

VOL. XXXV

NO. 8

THE HONORS REPORT

MAY 2021



Good luck on Finals, and enjoy your summer!
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Attention:

The Honors Report is looking for student writers for upcoming issues! If you would like to help us cover Honors College events, interview honors faculty, and have a student writer position to add to your resume, we would love to have you join as a student writer. If you have an interest or questions, *please email our head editor, Natalie Flory at ngflory@millersville.edu.*

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Millersville University
HONORS COLLEGE

THANK YOU, PEER MENTOR MICHAEL SKROS!

By Leah Freeman

Michael Skros, Senior, Emergency Management & Geography major with a minor in Economics, and lover of succulents, is known throughout the Honors College as a trustworthy friend and mentor. After working as an Honors College Peer Mentor for two academic years, he is retiring from the position.



"[I] will miss working as a part of the Honors College staff." - Michael Skros

Besides being a well-known and friendly face within the HC, Skros further participates in the campus community as the Public Relations Officer for the Honors College Student Association and the Secretary for the International Association of Emergency Managers. He dedicates his free time to volunteering as a writer for the Honors Report Newsletter.

While one of his favorite events hosted by HC is Day of Caring and any other offered community service, Skros is no stranger to the volunteer community offered outside academe. He spent last summer tutoring students affected by COVID-19 through a free summer program hosted by Faith Tabernacle. He volunteers as a member of the Disaster Action Team and Information/Planning Team with the Red Cross of Southeastern PA.

"I've been volunteering with the Red Cross since the summer after my freshman year and it's been a great way to get involved in the community and develop skills related to emergency management," said Skros.

Skros has been interning at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), conducting research on topics related to flood insurance, insurance marketing, and consumer behavior since August 2020.

Obviously, Skros has been extremely successful in his undergraduate career, and we just know that he will continue finding success wherever he goes after graduating from MU. However, he does not credit just himself for his accomplishments:

"The faculty at Millersville is always willing to help out with coursework and go above and beyond to enrich student experiences," said Skros. "My academic advisors, Dr. Cuthbert and Dr. Yalda, have been extremely helpful in making the most of my time at Millersville through excellent advising. Dr. Thyrum has also been really supportive and provided me numerous opportunities to develop my leadership skills as the Peer Mentor."

"Jonathan Wilkins, Senior, Computer Science comments, "Michael is genuinely one of the most driven and motivated students that I've ever known. He has a great sense of time management and is outstandingly hardworking. Thanks for being such a kind, caring, supportive, and organized roommate and helping me make a 2-year plan! I can't count how many times I've looked back at that to make sure I was getting all of my requirements fulfilled. It definitely helped me avoid a lot of the stress that comes along with picking classes each semester."

Article continued onto next page

MICHAEL SKROS CONT.



"Michael has always been very open and friendly to all of our students, Beth, and me. He's enthusiastic and invested in everything he takes on, including his role as Peer Mentor for the Honors College. I admire his ability to think broadly and come up with great plans and solutions. A huge thank you to Michael... He took on such a wide variety of responsibilities and projects related to the Honors College. We would throw out an idea or program for the Honors College and he would run with it. Before we knew it, he was making plans and moving forward - always in a helpful, positive approach. We will miss you and wish you all the best as you move onto your last semester at MU!" **-Dr. Elizabeth Thyrum, Honors College Director**

"It has been a pleasure working with Michael and getting to know him. Michael's dedication to the Honors College and its students is evident through his hard working and willingness to create, lead and promote events. Michael is a very welcoming person, open to helping anyone who needs it. When asked to do something within the Honors College, he always responded promptly. Many of our events have been shaped by Michael's influence...One of the biggest projects Michael was given as a peer mentor was to completely revamp our mentoring program. Michael did not disappoint. Thank you, Michael... Not only have you been available for our students, but you have been a tremendous asset to our programming." -

Beth Roberts, Honors College Administrative Asst.



