

NEWSLETTER

- SPRING 2023 -

HONORS



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

While every Research Expo feels special and exciting, this year's Expo was nothing short of stunning given the fact that these projects were developed after the chaos of a worldwide pandemic and the devastation we suffered from Hurricane Ian. It is a small miracle we have had the energy to make it to our wounded campus day after day, much less bring to fruition such a wide range of meaningful projects. As the director, Francis Ford Coppola said, "Anything you build on a large scale or with intense passion invites chaos."



Dr. Wendy Chase - Director

With the implementation of the Creative Capstone requirement, the importance of supporting undergraduate research seems to have fully entered the bloodstream at FSW. This is an important step in our evolution because we know that real thinking can only take place when students aren't told what to think but are trained to craft meaningful research questions, test hypotheses, analyze, synthesize, and interpret data, and convey their findings to a diverse audience. In the arts, students cultivate the creative skills they need to imagine a world we haven't seen yet, and inspire new ways of knowing and navigating the world that currently exists. All of the students who presented projects this year, regardless of their discipline, have used both creative and critical thinking skills and learned from both their successes and their failures.

Collectively, these students traveled 23,026 miles to participate in conferences, conduct research for their capstone projects, or work on community service projects. In addition to offering pre-professional training for future scientists, historians, and artists, engaging in research and creative projects instills productive habits of mind that are transferable to any disciplinary practice. Students learn how to set goals, collaborate, manage their time effectively, acquire accurate information independently, serve as community leaders, and communicate their findings effectively.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As anyone reading this newsletter knows, however, research is never really done independently and there are many people to thank for the projects our students presented at the Expo. First, I'd like to thank the professors in the Honors Scholar Program who guided these students: Dr. Bruno Baltodano, Professor Jordan Donini, Professor Ihasha Horn, and Professor Terri Housely. It is no small task to work one-on-one with multiple students exploring a wide range of ideas and I'm grateful to all of these professors for their commitment to offering high-impact learning experiences to our students. I would also like to thank my quiet dynamo, Courtney Daniels, the staff assistant for the Honors Scholar Program. Courtney can herd cats like nobody's business and her work behind the scenes keeps our program running smoothly. I also need to thank Dr. Gerald Anzalone and the rest of the IRB team who was kept exceptionally busy this year with these projects. And thank you to the professors who have taken the time, during the busiest part of the semester, to evaluate these projects. Thank you to our judges: Dr. Michael Barach, Dr. Brandi George, Dr. Gabe Gaidos, Dr. Rebecca Harris, Professor Lisa Hermann, Dr. Katie O'Connor, Dr. Sabine Maetzke, Dr. Brian Page, Professor Whitney Rhyne, Professor Dana Roes, Dr. Kelly Roy, Dr. Jennifer Summary, Dr. Michael Sauer, Dr. Debbie Teed, and Dr. Phil Wisely. And last but not least, I want to thank our fearless leaders in Team AAspire who organize, oversee, and install this Research Expo, Dr. Joe VanGalen and Jessica Godwin. It is humbling to work with such a talented and inspiring group of faculty, administrators, and students and I hope all of you have a relaxing and adventurous summer.



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Jill Hummel

Describe your path to becoming a professor: did you always want to teach or did you follow a twisty path to this profession?

It's a bit romantic, but I really do believe that being an educator is a calling. I knew from a very early age, like sixteen, that I wanted to be an English teacher. I remember being in my high school English class, and after having a really dynamic class discussion, feeling like I wanted to do this forever. But the idea of becoming a college professor didn't really come forward in my mind till graduate school. I interned at a community college in Oakland, CA, and I genuinely felt like that's where I belonged, teaching at that level. I believe in the work a junior/community/state college does and the service it provides its community. I've always trusted my instincts on that front. The path was a little twisty, but I never lost sight of it, and well, here I am.



If everyone could know one thing about your discipline, what would you like them to know?

It's difficult to pick just one thing, because I teach both composition and literature, but I guess I would want everyone to know that writing is one of the most powerful conduits we have to connect to each other, and that's a sacred belief in the English department. To hone one's skill as both a reader and a writer is an act of communal good because it increases our connection with other people. That's why no one should take, or teach, Comp I lightly. Clearly expressing ourselves in words is no minor act, and sometimes I worry that we don't understand it for the magic it is.

What have been your most satisfying moments teaching in the Honors Scholar Program?

