

## 2015 Honors in Action Hallmark Awards Entry Excerpts

Please note: These are excerpts from award-winning entries based on the 2014/2015 Honors Study Topic, *Frontiers and the Spirit of Exploration*. While these entries did not receive a perfect score in every category, these excerpts were chosen because they were excellent models.

**Question 1:** Provide a brief abstract or summary of your Honors in Action project including the following components: academic research and analysis, leadership roles, leadership development, action, collaboration, reflection and outcomes.

**Entry:** Alpha Rho Mu Chapter, Lone Star College – Tomball, Texas

**Theme 7:** Health and Medicine as Frontiers

After we decided to explore the mind and body connection as a frontier in Western medicine, in sources as far-ranging as an Emmy-nominated documentary and an academic interview, our research revealed that the effectiveness of integrative medicine is hotly debated. Ultimately, we concluded that Dr. Cohen, Director of Integrated Medicine at M. D. Anderson Cancer Center (MDACC), was correct: “There’s not good medicine or bad medicine, only medicine that works.” We were especially intrigued when some of our research revealed that the U.S. military was embracing integrative medicine to combat chronic pain and Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD). Realizing that veterans are an underserved population both within the city of Tomball and our college, we put our research into action, collaborating with the U.S. Army so that Captain Corina Tortora, R.N., and Director of the Alternative Medicine Pain Clinic and the Functional Rehabilitation Program at Irwin Army Community Hospital in Fort Riley, Kansas, could describe and demonstrate how she uses mindfulness, meditation, and yoga to treat physically and mentally wounded combat veterans. After negotiating the captain’s furlough, we collaborated with her in the creation of the seminar entitled, “Tapping the Power Within: Wellness Techniques to Control Pain and Stress.” Determined to serve all who might benefit, the chapter liaised with veterans’ counselors throughout the Lone Star College System (LSCS), the Tomball Veterans Outpatient Clinic, and the Nursing and Psychology Departments. As a result, in her seminar Captain Tortora not only increased awareness of the effectiveness of a new medical frontier but also provided tangible gifts to every veteran in the form of *Playaways*, audio recorders preloaded with guided meditations, and document packets that included a reading list that allowed attendees to pursue the study of meditation and yoga on their own.

**Question 2:** Why and by what process did you choose this theme?

**Entry:** Alpha Rho Lambda Chapter, Jackson College, Michigan

**Theme 2:** Ideas and Ideologies as Frontiers

Before examining the Program Guide, our Honors in Action team set individual goals we hoped would inspire our project. Those goals included broadening our perspectives, educating and advocating for community influence and impact creating an effective team by building connections with each other, entertaining different points of view, gaining knowledge, increasing personal empathy, and breaking familiar barriers. We wanted to challenge the depth of our research.

Next, we examined the meanings implicit in “Frontiers and the Spirit of Exploration.” We defined “frontiers” as boundaries or borders separating the known from the unknown. We viewed “exploration” as traveling to the unknown, the unfamiliar, in a journey to discover or question. Then we investigated the Program Guide. Each of us chose two themes that most intrigued us. Themes 2 (ideologies), 3 (human expression), and 7 (health and medicine) emerged. Team members advocated for their highest ranked themes. One of our team members, a passionate advocate for transgender rights, designed and presented a compelling power point which enlightened us on how a study of binary gender myths touched on all three of the themes that most interested us. His presentation led us to adopt transgender as our research topic.

We believe the idea of gender shapes (and misinforms) societies everywhere. As stated so well in Theme 2’s description, “Any quest begins with an idea ...that is believed to be truth but suspected by some to be false.” This is exactly what the transgender community is saying—the idea of gender is false. We chose this topic because transgender people are marginalized and excluded from civil rights legislation. A local private university fought Title IX for exemptions to justify the firing of a transgender professor, and one of our team members is a close friend of a female-to-male (FTM) transgender. In an interview, MC shared how he doesn’t fit into either of the gender roles our nation prescribes. Gender is an idea, assigned to infants at birth based on their genitalia. To be transgender in America is to challenge the binary system our society has for gender, a frontier of thought that needs to be dismantled.