"Michael is definitely a go-getter. Whether it be through the Honors College, classes, internships, jobs...he's always seeking opportunities... I'd love to thank Michael for being the true definition of a mentor. He has been approachable from day one, and it's because of this that we've gotten close... I'd like to thank him for taking me under his wing, while simultaneously treating me as an equal. Our teamwork has an easy give-and-take style, and often our working/planning Zooms lead to conversations about life updates or funny moments. There is never a dull moment, and, while I'm going to miss his partnership next year, I know we will keep in touch!" **-Alanna Bezas, Sophomore, Emergency Management**



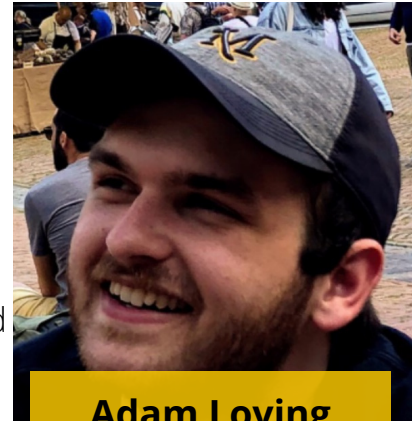
"Michael is a highly motivated student, proven leader, and caring peer who truly excels in what he does. He embraces vulnerability, prioritizes a willingness to serve, and exhibits an overall zest for life- all of which are admirable characteristics to possess... Thank you, Michael, for everything that you have done as Peer Mentor! You have been very successful in enhancing the Honors College experience for incoming and current students. Thanks for going above and beyond, both as a leader and friend." **-Jessica Whittemore, Senior, Chemistry**



Michael—wherever you choose to go, and with whatever you choose to do, the Honors College and university will be behind you in support! Thank you for all you have done for our program and our people!

Features Collected by Michael Skros, Owen Wallace, and Natalie Flory

Adam Loving is an art education major, and for his thesis project, he created a comic book (which he published) highlighting the major events of the Italian Renaissance and its art. Throughout his college career, Loving has participated in Intramural Kickball, Intramural volleyball, Day of Caring, and the Saturday Art School. Loving also studied abroad in Florence, Italy. His future plans include: “[Applying] for a Master’s degree in Art Education, with the eventual hope of becoming an Art Teacher.” Best wishes to Adam Loving in his bright and artistic future!



Adam Loving

Check out our March edition of the Report for a feature on “Renaissance Men” comic book!

Liv Medina is a biology major with a concentration in pre-medical professions. Dr. Heather Lehman served as Medina’s thesis advisor for her project.

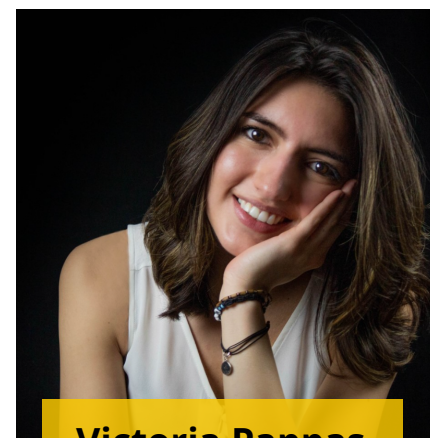


Liv Medina

Medina comments on her thesis, “The original topic was the effects of vape liquid of human esophageal keratinocytes, but I decided to make my project multidisciplinary by surveying the vaping habits and opinions of college students.”

Throughout her time at Millersville University, Medina has been active in the Honors College and the university. As a sophomore, she was the historian for the HCSA and secretary for the Pre-Health Club. That same year, she also started as a mentor for the Biology Mentorship Program. Now, she currently serves as the lead mentor for the program and has since Fall 2019. Medina’s plan moving forward is to take a gap year where she will work and continue researching with Dr. Lehman. Afterward, she plans on attending graduate school. Congratulations Liv, and we wish you the best in continuing your education!

Victoria Pappas is a media arts production major who has been heavily involved in media at MU. Throughout her time at Millersville, Pappas has been involved in clubs and activities such as MUTV, Marauder Video Productions, MU Mini-Thon, Direct Effect Innovative Challenge, Adobe Max Creative Conference, and the Emerging Leaders Program. Pappas worked as an RA, Multimedia Consultant for Made in Millersville conference, and interned at Aurora Films and University Communications and Marketing. Her thesis is titled “Power in Creativity – How creativity is used in the workplace,” which she worked on with Dr. Robert Spicer as he served as her advisor. In the future, Pappas plans to freelance as a videographer and editor and work her way up to working on tv and movie sets. She comments, “I am open to seeing where life takes me!” Congratulations, we know you will do great things, Victoria.



Victoria Pappas

Article continued onto next page

SENIOR SPOTLIGHTS CONT.



Julia Park

Julia Park is an early childhood education major. Her thesis investigated the successful implementation of music and movement activities into the classroom to better support learning and is titled "Music and Movement in the Classroom."

Park comments, "This project is very important to me because I am very passionate about the arts...I learned a lot throughout my research, and I hope it will inspire other educators to incorporate these activities in their classroom."