There have been so many, but for me it's when this magical thing happens to a class, when they find each other, when they create a sort of bond, and form this little brainy knot of budding scholars/friends. It sometimes takes a while, but there's a moment in the semester when that happens, when, after class, they all walk off together as a group, continuing the class discussion or talking about some other thing that they've found interesting. I love that moment, that day when they leave me behind, even if it's temporary or till the next class, and wander off together, because it means they're starting to trust themselves and each other, their voices, their interpretations in things. Sometimes they even come back into the classroom the next time, again, as this little mob of smartness, and tell me the things they've figured out without me. It's bittersweet because it means the possums are ready to move on soon, but I love that moment.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Jill Hummel

Is there anything else you'd like us to know?

Yes. It's this: reading books is a rebellious act. If books didn't hold the key to everything, we wouldn't dedicate entire buildings to them, entire fields of study, and people wouldn't be trying to ban them or burn them. And if they're trying to ban a particular book, definitely read that one. Several times. Be a rebel. Read the books.

Life Changer Award Dr. Krupinski



Congratulations to Dr. Krupinski, who was selected for the Life Changer Award by the class of 2023. Here is a comment written by one of her nominators:

Professor Krupinski not only offered to hear me out, she took action when I needed it the most. She was the first professor to go out of her way and show an interest in my situation. She took her time to hear my story and she guided me towards the proper resources. I'm so grateful that she was a part of my life. Because of her, FSW felt like home. For the first time, I felt that I wasn't just another student. I felt that I was a person and that someone cared for my situation. I met many great professors at FSW, but I decided to write about Professor Krupinski because she was the first professor to help me complete my journey at FSW. That's why I'm thankful to have such a wonderful Professor in my life. If it weren't for her, I would have ended up somewhere else. I would have struggled alone. That's why I think she deserves the Honor's Life Changer Award.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Stephanie Simon

Tell us a little bit about yourself and what you plan to do now that you are graduating from FSW.

My name is Stephanie Simon, and I'm a senior at FSW. I graduated high school in Naples, Florida. However, it wasn't until years later that I decided to continue my academic career. Coming to FSW and joining the honors program has been a blessing for me, as I've been able to cultivate knowledge and explore fields of interest that have truly solidified my passions and goals. Though I haven't settled on where I will go once I graduate from FSW, I expect to continue my academic journey in the field of art and curation.

Describe your capstone project.

My capstone project, *Generations of Resistance*, involved curating an art exhibition on the FSW campus which explored the evolution of combating gender-based violence over the last four generations. Seven women artists from

different generations were featured in the exhibit, all of whom submitted pieces that touched on the topic. I also held interviews with each artist to help build out exhibit programs that showcased their perspectives and experiences. The stories and ideas highlighted in the exhibit provided a rich experience of both emotion and knowledge, with the intention of empowering women and shedding light on hard-to-grasp issues that women face.

Did you learn anything that surprised you throughout this process? If so, what did you learn?

The process of putting this project together taught me an endless amount about myself and the world around me. Listening to the various stories of the artists involved expanded my idea of what defines violence and the importance of community in healing from it. I also gained incredible insights into how essential art is in activism and in the learning process. However, most eye-opening was learning how resilient my generation is. It is easy to be discouraged seeing how much women are up against in the US today. However, every Generation Zer that I spoke to had profound faith in their generation's ability to combat gender-based violence, which gave me a newfound sense of hope for the future.

Did you discover anything new about yourself in the process? If so, what did you discover?

This experience gave rise to loads of self-discovery and was deeply fulfilling for me. When I first came up with the idea for my capstone project, it was an intimidating task. I am typically an introverted person, so interviewing and coordinating with so many people regarding such a sensitive topic, was a nerve-racking experience. Yet I found myself pushing my own boundaries every step of the way. I discovered



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Stephanie Simon

how passionate I am about the curatorial process and how important being outspoken is in generating change. I also learned how deeply supportive an academic community like the FSW honors program can be and how much I value environments like it.

What was the biggest obstacle you had to overcome?

The biggest obstacle in my capstone project was most definitely an internal one. Though the project took a great deal of external work, it was the personal struggles that oftentimes were the largest mountains to climb. However, with the unwavering support and guidance of faculty like Dr. Wendy Chase and Professor Ihasha Horn, persisting through those moments of doubt was made possible. I could not have accomplished a project that I am so incredibly proud of without their amazing ability to uplift their students.

Aside from your capstone project, what was the most memorable experience you had in HSP?

