



HONORS COLLEGE

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY



GREETINGS

Much has happened over the course of the 2021-2022 academic year at the Honors College. As the year comes to a close, please take the opportunity to peruse the following updates and announcements and find new ways to connect with your fellow Honors alumni. Enjoy the summer and keep an eye out for additional updates later this fall. Go Dukes!

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CONGRATULATIONS TO HONORS GRADUATES



On May 12, JMU Honors had the opportunity to recognize approximately 140 graduating Honors students at the Medallion ceremony. The Class of 2022 embodied leadership, scholarship, and character and made their mark on Madison through their academic achievements and extracurricular successes. The future is bright for this cohort of graduates and we wish them well in all their future endeavors.

WELCOME TO DEAN BETHANY BLACKSTONE

As the Honors College continues to evolve and deepen its commitment to the JMU community, we are thrilled to welcome Dr. Bethany Blackstone as the new Dean of the Honors College, starting July 1. Dr. Blackstone will cultivate meaningful interdisciplinary experiences for students and faculty; steward the evolution of the Honors College; collaborate with academic units across campus; and recruit, support and retain Honors students.

Dr. Blackstone joins JMU from the University of North Texas (UNT) where she served as the Associate Dean for the Honors College with responsibilities for design, administration and oversight of the Honors College curriculum, academic initiatives and advising, student life, recruiting and admissions. She is committed to promoting equity and inclusion in Honors education, and is active in the National Collegiate Honors Council.

Dr. Blackstone earned her Ph.D. and M.A. in Political Science from Emory University, and joins the JMU Department of Political Science as a tenured Professor. She is an award-winning teacher, having been recognized with university-wide teaching awards at UNT and the American Political Science Association Law & Court's Section Teaching and Mentoring Award in 2018. From 2008-09, she served as a Congressional Fellow for the American Political Science Association in Washington, D.C. Her research explores judicial behavior and policymaking.

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Blackstone to the JMU community!

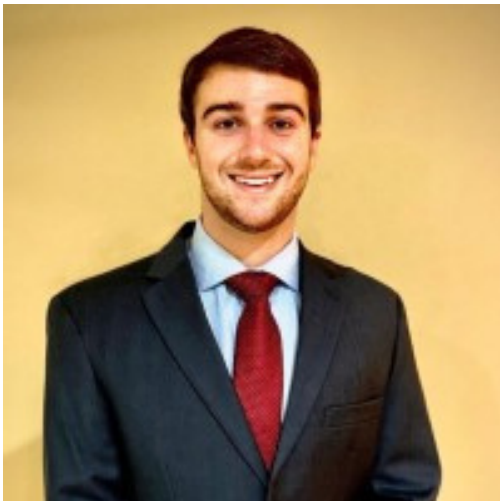
Are you interested in becoming more involved with the Honors College?

Please fill out this form to share ways you are willing to engage!

ALUMNI

Survey

ALUMNI REFLECTIONS



Joseph Kauffman ('20)

Consultant at Deloitte

*Economics Major with a Financial Economics Concentration
(Area of Emphasis in Leadership)*

"Relationships can create professional opportunities, and opportunities to create relationships through the JMU Honors College are everywhere.

The Honors College emphasizes close professor/student bonds across its curriculum. By working directly with professors in my major discipline, I quickly realized a value that spanned beyond checking an Honors requirement off my to-do list. In addition to diving deeper into my Economics major, I also was developing a professional network that helped me start my career.

My seminar facilitators were active and supportive while I created a cover letter and resume that helped me stand out. My capstone advisor was with me every step of the way through my interview process. Professors that I worked closely with on Honors projects helped me weigh the pros and cons as I made the challenging final decision of where to begin my career. Two years later, I continue to foster relationships with Honors College graduates at my firm. Throughout my entire job application process, the Honors College community supported me. Creating a more tightly-knit community within the broader JMU student body, the Honors College aids students in finding connections within their fields of interest and in developing remarkable relationships with faculty mentors." - Joseph Kauffman ('20)



Celebrating the class of 2022 at Brix and Columns

Brix and Columns Winery Event

On May 21, a group of Honors College alumni met at Brix and Columns (McGaheysville, VA) to celebrate the Class of 2022. All had a great time connecting, networking, and enjoying the company of both old and new friends! A big thank you to all who came out, and we look forward to hosting similar events in the future!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Young Alumni Tips and Tricks for Success

Join a panel of five recent Honors graduates working in a variety of sectors who will share their lessons learned and answer questions about entering the workforce and navigating life in the first years post-graduation. All registrants will be entered to win two free football tickets to the Hall of Fame Game when JMU plays Norfolk State on September 10, 2022. The event will take place on Wednesday, June 1st from 6:00-7:00 pm on Zoom. [Please register using this link](#)

SPRING IN FULL SWING WITH STUDENT PROGRAMS



Former MHLC President, Kiera Schwarz ('22), leading a retreat

The Honors College seeks to foster a strong, tight-knit community for our students. This semester we offered an array of events, including student-led initiatives, pop-up events, and trips that allowed students to explore the Shenandoah Valley.