These statistics and examples illustrate the transgender experience in America:

- Over 50% of transgender people experience homelessness due to familial rejection or discrimination in housing.

- 53% of anti-LGBT homicide victims were transgender women.

- Transgender people are 4 times more likely to live in poverty.

- 90% of transgender people report experiencing discrimination, harassment, or mistreatment on the job.

- 41% of transgender people have reported attempting to commit suicide. Only 1.6% of the general population has attempted suicide.

Bathrooms are a great example of the gender binary our society perpetuates. Transgender people can feel unsafe visiting the bathroom of the gender with which they identify or the gender they were assigned at birth. The pronouns used to address or refer to transgender people is another source of stress for trans people. Transgender people still cannot serve in our military. Our choice of this research theme definitely met our goals and challenged our perceptions.

As our study deepened, we recognized what a timely issue/ideology we had selected. *Time Magazine’s* June 9, 2014 cover story, “America’s Transition” unfolded how another social movement—the transgender movement—is poised to challenge deeply held cultural beliefs. Even more recently, this

January's Golden Globe Awards announced Amazon's new series "Transparent" won two Golden Globes Sunday as a comedy — but for the transgender community at large it proved a rather dramatic win. The show, which revolves around the patriarch of a family who is transitioning to becoming a woman.

**Question 3:** List the 8 academic/expert sources that were most enlightening regarding multiple perspectives of the Honors Study Topic Theme you selected. Briefly explain why these were the most important sources and what you learned from each of them as you researched your Theme.

**Entry:** Eta Gamma Chapter, Coffeyville Community College, Kansas

**Theme 7:** Health and Medicine as Frontiers

#### Resource 1

How Do Service and Therapy Dogs Enhance the Quality of Human Health? An Annotated Bibliography  
Britton, Todd, Correction Facilities Specialist, Ellsworth Correctional Facility. ToddB@doc.ks.gov.  
Personal Interview. 16 May 2014. Specialist Britton shared the facility's Canine Training Program. He related how inmates must interview for the dog trainer position, maintain a positive attitude, and care for and train the dogs twenty-four hours a day. Dogs live in the cells with their inmate who attends a four week class taught by experienced inmate handlers.

#### Resource 2

Cole, Kathie, et.al. "Animal Assisted Therapy and its Relationship to the Health Status of Hospitalized Heart Failure Patients." UCLA Research Study. 15 Nov. 2014. Researchers discovered that a twelve minute visit with a therapy dog helped heart and lung function by lowering blood pressure, diminishing release of harmful hormones, and decreasing anxiety among hospitalized heart failure patients. Benefits exceeded those that resulted from a visit with a human volunteer.

#### Resource 3

Currie, Nikki. "A Case Study of Incarcerated Males Participating in a Canine Training Program." Dissertation. Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology. Kansas State University, 2010. This qualitative study found that the number of animal training programs in correctional facilities has greatly increased in the past twenty-five years. These programs were found to positively impact inmate behavior, self-esteem and morale. This study provided orientation for the chapter's visit to the Ellsworth Correctional Facility.

#### Resource 4

"Dogs of War." A&E Documentary Series, 11 and 16 Nov. 2014. This new documentary series allowed chapter members to follow war veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder as they were paired with shelter dogs that would help them adjust to civilian life.

#### Resource 5

Eta Gamma Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa. "How do Service and Therapy Dogs Enhance the Quality of Human Health?" Survey. Ronald McDonald House Directors. 20 Oct. 2014. The chapter research team received 113 responses from 184 questionnaires providing a wealth of information on ten selected items including specialized training and certification. Questionnaires prompted phone calls from three states with additional information. Of those facilities having a therapy dog, ninety-nine per cent of the respondents felt it was highly beneficial.