Prior to my capstone project, I took an Introduction to Humanities course with Professor Mompoin. The course started like any other, but as time went by, I began to realize my passion for curation. Through the course, I gained a rich knowledge of how to understand and discuss different fields of humanities and found a drive in myself to continue exploring them. That class really marked the start of finding what I was passionate about. As I've continued in this program, I've made connections with other students, professors, and faculty that I will likely appreciate for a lifetime.

What advice would you offer in-coming freshmen to the program?

Take the opportunity to connect with your peers and honors faculty, follow your interests, and challenge yourself. This program is rich with support, so you aren't alone when you take on tasks that you would otherwise shy away from. Not only will you discover what an amazing community there is in this program, but you will discover how rewarding it can be to open yourself up to new experiences. The honors program is not just about gaining knowledge of the world around you, but it is also about discovering yourself!



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Diara Mercedes

Tell us a little bit about yourself, including what you plan to do after you graduate.

Hello! My name is Diara Mercedes. I am an 18-year-old dual-enrollment student at FSW. I am heavily involved on FSW's Lee campus including being an Honors Ambassador for the HSP, a Peer Mentor, and a member of the Student Community Standards Board to name a few. After I graduate with my A.A. and high school diploma this Spring, I plan on transferring to UCF and majoring in English and minoring in Linguistics



Describe your Capstone Project and tell us what was the greatest obstacle you had to overcome. What were one or two things that you learned through the process that surprised you?

My capstone project was an ethnographic study of Dominicans and Dominican Americans and their perspectives on their national identity. My sister and I decided to work together on a documentary to record our participants' oral stories. The greatest obstacle I had to overcome while working on the project was the many technological difficulties that arose during the editing process. At one point, the external hard drive that held all of our video content corrupted. To this day, there is some lost footage that Dasha and I were never able to retrieve. While disheartening at the beginning, we were, luckily, able to refilm some of the interviews we lost.

Did it change the way you think about your own national identity? If so, how?

Yes, working on the documentary capstone did change how I think about my own national identity. Honestly, I am more confused about it now than I was before. Throughout the research and pre-production process of the project, I was hoping to learn more about my Dominican heritage and connect to my Dominican roots. After visiting the Dominican Republic, however, I have become more aware of just how American I am and how much American culture influences me as a person. I am now trying to work on my own definition of what it means to be "Dominican American" and developing it as I grow in knowledge of the country and culture, and as I grow as a person.

What is one thing you wish everyone understood about the filmmaking process?

I wish everyone understood just how long the editing process takes. I was warned beforehand that it would take a while, but still did not fully grasp just how time-consuming it was going to be. I was in a unique position as well being that I had only two weeks to edit the whole project (which included 8+ hours of content). I can recall many sleepless nights leading up to the presentation of the video.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Diara Mercedes

What is one thing you wish everyone understood about the experience of immigrating from one's country of birth?

I wish people understood and would be more considerate about the reason why immigrants leave their home countries to begin with. For many, it is a difficult decision to make because of the many factors involved (leaving family, moving to a new place with a different culture, language barriers, etc.). There are many times when people treat immigrants harshly, unjustly so, because they simply don't know. I think this mistreatment could be avoided more often if people began to think and ask about the reason(s) "why" immigrants left their countries in the first place.

Aside from your capstone project, what was your most memorable experience in HSP?

Aside from the capstone project, my most memorable experience in HSP was traveling to Boston and participating in Harvard's National Model United Nations Conference. The MUN class itself was very fun and engaging, and I was able to learn so much about global politics and the world throughout the two semesters of the class. It was also nice to hear from other people around the world about their experiences during the actual conference. I would definitely recommend the class to all students, no matter if they have prior knowledge about global politics or not.

What advice would you offer incoming freshmen?

I would advise incoming freshmen to take advantage of as many opportunities as they can. I have had the most wonderful two years at FSW because I made it a point to be involved. I would research opportunities that the college offers and actively take part in the events and activities it hosted. Not only have I enjoyed myself at these events, but I have also come to learn so much and have had the opportunity to meet so many amazing people! I would also say to learn how to self-advertise and to do so when in the proper scenario. It is important to make connections and network in college so knowing how to "sell" yourself as a person can be beneficial.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Dasha Mercedes

Tell us a little bit about yourself, including what you plan to do after you graduate.

My name is Dasha, and I want to double-major in creative writing and film at the University of Central Florida. I plan to pursue a film career and focus on becoming a screenwriter, producer, creative director, or all three!

Describe your Capstone Project and tell us what was the greatest obstacle you had to overcome. What were one or two things that you learned through the process that surprised you?