Honors meet-ups are events that encourage our students to meet at Hillcrest to attend an on-campus event together. This semester we hosted meet-ups for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day keynote, the Holocaust

Remembrance keynote, and an art installation by Pablo Delano. We also hosted Kevin Bertram, founder of Fort Circle Games, in early February for an enthusiastic game night. Mr. Bertram, a board game designer, shared his industry experiences prior to open game play.

Student-led events included two yoga/guided meditation sessions led by Maddie Williams and Alexa Rountree. Student photographers also offered free headshots. Sarah Handel, Abi Middleton, Liv Mumma, Ella Robertson, and Olivia Sandoval volunteered their time and talent to provide their peers with professional quality headshots that could be used for portfolios, profiles, applications, and social media.

Honors Faculty took students on two trips this semester to various destinations in the surrounding area, including tubing at Massanutten and a tour of Grand Caverns. Students also took a day trip to Morven Park in Leesburg. later in March. These expense-free trips allowed students to explore our local community and Virginia, all while building connections with Honors faculty and fellow students.

Being that 2021-2022 was the first full year back in a somewhat “normal” format, the transition back to the JMU experience everyone knows and loves was challenging at times. Honors wanted to make sure students knew they were appreciated and supported. To further expand Honors event planning efforts we created the Honors Program Board (HPB) a cohort of nine students who will provide valuable insights in continued event planning. We look forward to next year, and hope that alumni feel encouraged to get involved. If you have an idea for an alumni-led event for students, please reach out to Dr. Alysia Davis at davis4am@jmu.edu.

HONORS CAPSTONE PROJECT SPOTLIGHTS

The Honors College was pleased to host a premiere screening of two student documentaries on May 5. The screening featured exemplary Honors students Gannon La Croix and Brody Todd. Look for them both on red carpets in years to come!

Gannon La Croix ('22), School of Media Arts & Design

Gannon soon is off to participate in the JMU in Los Angeles program. He looks forward to being immersed in the film industry, building on the success of his capstone documentary, "The Cave Keeper: Preserving the Shadows." Gannon is an enthusiastic supporter of the Honors College, explaining: "It might sound cheesy, but the Honors College has been the single most valuable experience during my time at JMU. I actually joined the Honors College specifically for the support to create a capstone project. As I wrapped up my project after nearly two years of filming, editing, and caving, I felt an immense level of gratitude. The Honors College is where I received the most support, the most opportunities, and overall the most excitement."



Brody Todd ('22), School of Media Arts & Design

Originally from Richmond, VA, Brody soon will be moving to Charlotte, NC to pursue establishing his own music video production company. He also anticipates frequently traveling to Nashville and Los Angeles to work with a variety of artists. [Brody's work is available on YouTube.](#) Brody states, "The Honors College was an amazing part of my college experience and was so helpful in providing me with the knowledge and resources necessary to get to this point in my career. I will be forever grateful for the advice and guidance of the Honors staff over my four years, especially throughout my Capstone process. I would recommend this program to anyone, and I'm so glad that I chose to be a member."



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Stay Connected

The Hillcrest Club is a network designed with Honors grads of the last decade in mind. Nothing is required to join. We hope that the Hillcrest Club will help keep recent graduates connected with each other and with JMU Honors. The Hillcrest Club Advisory group works to plan alumni opportunities for the young alumni network.

If you are interested in becoming an Advisor contact Dr. Davis at davis4am@jmu.edu.

Have news to share with the Honors College alumni community?

[Please fill out this form to be included in the next newsletter.](#)

All alumni are encouraged to follow the Honors College on social media to learn more about engagement opportunities. Alumni messages are primarily shared through LinkedIn. Please also follow JMU Honors on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. *See links below.*

ALYSIA DAVIS, DIRECTOR OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



Contact Alysia Davis with any questions or if you are looking for engagement opportunities! She can be reached at davis4am@jmu.edu.

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