major, had the opportunity to present her research titled *Phenotype Characterization of Mouse Model*. Mapiki developed a poster based on her research experience at the University of Florida, which aimed to further the contribution of cancer cell research.



Airyana Washington, HC30, a sophomore Anthropology major, presented her research after conducting her own archaeological fieldwork, exploring the noteworthy features found in Worthington, Ohio, titled *Cistern Excavation*. **Celeste Kapalin, HC29**, a senior Public and Professional Writing major, collaborated with Dr. Mollie Hartup, honors director, to deliver a presentation during a general session, titled *Reimagining Honors-Only Orientation Though Campus-Wide Collaboration*.

Beyond presentations, the students could attend sessions with honors faculty, staff, and honors students from across the country.

This exposure left a lasting impact, as expressed by Mapiki who said, "I did not only learn a lot, but I was empowered by having the opportunity to spend time with other students who are also determined, innovative, and hope to impact the world."

Kapalin emphasized the dual nature of the conference, stating, "NCHC was the perfect blend of fun and educational. We got to explore the city as well as meet new people, share ideas, and improve our presentation skills."

The Sokolov Honors College magazine, *With Honors*, earned a second-place award at the conference, a second national award earned at the conference in the last three years.



From left: Mollie Hartup, Scott Gregory, Celeste Kapalin, Tafadzwa Mapiki, Airyana Washington at the NCHC awards ceremony.

“What makes our magazine so special is that students are the heart of every aspect of its development. From writing to layout, including QR codes that link out to video content, our students do it all,” said Hartup, who teaches the Honors Magazine Editing and Production Seminar and oversees magazine publication.

YSU’s continued success at NCHC, with a history of awards in research, community engagement, and honors publications, reinforces the college’s commitment to excellence.

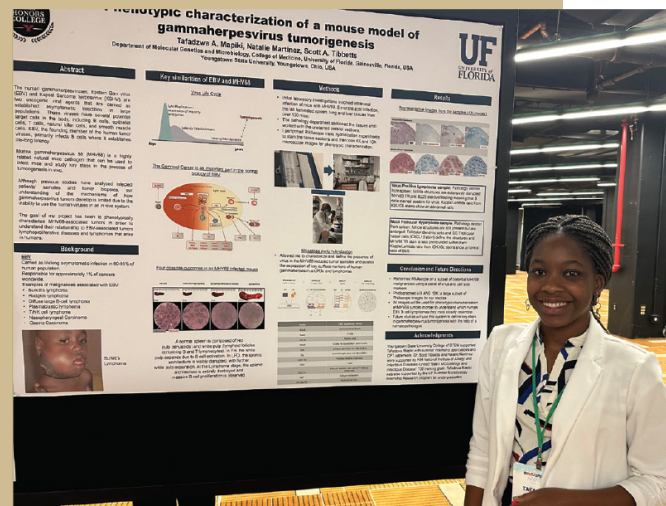
Dr. Amy Cossentino, dean of the Sokolov Honors College and associate provost for Strategy and Engagement, emphasized the strong impact of participating in such conferences.

“Overall, participating in this conference not only enriches academic experiences but also lays the groundwork for future academic and professional endeavors,” said Cossentino.

The achievements at the NCHC conference highlighted the Sokolov Honors College’s dedication to fostering a dynamic learning environment and preparing students for success on a national stage. In the past decade, YSU students have received five awards for research, a top award for community engagement and three awards for honors.



Scan the QR code to learn more about the NCHC student experience.



HONORING OUR SUCCESS

Honors students collectively represent an interdisciplinary community of scholars who succeed in their fields. This final section features stories of students who are paving the way learning, leading, and serving.

SWIMMING WITH THE SHARKS

Two honors students won top awards at the 2023 YSU Shark Tank competition – **Annabelle Himes, HC28**, for her established business Heroes and Tiaras, a character entertainment company, and **Elly Volz, HC29**, for her new jewelry design venture, Otis’s Jewelry Co. Himes won the grand prize for an established business, and Volz walked away with the grand prize in a category for new businesses.