My twin sister and I did our capstone project together. It is a documentary about Dominican national identity vs. Dominican-American national identity. Essentially, we wanted to know how immigration could affect a Dominican American's national

identity and how it contrasts with Dominicans who stayed on the island. We interviewed our family members to see their perspectives on the subject. We also analyzed how staying in the Dominican Republic and immigrating at an older age determined someone's national identity.

What surprised me while doing the project is how much of a culture shock I felt when I visited the Dominican Republic. The lifestyle is slower, and there are no concrete schedules. Generally, Dominicans do not seem to be as concerned about "hustling" or overworking themselves. Instead, they take time for their community and invest more time in their family than Americans, I would say.

Did it change the way you think about your own national identity? If so, how?

As I mentioned earlier, I experienced quite a culture shock when I visited the Dominican Republic because it was the first time I had traveled there. During this time, my views on my national identity changed a lot. To be completely honest, I felt like a hypocrite not worthy of my Dominican identity. I was just so different from everyone else there. No one in my family ridiculed me for it, it was quite the contrary. They love me and my sister for who we are and cherish our American traits and how precise and particular we are. But I felt so different and estranged from my culture.

My mother was the youngest of her siblings to immigrate to the US and worked hard to raise two children by herself, so she could not dedicate herself to teaching us her culture because she had slightly lost touch with it as well. So, in the Dominican Republic, I underwent a sort of identity crisis because I did not feel "Dominican" enough because I did not share the same experiences as all of my Dominican family.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Dasha Mercedes

Eventually, I came to realize that there is no “one way” to be Dominican and that I should be proud of my American heritage as well Dominican heritage. My combined Dominican-American identity makes me who I am, and I should feel proud of myself and my family for the sacrifices they made to build a life here.

What is one thing you wish everyone understood about the filmmaking process?

I think people correctly assume that filmmaking can be difficult due to creative differences, scheduling conflicts, and the grueling amount of time that it takes to edit a film. Still, I would continue to put a major emphasis on how difficult how all three elements are. I mean, I knew that editing would take a long time, but wow, it takes a long time! I was also not expecting all of our files to corrupt on our hard drive, which cost us around four-to-five days of editing. Thankfully we kept many of our files on our SD card, but we lost two interviews (roughly three hours of footage) and had to refilm them a week before our project was due. Editing appears to be simple in your mind, “All I have to do is cut this clip, add this transition, overlay this footage, insert this picture, etc.” but those “All-I-have-to-do-is” add up.

Also, my sister and I had to visualize our documentary as we were editing because so many of our plans got changed, canceled, or took longer than we expected when we were in the Dominican Republic. So we were mentally storyboarding while editing. We were deciding which clips we wanted and where, what music we wanted, what old family photos we wanted, etc. There are lots of moving parts and little details that you have to account for.

What is one thing you wish everyone understood about the experience of immigrating from one’s country of birth?

Every immigrant experiences varying levels of nationality for their birth country, and every experience is valid. There is no “right way” to be an immigrant. Some immigrants prefer America because of how different it is from their home country, while other immigrants are critical of America because they prefer their home country. In Latin American culture especially, experiences from an immigrant’s birth country can greatly influence their political affiliation and lead individuals to be strongly for or against one side. I would argue that a difference in opinion and perspectives can coexist because immigrants from Latin America can share their love for their birth countries and the lifestyle, culture, music, recipes, and language(s) they learned there. This contrasts with American identity, where there is not one shared culture. Instead, America is a mosaic of many different cultures combined into one nation.

Aside from your capstone project, what was your most memorable experience in HSP?

The most memorable experiences I have had in HSP are attending the Harvard National Model UN Conference in Boston, taking the SWFL Turtle Project class for my Honors Seminar, and volunteering at Give Kids the World in Kissimmee, Florida.