Throughout her time at Millersville, Park has been involved in the All Campus Musical Organization and has performed at several benefits, coffeehouses, and showcases as well as other productions. Additionally, she has performed in University Choir at Millersville. In the future, Park would like to obtain a teaching position. Congratulations Julia, and we are sure you will succeed!

Tara Petrosky is an entertainment technology major. For her thesis, Petrosky worked with Professor Jonathan Strayer on a creative project where she served as the student director for the Millersville University Theatre mainstage production of *The Far Reaches: A Night of Drama and Comedy*. In addition, with multiple University Theatre and Citamard Players shows she has served in various acting, technical, and production management positions. For Citamard Players, she was a production coordinator for two years. She was also a member of the University Theatre season planning committee for three years. Petrosky had the opportunity to be an Orientation Leader for two years. In addition to these roles, she is a member of MU's chapter of the honor society, Omicron Delta Kappa.

Petrosky comments, "My favorite events [with the Honors College] include the annual United Way's Day of Caring, as well as the New York Broadway trips. I have loved every second!"

Petrosky plans to work in the entertainment industry in production management or a creative direction capacity. Good luck Tara!



Tara Petrosky

SENIOR SPOTLIGHTS CONT.



Lydia Shaloka

Lydia Shaloka is a business administration major with a concentration in marketing. For her thesis, Shaloka focused on the use of computer-generated imagery (CGI) technology in social media influencer marketing alongside her thesis advisor, Dr. Lexi Hutto. Throughout her time at Millersville University, Shaloka has been involved in ENCATUS and has been the president of Spoon University for the 2019-20 academic year. In addition, she participated in a variety of Honors College events, including the Day of Caring, Sugar Bowl fundraisers, and the 2018 Beideman Mentoring Initiative Panel and Dinner.

Shaloka comments, "I am very grateful for all the opportunities that the Honors College has given me to give back to members of the community and for the various on-campus events they held that helped me get to know my fellow Honors students."

In July, she will be starting the First Flyer Program at Freedom Mortgage where she will train to become a Marketing Specialist for the company. Congratulations and good luck, Lydia!

Brooke Shimer is a psychology major. Her thesis was titled, "The Impact of Gratitude on Mindfulness: A Mixed Methods Analysis," which was accepted for presentation at the Eastern Psychological Association 2021 conference, Made in Millersville conference, and Made in Millersville Journal. Shimer previously served as the clinic coordinator in the psychology department and as a University 103 mentor. She represented MU at the PASSHE Women's Consortium Leadership Institute, where she participated in educational and service opportunities with women across the state system. Shimer is a member of Phi Kappa Phi and Psi Chi Honor Societies and is President of Omicron Delta Kappa. During Shimer's freshman and sophomore years, she attended the PASSHE Honors Student Conference. She served as the Honors College Peer Mentor, Membership Retention Chair and Vice President of HCSA, and a student representative on the Honors College Curriculum committee.

"Whenever I heard of an event involving the honors college, the probability that I'd be in attendance was almost always 100%. My favorite event was the first HCSA talent show where I did a speed painting!" Shimer said.

In the fall, Shimer plans to pursue a master's degree in the Clinical Psychology program at Millersville. Congratulations, Brooke!



Brooke Shimer

SENIOR SPOTLIGHTS CONT.



Jess Whittemore

Jess Whittemore will graduate with a B.S. in chemistry this May. Her thesis is entitled "Gas-Phase Reactivity of Cooking Oils Through Indirect and Direct Contact Methods." Dr. Daniel Albert served as Whittemore's thesis advisor. Whittemore has won numerous awards for her academic achievements and is a member of the Omicron Delta Kappa Honors Society. Some clubs she has been involved with include the American Chemical Society, HCSA, ADSE SUPER. In addition, Whittemore has also served as an Orientation Leader, chemistry tutor, and Honors College mentor.

Whittemore comments, "The Honors College has greatly enhanced my academic, social, and professional experience at Millersville."

Whittemore plans to attend Cornell University to pursue a Doctoral Degree in Analytical & Inorganic Chemistry. We know you will succeed! Congratulations, Jess!

Shannon O'Loughlin is a psychology major with a biology minor. For her honors thesis, O'Loughlin worked with thesis advisor Dr. Shaun Cook to study the relationship between the number of concussions an individual experiences and cognitive decline. O'Loughlin became a member of the Psychology Club her freshman year, and she also worked for Integrated Studies for two years. This got her involved with students and resources both on and off-campus. In the Fall, she will begin studying in the Clinical Psychology Master's Program at Millersville. O'Loughlin hopes to later work toward earning a Ph.D. and dreams of working in the field of clinical neuropsychology. We know you will do great, Shannon!