[Note: The survey conducted by the chapter and is cited as a resource that informed their Honors in Action Project, and it is not also described as part of the action components of the Project]

#### Resource 6

Larimore, Sonia. Manager of Assisted Living, Windsor Place. 620-330-0630. Personal Interview. 14 Apr. 2014. Ms. Larimore introduced members to Boomer, a Standard Poodle service and facility dog. His duties include engaging with Windsor Place residents and identifying those in need of emotional support. Residents often talk to him instead of other adults. This dog and handler team were representative of several interviewed.

#### Resource 7

Piper, Lynn J. "The Practice of Animal-Assisted Psychotherapy." United States of America: E Street Lane Publications, 2014. Piper explains how specially trained therapy dogs assist a human therapist to work with clients' mental health issues. Members learned the clinical application for such therapy as well as the physical and ethical boundaries involved.

#### Resource 8

Ramirez, Ken. "Exploring the Natural World: Frontiers in Animal Training." Keynote Address. International Honors Institute. 18 June 2014. This address focused upon the role that training plays in a dog's mental stimulation and cooperative behavior. A dog's role in conservation was presented as its contribution to our mental health and happiness. When sea turtle eggs were threatened by an oil spill, dogs used their scent to find over 29,000 eggs for relocation.

**Question 4:** What conclusions did your chapter reach based on your research and how did these conclusions guide you to select the action part of your project?

**Entry:** Alpha Lambda Alpha Chapter, Hillsborough Community College, Florida

**Theme 2:** Ideas and Ideologies as Frontiers

Our investigation revealed that diversity is an over-arching ideology that is global in nature; for example, it can be expressed in the forms of affirmative action, equal employment opportunity, demographic shift, veterans, disability acts, equal rights, religious rights, civil rights, voting rights, immigration rights, and their various accompanying laws. Further, we concluded that by 2017, African American and Latinos will be the majority in our K-12 educational system and by 2043, non-Hispanic whites will be a minority group in the US. This demographic shift led to the conclusion that diversity is also a frontier of thought that will shape the world politically, socially, and economically as we move

deeper into the 21st century. Because of its potential impact, we decided to focus our work on diversity. But how prepared is the society for this everchanging, all-encompassing frontier? From a societal standpoint the enactment and enforcement of laws would help immensely. At the academic level, colleges are not prepared for the changing demographics because many community colleges and their partners, in spite of their calls to action, lack definite implementable plans. Therefore, there is a need to help community colleges fix the problem. Further inquiry on the benefits of diversity showed the following: 1. The First Friday in October is National Diversity Day and October is Global Diversity Awareness Month (though neither is celebrated at the local or state level.) 2. Integrating diversity into higher education promotes creativity, self-awareness and social development, and provides students with an opportunity to work with people from culturally diverse backgrounds. 3. With demographic shifts, advances in technology, communications, and globalization, diversity is not only a competitive advantage and driver for growth around the world but also it improves the effectiveness and productivity of a diverse workforce. While some like Peter Wood and Brenda Walker are against diversity because they fear it corrupts our educational system, the overwhelming body of research showed that everyone benefits from diversity. Further investigation on feasibility of diversity led us to the idea of inclusion (the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity) in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities with which individuals might connect and in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions. It became obvious to us that advocacy through positive awareness campaign was a possible action.

**Question 5:** Summarize your objectives for this Honors in Action project and the process by which the chapter set these objectives.

**Entry:** Alpha Psi Tau Chapter, Ozarks Technical Community College, Missouri

**Theme 1:** Nature of the Quest

To further explore our working hypothesis [Awareness of the history of the World's Fairs and their tradition of innovation is lacking in our society], we continued our association with the historians of the 1904 World's Fair Society. In addition, we sought out resources related to innovation in various career fields and higher education institutions. Using our conclusions to guide our discussions, we found that the general public is unaware of the grand tradition of the World's Fairs. Also, higher education institutions are seeking students in innovative fields, yet few students pursue them. This led us to further investigate specific fields of study that are on the cutting edge. With our research in mind, we sought to bring attention to World's Fairs as well as highlight innovative fields of study. To do so, we developed the following objectives: Seek to bring awareness to the historical significance of the World's Fairs. Develop a platform to showcase innovation in a variety of career fields. Disseminate information regarding higher education institutions that are on the leading edge of innovation.

