



HONORS COLLEGE

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY



GREETINGS

Welcome to our third issue of the Hillcrest Club Alumni Newsletter! It is our hope that this newsletter allows you to remain connected to the JMU Honors College. Despite COVID-19 altering this year's programming, Honors continued to offer numerous ways for students and alumni to engage with the College. We hope you get great joy in learning about all of the things happening within the Honors College and the available avenues for alumni engagement.

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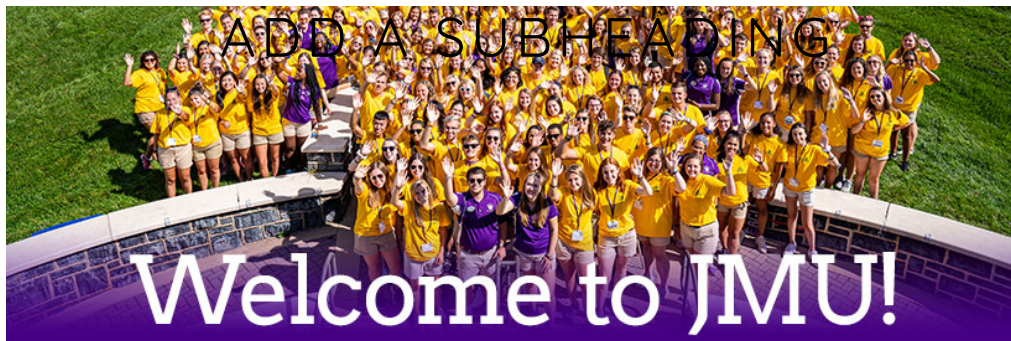
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES



On May 8th, JMU Honors had the opportunity to recognize 130 graduating Honors students. The Class of 2021 demonstrated true resilience, leadership, and character during their time at JMU. They made their mark on Madison and on the Honors College. While we are sad to see them go, we know their futures are bright and we cannot wait to see all of the amazing things that they will accomplish!

A slideshow honoring all Honors College graduates in the Class of 2021 can be found [here](#).

WELCOME TO THE CLASS OF 2025



The Honors College is excited to welcome the incoming class of Honors scholars. Out of over 1,100 applicants, approximately 225 students will be enrolling in the JMU Honors College's Class of 2025. All of these students excelled academically, challenged themselves with rigorous programs of study at the high school level, received high marks in their core classes, and demonstrated a commitment to leadership and involvement outside of the classroom. We are thrilled to welcome this new class of Honors College scholars and are confident that these students will be a wonderful addition to our community!

RECENT HONORS EVENTS



Honors students check out free swag offered at Hillcrest in celebration of Giving Day!

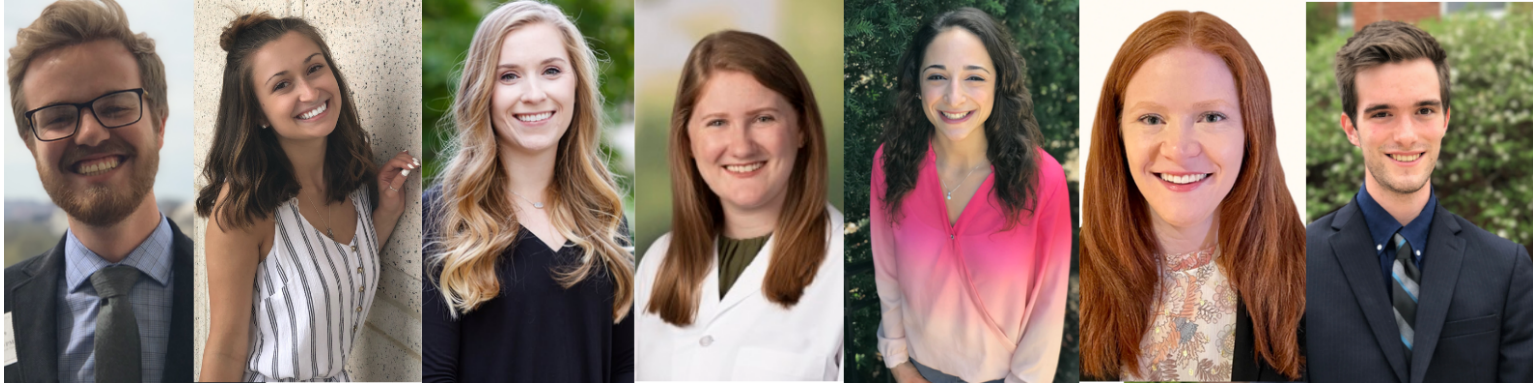
We all know this year was a challenge, but there was no stopping the Honors College. Honors hosted virtual events, many of which were livestreamed on the Honors Facebook page, as well as in-person drop-in events at Hillcrest.

We were especially pleased to have the participation of our awesome alumni in many events, including Honors *Factfulness* common read programs, Alumni Spotlight events, professional development programs with the Madison Honors Leadership Council (MHLC), Honors Book Club, scholarship committees, and more. **We encourage your continued participation next year!** If you're interested in volunteering your time to further engage with students, please fill out this year's alumni survey!

In addition to this bi-annual alumni-produced newsletter, Honors also communicates with alumni via social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) and on LinkedIn. We hope that you'll tune in regularly to find out about opportunities to plug in and be more involved. Dr. Alysia Davis, Director of Student Engagement, also maintains a Weebly site with updates about Honors programs and can be found on Twitter as well.