Finally, we have **Alexis Elliott** graduating this Spring! Best wishes, Alexis!

We wish all our honors graduates the best in their futures!

EGG HUNT HIGHLIGHTS

On March 30, the Honors College hosted an egg hunt in the Franklin House. Honors students had a great time searching for eggs. *Photos taken by Leah Freeman*



By Leah Freeman



After sitting down and talking with Dr. Elizabeth Thyrum, Director of the Honors College, and Dr. Susan Luek, MU faculty emeritus—the inspiration for the renovated Luek Hall’s name—I learned they have been close colleagues and friends for a long time. However, even before that, Dr. Luek had been Dr. Thyrum’s honors thesis advisor.

Not only does Dr. Thyrum credit Dr. Luek for her success in confronting her thesis, but she also credits her for impacting her career path.

“I got to know Dr. Luek through a few of my courses I had taken with her, and she was the first faculty member—first person—who encouraged me to pursue graduate school,” said Thyrum.

Thyrum, also a psychology professor, attended Millersville University in her youth—not choosing to major in psychology until her second year. Graduate school had not crossed her mind until she met Dr. Luek.

Luek tasked Thyrum to look into graduate schools during her junior year. Thyrum, nervous but excited, came back with a shoebox of information about graduate school’s master’s degree programs to show Luek, and to her bewilderment, Luek told her she had meant that Thyrum should strive for a doctoral degree.

“Now, my jaw dropped even farther, because that was not anything I had ever thought of. Because of her encouragement and her advice, I started identifying PhD programs—Dr. Luek wrote a letter of recommendation for me, advised my Honors thesis, and then helped me pick the school I ultimately went to for my doctoral program,” said Thyrum.

Thyrum’s career path drastically changed due to Luek’s influence, and all the while she was helping Thyrum get the most out of her honors thesis.

Luek had taken Thyrum to a regional psychology conference to present her undergraduate honors thesis, which then was written up and featured in a national magazine.

“All thanks to Dr. Luek,” said Thyrum. “She has been a many decade supporter and faculty member in the Honors College, and she’s supported me as well.”

The connection never died as they stayed in touch throughout Thyrum’s time in graduate school. Luek even attended her wedding. Before she knew it, Dr. Thyrum was then a colleague of Dr. Luek and working at Millersville University with her until her retirement.

Memorably, Thyrum turned to Luek and said, “I will always look at you as a mentor, Susan.” In which Luek responded, “Thank you, you were a superior mentee.”

Drs. Luek and Thyrum developed a profound definition of the mentor-mentee relationship over the course of many years.

ALUMNI PANEL FEATURES

By Elias Peluso

On April 7 at 8 PM, Honors students attended Millersville's first virtual Honors Alumni Panel. During this event, eight Honors College alumni gave presentations on where their academic career at Millersville University has taken them in life, as well as reflections and advice for current students. Having alumni from all of MU's colleges, this event had something for everyone. Highlights from each alumni's presentation are detailed below.



ALYSSA CANNISTRACI

Visiting Scientist | NCAR
alysacann@ucar.edu

Millersville | Meteorology/
Math (minor) | 2018

University of Tennessee |
Geography | 2020

graduated with a master's degree, she works as a visiting scientist at NCAR.

Cannistraci states, "I had a lot of really fun memories; I have pictures starting from our orientation group...all the way through senior year."

"While I was a student, I was a tour guide, which was a lot of fun. I helped with open houses for the department, and then I was a community service chair for the Honors College my junior year and vice president my senior year with the formal," Cannistraci comments.

Cannistraci gives thesis advice, "Always remember, a good thesis is a done thesis."

Rachel Winger (who has proudly gained this last name through her recent marriage) graduated MU with a major in English and a minor in Print Media Studies. She now lives in Belcamp, MD, and works as an Associate Editor at Krames, which is a business publication unit within WebMD. As her new life is just beginning, she will always look back with her fond memories of Millersville .

Winger comments, "I actually started out as a Secondary Education major and my junior year (so, pretty late on) I switched. I decided that that wasn't really my path, so I switched, and everything kind of worked out."

"My thesis was all about sheltered workshops (adults with intellectual disabilities). So that was kind of really fun and interesting to have the chance to dive into that," Winger said.