**Question 6:** With whom did you collaborate for this Honors in Action project?

**Entry:** Alpha Zeta Eta Chapter, North Lake College, Texas

**Theme 2:** Ideas and Ideologies as Frontiers

Through collaborating with the IR department and NLC Counseling Services, our chapter developed a survey to obtain useful information including demographics, different perceptions of sexual violence, and the global severity of the issue. We teamed up with several student clubs including Student Government Association, Student Leadership Institute, Gay-Straight Alliance, Psi Beta, Philosophy Club, Blazer Student Ambassadors, Drama Club, Blazer Radio, National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Journalism Club, The News-Register, Baptist Student Ministry, We Expose Ourselves To Art, and NLC News to make our project a campus-wide initiative. The NLC Student Life Office (SLO), Marketing Department, and Title IX Committee worked with our chapter to create NASVP advertisements and publish them on NLC media outlets. By working with the NLC Facilities, they helped us “purple out” the campus, symbolizing Sexual Violence Awareness Week. The NLC Police Department, Counseling Services, and the DARCC were instrumental in helping us create risk prevention workshops. We also partnered with several community groups such as Coppell YMCA, Keys to Success, and the BSA Troop 840 of the Circle Ten Council. Additionally, to spread awareness on other campuses, we worked with Omega Omega Chapter of Mountain View College (MVC) and the Alpha Chi Omega sorority chapter of the University of Arkansas. Through international collaboration, we surveyed residents of Australia, Colombia, El Salvador, Malaysia, Mexico, Tanzania, and Wales.

**Question 7:** Describe the leadership of chapter members that contributed to the planning, preparations, and implementation of this Honors in Action project. The exercise of leadership may come from groups/committees, officers, and non-officers. Leadership roles are not necessarily those that come with “titles.”

**Entry:** Alpha Pi Xi Chapter, Kauai Community College, Hawaii

**Theme 7:** Health and Medicine as Frontiers

All participating members were given a leadership role at some point during the Honors in Action Project process. President Samantha and Vice President Hope spearheaded the project, collaborated with SAC, and completed the write up. Hope was in charge of organizing the CNA program and HOSA club students. Samantha also created informational stress brochures and student surveys. Eric, social media and graphic arts expert, was in charge of creating and displaying flyers to advertise the event. Contributors provided herbs and other materials for the aromatherapy activity, and an aromatherapy informational flyer was printed for distribution. Bryan, Vice President of Leadership, collaborated with Kauai Pharmacy to create and supply the stress-relieving tea. A chapter member, Lois, attempted to collaborate with the massage program on campus to provide free massages. However, those students were not able to participate due to conflicting schedules. Lastly, each participating member took on a leadership role by conducting individual research. Various topics were selected by paired members, and research conducted. Resulting information was then presented by teams to the group during a meeting.

**Question 8:** Describe leadership education and training activities taken to specifically help chapter members be more effective leaders for this Honors in Action project.

**Entry:** Alpha Nu Sigma Chapter, Horry-Georgetown Technical College, South Carolina

**Theme 7:** Health and Medicine as Frontiers

Our training began with an academic research workshop led by an HGTC research librarian where we were instructed how to use the electronic library guide created specifically for our HiA theme. An HGTC Career Resource Center Specialist taught us how to interview medical professionals. All committee members took advantage of regional HiA training opportunities by participating in pre-conference workshops, such as "What is Academic Research," at the Carolinas Region Honors Institute and the Carolinas Region Leadership Conference. Three committee members attended HiA educational forums at NerdNation 2014, and one attended the International Honors Institute. Our survey developer defined ethical boundaries with an HGTC ethics professor and shared this knowledge with the committee to develop our CAMRSA Awareness Survey. A College Project committee member instructed two HiA members in creating an Excel tabulation worksheet. They used this new skill to compile their survey data efficiently. An HGTC speech professor conducted a public speaking workshop for chapter officers.