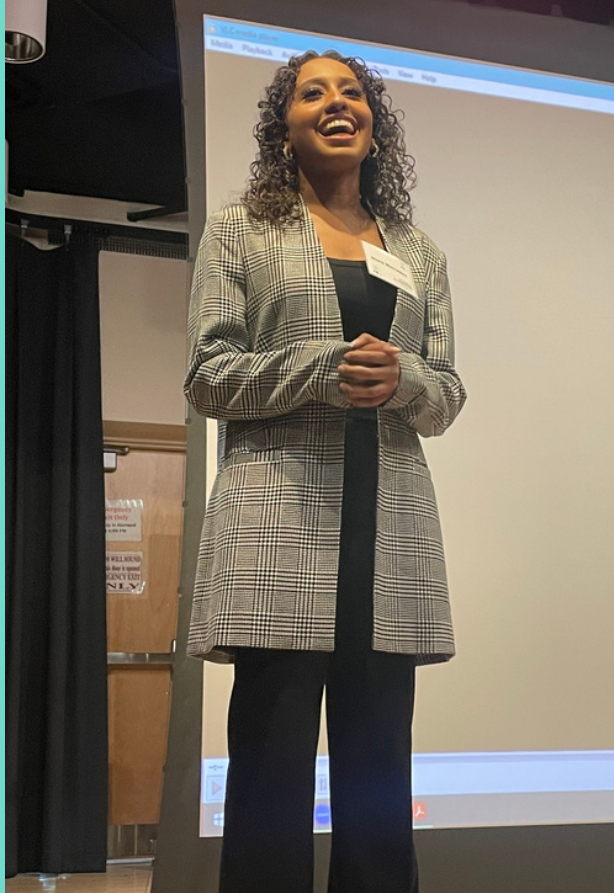
What advice would you offer incoming freshmen?

You are going to have a great time, and you are worthy of being part of the program, so do not stress yourself out. Make the most out of all opportunities and experiences the Honors Scholar Program grants. There are many great possibilities if you keep an eye out for them.



HONORS IN ACTION





SPRING RESEARCH EXPO 2023



CONFERENCES AND TRAVEL



Congratulations Capstone Winners

Education:

1st: Nayelie Perez Valle: ***The Power of Education: Does the Level of Acceptance Toward Transgender People Change Upon Being Educated on Transgender-related topics?***

2nd: Maria Ducady: ***Understanding the Relation Between Income Level and Spending Allocation of College Students***

3rd: Janessa Wright: ***Social Anxiety: An Observation of its Effects in Academic Achievement***

Fine Art, Humanities and Design

1st: Stephanie Simon: ***Generations of Resistance: Confronting Gender-Based Violence Through Curation***

2nd: Dasha and Diara Mercedes: ***The One who Came and the One who Stayed***

3rd: Summer Walker: ***Adapting to the Future of Education: Concept Design for FSW's Outdoor Classroom***

Natural sciences and sustainability

1st: Yoselyn Gonzalez and Claudia Hernandez: ***Presence of Ranavirus in Three Populations of Florida Box Turtle (Terrapene bauri)***

2nd: Grant Gross and Jordan Rios: ***Impact of Hurricane on the Home Range of Florida Box Turtles (Terrapene bauri)***

3rd: Emily Paraboschi: ***Life in Plastic, it's Not Fantastic***

Psychology, Social Sciences, Health and Well-being

1st: Isabella Cualing and Emma Stanley: ***Sleep and Social Media in College Students***

2nd: Madison Scheffer: ***What Are the Impacts of Sleep Deprivation on Pilot Performance?***

3rd: Isabella Diaz: ***The Impacts of Sustainable Eating on FSW's Main Campus***

Political science and communication

1st: Deborah Ruiz: ***The Power of Words: An Analysis of Lexicon Use in Insurrectionist Movements***

2nd: Santana and Sierra Khan: ***The Percentage of Black Medical Students in Florida Compared to the National Average and Prior to the Emergence of the Black Lives Matter Movement***

3rd: Shelley Parker: ***How Much of an Effect does Biased News Have on its Consumers?***

Congratulations Graduates!



- Giadonna Acosta
- Victoria Argueta
- Christine Burzo
- Nikkita Cheriel
- Nicole De La Cruz
- Isabella Diaz
- Maria Ducady
- Ashley Hall
- Claudia Hernandez Ruiz
- Dasha Mercedes
- Diara Mercedes
- Erica Moran
- Tracy Musotte
- Kumiko Nadolski
- Emily Paraboschi
- Shelley Parker
- Nayelie Perez Valle
- Megan Pinera
- Deborah Ruiz
- Javier Sanchez
- Madison Scheffer
- Stephanie Simon
- Emma Stanley
- Summer Walker
- Janessa Wright

WANT TO LEARN MORE?



Are you or someone you know interested in the Honor Scholars Program?

If you are motivated, hardworking, creative, innovative, forward thinking, or ready to achieve your dreams then the Honor Scholars Program might be right for you! We strive to cultivate your academic excellence, leadership skills, and commitment to being socially responsible. Honors is a great way to build your academic resume, meet like-minded people, and develop your very own research!

Email **Dr. Wendy Chase** or **Courtney Daniels** about all that the program has to offer!

Contact Us

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Check out our website