Winger states about her life this past year, "I currently live in Belcamp, Maryland; my husband and I just bought a house. So, in a total of six months, we got engaged, got married, and bought a house, so it's been a very exciting pandemic year for us!"



RACHEL WINGER— MILLERSVILLE MEMORIES

Major: BA in English with a minor in Print Media Studies

Honors College:

- Special Events Chair and President
- Managing Editor of the University Research Newsletter

Thesis: "ALTEC: A Successful Model of a Sheltered Workshop"

Favorite memory: Building blanket forts in the dorm rooms!

Article continued onto next page

ALUMNI CONT.



Elizabeth Siebold
elizabeth.siebold@hcps.org

- Hometown: Bel Air, Maryland
- Major: Biology and Secondary Special Education, 2018
- Master's (work in progress): Master of Education in Trauma-Informed Education
- Current Job: Special Educator at Edgewood High School in Harford County Public Schools (Go Rams!)
- Co-teacher in several Biology classes and Integrated Physics and Chemistry classes
- UHC Thesis: An Autoethnographic Study on the use of the Flipping Method & the Flipped Classroom Model in a Science Classroom

Elizabeth Siebold graduated from MU in 2018 with a major in Biology and Secondary Special Education. She was part of the first cohort to be in the Secondary Special Education program. She is currently working on her master's degree in Trauma-Informed Education but has already secured a job as a science teacher at Edgewood High School in Harford County. Even though she has moved away, she still holds connections with many of her former MU classmates.

Siebold comments, "My thesis was an Autoethnographic study. If anyone has had Dr. Kennedy for chemistry, or organic chemistry, and how he partially "flipped" his classroom; I did a study on the effectiveness of that, which is perfect for right now because we are doing virtual learning!"

Siebold offered a tip to education majors: "Take advantage of the education job fair that is held April/May at Millersville. They have school districts from nearly every state. I walked away with several job offers. If you go in prepared, it will make your job search so much easier as everyone is right there and you can often interview right at the fair too."

Emma Montgomery majored in Computer Science and a minor in Women's and Gender Studies at MU. Connecting these two topics, her now-published Honors thesis explored the topic of "reframing the gender gap in computer science as a solvable problem. "

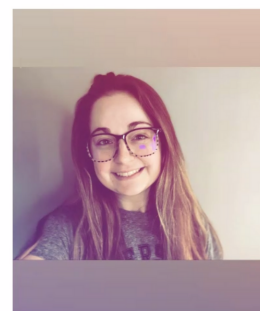
She currently works as a professional scrum master, technical communicator, technical lead, and a software engineer at Stazon Consulting (a company that publishes custom websites and mobile applications) and has many technical certifications under her name. Even today, Montgomery remains connected with Millersville through her frequent volunteer work.

Montgomery comments about her thesis saying, "It was pretty cool - the paper that we published together was actually put into a book that was created at a conference in Las Vegas, and I was one of two Honors students selected to represent Millersville at IEP State Systems my senior year."

Montgomery also states, "My honors thesis wasn't actually in my department. To graduate from the Honors College, [your thesis doesn't] have to be in your department."

Emmali Montgomery

PSM I, CPTC, Technical Lead, Software
Engineer



ALUMNI CONT.

Rachel Hentnick, M.A., BCBA, LBS (2018)

- BA in Psychology, MA in Applied Behavior Analysis
- Behavioral Consultant at Pennsylvania Counseling Services
- Worked with Dr. Thyrum on my thesis about perceptions of driving under the influence
- Graduated with departmental and university honors and participated in a sorority, club soccer, intramural sports, Relay for Life, and the honors college



Rachel Hentnick, 2018 MU graduate, majored in Psychology. Completing her thesis with Dr. Thyrum, she graduated with departmental and university Honors. This led to her pursuing her master's degree in Applied Behavior Analysis at Penn State Harrisburg, with which she graduated in 2020.

Hentnick comments, "I worked with a company called Pennsylvania Counseling Services throughout my master's program.

I was a therapeutic support staff during that time, so I was working one-on-one with clients with different needs, intellectual disabilities, autism, things like that."

Hentnick added, "That graduation picture is all people that I met my freshman year through the Honors College, and we're still all very good friends today...it [being in the Honors College] was an awesome experience, so take everything you can from it."