**Question 9:** Describe the service or "action" components of this Honors in Action project that were inspired by your Honors Study Topic research. (Action can also include advocacy.)

**Entry:** Alpha Tau Epsilon Chapter, Delaware County Community College, Pennsylvania

**Theme 3:** Quests of Human Expression

Extensive research conducted on human expression revealed a need for a necessary bridge to aid individuals with communication deficits. Further consultation with the disability office on our campus exposed a void in programs aimed at supporting individuals who experienced difficulty expressing themselves and communicating effectively due to intellectual and developmental delays. Due to these conclusions, we began researching programs and events to help fill this need. We partnered with a local art studio to bring a sensory friendly event to the community. Proceeds from this event were donated to the Alpha Tau Epsilon team, walking to support Autism Speaks in their advocacy and research effort. Our original work continued with a design by our PR officer for a t-shirt fundraiser. Again, proceeds went directly to this foundation. In total, we raised \$2,384.86 for Autism Speaks. Finally, the most meaningful part of our action project is the implementation of the Best Buddies International (BBI) program on our campus. BBI is a recognized program that pairs volunteers with individuals who have a developmental disability. It creates an atmosphere for individuals to be mentored and establishing a friendship with someone trained to understand their obstacles yet remain supportive of their endeavors.

**Question 10:** What were the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of your project, including the lessons learned by your chapter members and others?

**Entry:** Alpha Beta Chi Chapter, Pima Community College, Arizona

**Theme 9:** Borders and Boundaries

The forum accomplished our goal to inform and educate people about the problems of unaccompanied children immigrating to the U.S. The audience of 20 people learned what motivates parents to risk their children's lives to send them from Central America to this country. Attendees heard about perils children face along the way, the American legal process they endure once they are detained here, and what happens to them while they await their immigration hearings. The forum made us aware of the lack of available pro bono legal services for the children, so we decided to fundraise for FIRR through several events, and were able to contribute \$500. As we worked to advertise the forum, we thought we understood how to market our event within the college. The lower than expected attendance taught us we needed to better develop those leadership skills. To help prepare us for the future, we contacted the college's Marketing and Public Relations Office so we could get professional help with evaluating our strategy and how we can improve it for future events. This meeting taught us that our event attendance is typical because 60% of the college's students are nontraditional and do not participate in events. We also learned when planning, we should consider the time and day of the event, frequency of public announcements, media sources and collaboration with outside agencies. The knowledge we gained will benefit us for future chapter events and HIA projects. Our exploration of the topic put us firmly in the center of the immigration debate and taught us the enormity and complexity of immigration issues in our country. We realized immigration laws and policies have often been put together piecemeal as quick-fixes, and nationally we need to engage in comprehensive immigration reform that serves the needs of everyone, something our elected officials have been hesitant to do. Regardless of our views on the issue when we began, this project reshaped our thinking on immigration and changed or eliminated our cultural biases on the topic.

**Question 11:** What is left undone or what opportunities remain for the future?

**Entry:** Beta Theta Kappa, Butte College, California

**Theme 8:** Exploring Political Economy

The photographs that our chapter took will be used forever as valuable classroom aids, shared with all of our Natural Resources Professors at the college. Furthermore, the aerial photographs of the degraded ponds will be submitted to the ACE, who will likely give permission for the refuge to begin the restoration of the ponds. We plan to continue to work with the FTR to complete the report that will be submitted to the ACE, and will also help them map the trails and streams on campus to find new water sources for the ponds.

Drones have the potential to be used in so many ways throughout our campus such as virtual tours, orientations, and building inspections. Now that our faculty and administration has seen what our drone can accomplish, it leaves unlimited opportunities for future drone use on campus. If the FAA regulations loosen in the future, our chapter has the potential to use drones for various fundraising efforts and service projects off-campus. Regardless of how the political economy changes, we are in



the process of publishing an article of our project in the local newspaper in hopes that our project will be used as a model for other non-profit institutions and companies to follow.