What better time to take on a new job than during a global pandemic? All joking aside, my position as Honors Program Director is one I take quite seriously. And despite the unique challenges 2020 presented all of us, I am happy to report that the Honors Program at Greenville Technical College is growing and flourishing due to the leadership and support of faculty, students, and administration.

As the largest and most fully developed Honors Program in the South Carolina two-year college system, GTC’s Honors Program serves as a shining example of how Honors Programs support both the college and the community. Not only are our students active on campus and in the community while maintaining an impressive G.P.A., they go on to experience countless opportunities in education and the workforce, giving back to the community and building lives shaped by their Honors experience.

As I take on my new position in the Honors Program, I am joined by our new Assistant Director, Lori Bongiorno (Grabiec). As English professors, we are both word nerds and rule-followers, multi-taskers and big dreamers. Most importantly, we both enthusiastically support the mission of the Honors Program, “to enhance the academic experience for bright, highly-motivated students who desire a challenge, take responsibility for learning, and seek intellectual and cultural stimulation.” We look forward to the upcoming spring. Big things await!
Student Spotlight: Elizabeth Mira

Fine Arts and Honors Program student, Elizabeth Mira, is talented both academically and artistically. Mira’s charcoal “Pear Study” (shown below) was the 2nd Place Drawing in the 2020 Visual Arts Annual Student Exhibit. Mira channels a “great deal of enthusiasm” and “distinctive vigilance” towards her course work, showing a true interest in learning, according to her ART 101 professor, Mark Roper. Though it is only her first semester in the Honors Program, we can’t wait to see what is next for Elizabeth Mira.

Creative Community Service

Students find creative new ways to complete community service hours safely during the pandemic.

Service learning has always been a requirement of the Honors Program. In 2020, however, students faced the challenge of volunteering safely during the pandemic. We encouraged students to find virtual or low-contact options in the fall, with safety as our first priority. As always, the Honors Program students rose to the challenge. The virtual service hours we saw this semester included transcribing concentration camp registration cards for the “Every Name Counts Project,” transcribing historical text for online access through Smithsonian Digital, and even drawing sidewalk art for nursing home residents.

Some of the other organizations students volunteered at this fall include:
- Meals on Wheels
- Just Say Something
- Maggie’s School
- Taylors Free Medical Clinic
- Loaves and Fishes
- Miracle Hill
- Harvest Hope Upstate
- Greer Community Ministries
- Ronald McDonald House
- Greenville Humane Society
- Saluda Voting Precinct
- Root and Rebound

GTC Foundation: Thank You Notes

In November, Honors Program students worked with the GTC Foundation to write cards to donors, thanking them for their generosity and support. Students came to the Honors Program Resource Room to each write 10-20 (or more!) Thank You cards, with the help of Judy Wilson at the GTC Foundation. The following Honors Program students were in attendance over a two week period: David Porterfield, Eden Wallace, Elizabeth Mira, Kaitlyn Bartus, Za’Cairiah Hoke, Elise Cotuna, Johanna Vita, Anna Galloway, Itzel Pavon, Kayla Ellis, Mame Ndiaye, Jessica Tamrack, and Meghan Pringle.
This semester has presented a multitude of unique obstacles for everyone involved. Between global pandemics, online learning, and everything in-between, anyone still working toward their goals is doing great. It has been a challenge to move learning, socializing, and participating in community service to primarily virtual spaces, but to back away from the challenges that present themselves in life is a sign of cowardice—so, let’s do this thing!

If there is one aphorism that I try to keep in the back of my head, it’s this: “teamwork makes the dream work,” and I think that this semester has proven that. It has taken everyone working together to make this semester happen.

Being an Honors student at Greenville Tech taught me the skills necessary to maintain trajectory even when things get difficult, form communities to help each other through the struggle, and to never stop growing along the way.

All these lessons have been extremely valuable in making it through this past year. I urge everyone to participate in activities like the Honors Program because it is an honor, pun entirely intended, and a challenge to graduate with those kinds of accolades and, seriously, all it requires is that you want it.

The Honors Program is pleased to welcome Lori Bongiorno the new Assistant Director. As an English professor at GTC and member of faculty senate, Lori brings her knowledge and creativity to the position. The Honors Program is lucky to have her.
Professor Nathan Sasser seized the mild fall weather as an opportunity to teach HSS 295 (Leadership Through the Humanities) outside this fall.

With less students on campus, it was a great time to update bulletin boards outside the Honors office, safely, of course. We look forward to seeing our current and new students, as well as our Honors faculty and community in this space in the future.

Briana Guerra and Mame Ndiaye

Classroom snapshot: Leadership Through the Humanities

Professor Nathan Sasser seized the mild fall weather as an opportunity to teach HSS 295 (Leadership Through the Humanities) outside this fall.

Briana Guerra, hard at work.

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Nathan Sasser
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See you next semester!