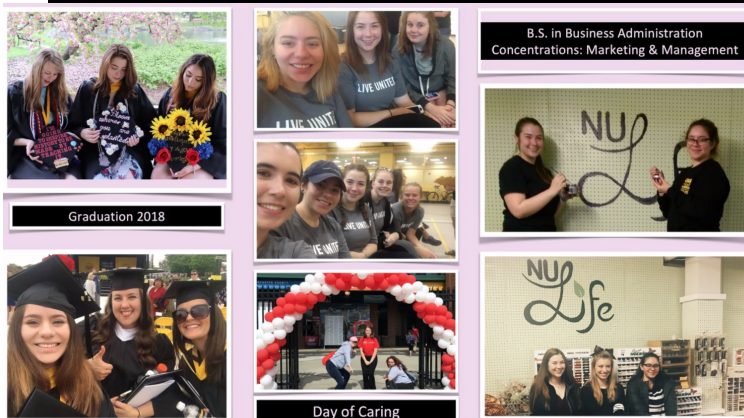
Anne Mitzel graduated from MU with Honors in Spring 2019. As an education major with a concentration in science, she soon after secured a job as a 5th-grade teacher at Shallow Brook Intermediate School in Manchester, PA. Her desire to help in her community has stemmed from her involvement in Millersville's clubs and the University Research Newsletter.

Mitzel indicates her involvement on campus, "I

was quite involved with the Honors College and other organizations. I was an orientation leader, and then I was an orientation planning committee member, which are the people who help the orientation leaders, and you kind of help plan the whole orientation. It was a lot of fun; I really enjoyed it. And then I got involved giving tours to prospective students [on the SHARP Team]. One of my best friends and I started a club for middle-level majors, so we called it 'CMLA' [Collegiate Middle-Level Association]."

Mitzel comments, "I really thought that I would be a middle school science teacher, because I had started in chemistry education and then switched my major, but now I'm actually teaching fifth grade - every subject - and I really like it. So, if you're an education major, or, really, any career, just kind of keep your options open, because you might do something else and really love it."



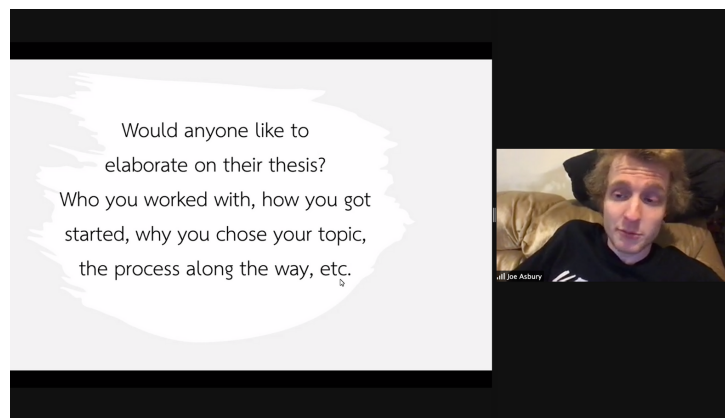


Kelly Brievea graduated from MU's Honors College in 2018. With a major in Business Administration with concentrations in marketing and management, she now works as a logistics management specialist at NAVSUP WSS, which is a division of the US Navy. She is also aspiring to gain her master's in global supply chain management at Athens State University in Alabama. Some of Brievea's

favorite Millersville experiences included the community service events, such as Day of Caring, and the hands-on work through Management courses.

Brievea speaks about her thesis saying, "My thesis was about the impact of culture in business practices, which was part of my plan [to focus on international business]. I did take a few classes, but I didn't get a concentration in [international business], so I decided to focus my thesis on it, which I'm glad I did, because it has a lot to do with what I do now."

Joe Asbury, a Computer Science major with a minor in Math, graduated from MU in 2018. Having been very involved in both the Honors College and HCSA, he soon after secured a job in programming for a local life insurance company. He believes that both his involvement in the Honors College and his own personal ambitions have led to his success today. Asbury states, "I wasn't necessarily looking for any specific job; I was just looking for something that involved a computer that was actually programming-related. And somehow, I got lucky...I didn't get an internship, but somehow I managed to (again, I got really lucky) score a job immediately...I think that definitely was in part due to the fact that I graduated from the Honors College and completed a thesis because I don't know many other people who have this job that I do."



Asbury offers a thesis tip, "Definitely do projects that mean something to you, that you can learn something out of. It's been said a million times that you should pick something for your thesis that you actually care about, and that's a similar idea to...how you deal with a job in post-graduation."



The Honors College would like to say thanks to our alumni for a great and enlightening evening!