The Honors College is in the midst of planning Fall 2021 events NOW. If you have ideas for programs, please be sure to let Honors know so that you can be added to the calendar!

NEW HILLCREST CLUB ADVISORS



We welcome our newest cohort of Hillcrest Club Advisors!

From left to right: Ethan Gardner ('20), Jordan Gamache ('20), Lizzie Brannon ('17), Abby Compton ('16, '20 AuD), Holly Millet ('15), Jane Aronds ('18), and Cory Petinga ('18).

Hillcrest Club Advisors recruitment is held every January.
We'd love for you to join us next year!

ALUMNI SURVEY

Interested in becoming more involved with the Honors College?

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

<https://tinyurl.com/2021HonAlumniSurvey>

HONORS CAPSTONE PROJECT SPOTLIGHTS

The Class of 2021 recently completed their Honors Capstone Projects. A hybrid Symposium allowed students to share their scholarship with peers, their families, and the larger JMU community. Check out the [April Symposium website](#) and [watch the Symposium Roundtable](#) to see our students' amazing work.

The following student spotlights give a glimpse into the ongoing work of two exemplary Honors students. Best of luck to them and their peers as they complete their capstone research during the 2021-2022 school year!



Rodrigo (Rod) Morales ('22): I am a rising senior Economics major from Long Island, NY. I have a double minor in Spanish-English Translation and Interpretation and Honors Interdisciplinary Studies (a mouthful, I know)! Coming to the end of my college experience, I had to start thinking about and preparing for my Honors capstone. My thesis is about analyzing the growth and development of El Salvador compared to other countries of similar population size, with similar and different industries in varying regions.

Brenna Gannon ('22): As a Biology major with a microbiology concentration, I chose to pursue a thesis project focusing on aquatic microbiology. For my capstone, I am working in Dr. Steffen's lab researching samples from Lake Tai, China's third largest freshwater lake which is plagued with cyanobacterial harmful algal blooms, or CHABs. These CHABs are expected to increase in severity and frequency as climate change progresses. In 2018, my lab collected bloom samples both during and after a typhoon during a trip to China. My research examines whether the typhoon impacted nitrogen uptake by bacteria in Lake Tai. Ultimately, I hope to be able to provide insight into whether climate change is impacting CHABs and their natural nutrient cycling.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: DR. GRAY KIDD

Gray F. Kidd ('12, '14M), an historian of race and popular culture in modern Brazil, recently received his Ph.D. in history from Duke University. His dissertation, *Surrendering to the Street in Mid-Century Recife: The Living Legacies of Slavery in Black and White*, is an urban cultural history of slavery's afterlives in the Northeast Brazilian state of Pernambuco. Pernambuco received one-fifth of the enslaved Africans that landed in the Western Hemisphere. It examines Brazil's "public secret" of racism while exploring how Recife's nonwhite majority contested these hierarchies through humor, religiosity, and forms of popular entertainment.



Dr. Kidd spent nearly 32 months in Brazil through the generous support of a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Award (DDRA), two Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships for the study of Portuguese, and countless travel grants from the Duke Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Duke Brazil Initiative, Department of History, and The Graduate School. Gray was also fortunate to present his research internationally, including in Colombia, Mexico, and Italy.

Since arriving at Duke in 2014, Kidd held multiple roles in the public humanities. From 2014 to 2016, he coordinated the Global Brazil Humanities Lab, an interdisciplinary hub for the study of the world's fifth largest country. The GBHL fomented conversations across the humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences through cluster signature projects focused on social movements, the environment, and the arts. It is also in this role that he successfully planned five Global Brazil Conferences, which brought scholars to Duke for a series of public-facing events.

In 2016 and 2017, he co-led a binational team of faculty, undergraduate, and graduate student collaborators from Duke and the Multidisciplinary Institute of the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro that examined the impacts of Brazil's vast expansion of free public higher education since 2000. The team's work centered on the Baixada Fluminense, a racially and socially stigmatized region of greater Rio de Janeiro. Close study revealed that policymakers do not sufficiently understand the various obstacles that racially and socioeconomically marginalized populations face when they pursue mobility through higher education. Most recently, Kidd advised a group of undergraduate student curators who produced the virtual exhibit "[Black Lives Matter Brazil-USA: The Global Fight for Breath.](#)"

In August, Kidd will join the history faculty at The Agnes Irwin School in greater Philadelphia.

THE HONORS ADVANTAGE

THERE ARE SO MANY PERKS OF BEING A
JMU HONORS COLLEGE STUDENT:
Focus on Faculty Mentorship



" "I love the Honors College because it creates a small family-like community feel within a larger university. **I always have the opportunity to connect and communicate with like-minded students and faculty who are just as eager to learn and get involved as I am.** And the overall benefits you can't find anywhere else!" - Mya Warren ('24)

"It's a community with endless opportunities. **Whether you want to get involved with research, study abroad, need scholarships, Honors will help you and provide a path for you.** All along the way with every high and low there is someone to be there with you the whole way!" - Erin Arnold ('21)



WAYS TO 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.

Interested in becoming an Advisor? Contact Dr. Davis at davis4am@jmu.edu for more information.

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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