YSU PIN RECIPIENTS

Since 1948, the YSU Pin has recognized up to five graduating seniors each year who have achieved academic success and demonstrated outstanding leadership, motivation, and creativity in university and community activities. In Spring 2023, all five Pin recipients were Sokolov Honors College members. Picture left to right are **Clay Miller, HC28**, **Galena Lopuchovsky, HC27**, **Elsa Khan, HC28**, former interim President Helen Lafferty, **Oluwatumininu Adeeko, HC28**, and **Maguire Franko, HC28**.



MAKING MUSIC HISTORY

First-year honors student **Aaron White, HC31**, made history when the Dana School of Music jazz ensemble performed one of his original compositions, a first for a freshman.

“Quadacity” played by the school’s jazz combo and “Snapdragon” played by the ensemble, were written by White.

“We’ve never presented a major ensemble piece composed by a freshman,” said David Morgan, professor of Music Composition, Bass and Jazz Combo. “What Aaron White did was unprecedented.”

TAFADZWA MAPIKI SELECTED AS A TWO-TIME YSU STEM CO-OP OF THE YEAR



Tafadzwa Mapiki, HC28, a Biological Sciences major on the pre-medicine track, has been named YSU STEM co-op for the second year running. Mapiki spent summer 2023 at the Mayo Clinic, in Rochester, Minnesota, participating in the summer Research Exploration Program (SREP). Working with Radiation Oncology physicians, her research focused on patient-reported outcomes for patients treated with preoperative chemoradiation for a very rare cancer, perihilar cholangiocarcinoma. Throughout her research, she collected data necessary to understand the discrepancy between physician-reported outcomes and patient-reported outcomes. Mapiki was selected to present this research at the National Collegiate Honors Council conference in Chicago last November. She is applying to medical schools with the goal of becoming a physician-scientist. Mapiki also served as student speaker at the Sokolov Honors College senior ceremony, as pictured above.



▲ **Jacob Fay, HC28**, **Nicholas Hartman** and [unclear] at their NEOMED white coat ceremony in July 2023.

ROCCO BRUNO PKP FELLOWSHIP

2023 honors graduate **Rocco Bruno, HC28**, was selected as a recipient of a Marcus L. Urann Fellowship by The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi – the nation’s oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines. Bruno is one of only six recipients nationwide to receive the prestigious \$20,000 fellowship,



named for the Society’s founder. Bruno is pursuing a Doctor of Medicine at The Ohio State University College of Medicine. He was also awarded a Veterans Health Professions Scholarship and currently serves as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Reserve Medical Corps. Bruno looks forward to a career providing high-quality healthcare to our nation’s more than 16 million military veterans.

YSU students matriculate to NEOMED

YSU sends the second most students to NEOMED every year (second only to Ohio State University, which is not an early assurance school). Of the nine partner universities, YSU consistently sends the most students to NEOMED. For students starting Fall 2023, 30 of the 50 who had early assurance across all 9 partner schools fulfilled all requirements for admission. 30% of those students matriculating came from YSU.

ATHLETICS + DESIGN = A PASSION PROJECT AND FUTURE DREAMS FOR PALOWITZ

Sophomore **Ethan Palowitz, HC30**, a Multimedia Communication major, is already making his mark on the world of YSU Athletics. Palowitz uses his graphic design skills to use Adobe apps to create high-quality images, such as the one featured here, for YSU Athletics social media accounts.

“For me, I think one of the best things about working in athletics is that I get to be around the sport I have played my whole life and have remained a huge fan of, in football,” said Palowitz. “Everyone I work with is great. They are all very appreciative and supportive of my work, so they make my job even easier.”

After graduation, Palowitz plans to pursue a position as director of Creative Media for a university football program and perhaps one day a similar role with the NFL. “My focus wouldn’t be as much of making graphics,



but more so how I can elevate the team’s brand and identity behind that brand,” he said. “I am very excited to see what the future holds, and I am very grateful for the early start I was provided here at YSU!”



YSU TRANSCRIBING CLUB HITS MAJOR MILESTONE

The YSU Transcribing Club continues to deepen its impact increasing access to historical documents and preserving history. Honors students have transcribed over 50,000 documents in less than four

years. Under the leadership of senior **Julie Centofanti, HC28**, students at YSU have also collaborated with the honors program at the University of Texas at Arlington through two joint transcribe-a-thons.

50,000
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