

HONORABLY

WINTER 2025



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Evolving Traditions

This fall's Honors Kickoff welcomed the return of the iconic Honors "Jump" photo, which started in 2020, when six-foot distancing was a Covid-inspired cautionary norm.

The Honors Convocation and March, began in 2006 and was once led by Dr. Hollingsworth's bagpipes. Today, it features the Pride of Tigerland Drum line, the Book of Honors signing ceremony, and the Gonfalon Reception.

The Sorting Hat Ceremony, which began in 2013 at Wintersmith Park, is now held in the Ataloo Theatre. With help from Jamie Davis, this year's ceremony was more grandly theatrical than ever (see the cover of this newsletter!).



Honors Index 2024



- 36** Years that ECU has recognized Honors Program graduates
- 462** Total number of ECU Honors Program graduates 1989-spring 2024
- 3** Honors Program Directors, 1989 to the present
- 12** Years Dr. Benton has served as the Program Director
- 19** Fall Honors Program Convocation Marches
- 24** Faculty who received compensation for mentoring Honors Projects and Theses in 2024 (the most ever)
- 31** Honors Projects and Theses completed in 2023-2024
- 30** Percent of Honors students who identify as first-generation college students
- 36** Percentage of Honors students who are Pell Grant eligible due to financial need
- 37** Percentage points that the Honors Program graduation rate surpassed ECU's overall 4-year graduation rate in 2024
- 3** Number of Honors Students among ECU's 5 Nigh Award finalists in 2024



ALAS, POOR YORICK!

This fall's Oklahoma Shakespeare trip featured a first-ever pre-show visit to the Museum of Osteology, where Honorables contemplated skulls, much as Hamlet would in that evening's drama. Inspired by the Danish prince's study abroad experience in Wittenburg, we also stopped by Fassler Hall, where we dined on German fare, and then descended to the Dust Bowl, where Arete won the Honors House Bowling Championship.



PROMWEAR, TRASH BAGS, & COSTUMES



On the Tuesday before Halloween, Honors co-hosted a *Carrie* Prom Night with the English department. Donned in their Promwear best, students and faculty began the evening discussing Stephen King's 1974 horror novel and finished it watching Brian DePalma's 1976 film.

On the first Saturday in November, Honors, the President's Leadership Class and the BLA joined forces to pick up trash on Ada's downtown streets.

On Halloween night, costumed Honorables haunted Wintersmith Park before retreating to Faust 159 for trick-or-treat candy, House costume and trivia contests, and an evening of Werewolf gameplay.



BREAKING RECORDS

A New Mayor in Town



With 232 donors and over \$14,000 raised (a whopping 41% increase over the previous high!), this year's Crowdfunding Campaign broke all records. Senior Business Administration major Arely Hernandez came up with the idea for a fundraising contest among current Honors students, and sophomore Ethan Starr helped that idea pay off—literally—by single-handedly bringing in 12 donors and \$1200. For his efforts, Ethan was celebrated at Honors Thanksgiving as “Mayor of Athens” (thanks for the sash, Megan Lewis!). We were thrilled that a record-high 48 Honors Alums donated and offer a special a vuvuzela blast for the generous donations made by alums Trevor Berg (\$600) and Jennifer Barnes Kearns (\$500), HSA faculty advisor Dr. Andrew Wells (\$500), and the families of current Honorables John Kelso (\$1000), Titus Higle (\$750), Ileen Hull (\$750), and John Gladders (\$575), in addition to the annual \$1000 scholarship sponsored by alums Allyson and Talor Stewart.

HEAR YE, HEAR YE

Last spring, when he was spending a semester at the Swansea University in Wales (U.K.), Brad Henry International Scholar Twan Yellowfish (pictured top right) recorded a three-song hip-hop EP, titled “Here.” That EP formed the foundation of his creative thesis, “Hip Hop’s Voice in Healing.” At our Fall Showcase, Twan played an excerpt from that EP, featuring a Native American drum track played by a family member and talked about how his thesis incorporated what he had learned about Native American intergenerational trauma, mental health, healing, and humor into hip-hop culture. Twan’s was one of three theses presented. Twelve Honorables presented on semester-long projects, 8 on internships, 3 on Oklahoma Scholar Leadership Enrichment Program seminars, and 1, Arely Hernandez, presented on the semester she spent in Brazil.



“I love witnessing passionate people talk about their work. ... You could tell Seezan (pictured above) had put in enormous amounts of effort into her physical therapy presentation and was proud to share it.”

**- Zach Idlett
(Sophomore, Business Administration)**



QUEEN

When Lauren HerrNeckar was named ECU's Homecoming Queen, it put the crown on a royal year. In April, the Molecular Biology and Biochemistry double major from Round Rock, Texas capped a 4-year career as a starter for the ECU softball team with a shut-out: her 16th win and 8th complete game. In June, she became President of the Honors Student Association. And over winter break, she was accepted into the Oklahoma University Graduate Program in Biomedical Sciences.

An Honors student from day one, Lauren remembers being selected along with 6 other first-year Honors students for an on-campus research opportunity in biology: "I wouldn't be going into my PhD to do more research if I hadn't had that chance." When we asked Lauren what she values most about Honors, she said "community. There is no other program on campus that has a community like Honors."

