



HONORS SENIOR AWARDS & RECOGNITION CEREMONY

2025



MONMOUTH
UNIVERSITY

HONORS
SCHOOL

Senior Awards & Recognition Ceremony

May 14, 2025

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Outstanding Service Award

Dr. Pedram Daneshgar

In 1985, the Nintendo Entertainment System was released in the United States marking the beginning of the video gaming generation. Pedram Daneshgar or Dr. D as his students call him, was six. Sure, he thought Super Mario Brothers was fun, but he preferred to be outside getting dirty in the woods or wet at the local creek. Time after time, he would bring little critters home much to his parents' dismay. Dr. D was a nature boy at heart destined to pursue a career in Biology.



Dr. D attended the University of Delaware where he was part of the Honors Program. He attained a BA in Biological Sciences, an Honors certificate and was a member of the a cappella group, the Y Chromes.

To follow, he studied the role of climate change on whitebark pine in the Pacific Northwest for his MS from Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia. Dr. D moved to Gainesville, Florida, to study Invasion Ecology at the University of Florida. His PhD dissertation work explored the impacts of the exotic invasive cogongrass on southern pine forests. He continued his work on invasive species in Texas, working as a postdoctoral researcher for Iowa State University, examining how exotic species affect the biodiversity of tallgrass prairie.

Dr. D figured out that he loved both plants and teaching which is what brought him to Monmouth University. At MU, Dr. D teaches Botany, Ecology, and Tropical Island Ecology in The Bahamas, as well as several Honors courses. His research lab currently focuses on carnivorous plants, maritime forests, mangroves in The Bahamas, and the Ecology of pop culture. Over his fifteen years at Monmouth, Dr. D has proudly served on Honors Council and mentored 16 students on their Honors theses as a first reader. Several of those students published their work or had the opportunity to present their research at national conferences. Dr. D believes that the Honors students at MU are as good as any around the country.

THE DEAN'S AWARD for **Excellence** IN HONORS

RECOGNIZES OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS BY A GRADUATE OF THE
HONORS SCHOOL

This award recognizes superior graduates for their contributions to the Honors School. Senior honors students who have achieved a 3.5 GPA in their major and who meet at least two of the following criteria may be included for consideration: active member of the honors community, member of the Peer Mentoring Program for at least two years, represented the Honors School at an academic conference, or served on the Honors Students Association. The award winners are selected by the Honors School Dean.

LYNDSEY BUREN '25

Medical Laboratory Science and Chemistry

Lyndsey's time at Monmouth University has been marked by exceptional leadership, academic distinction, and a commitment to service. Lyndsey's presence resonated through campus through her contributions as an Orientation Leader, her leadership in MU Players Theatre Club where she served as Philanthropy Chair, and her role as executive board member for the Phi Eta Sigma honor society. She co-directed the 2022 Cabaret for a Cause, raising money for Broadway Cares Equity Fights Aids (BCEFA).

Lyndsey presented her research at the National Collegiate Honors Council conference, the Summer Scholars Research Program, and Student Scholarship Week. She became a certified Medical Laboratory Scientist and gained hands-on experience through clinicals at Jersey Shore Medical Center. She won numerous accolades, including the Medical Lab Sciences Award and the Student Engagement Impact Award.

Beyond her personal achievements, Lyndsey served as a Peer Mentor and represented the Honors School at events like Accepted Student Days and Open House. Her dedication to learning, mentorship, and community has left a lasting impact on the Honors School. We are proud to recognize Lyndsey with the Dean's Award for Excellence in Honors.

2025 HONORS COUNCIL AWARD for Best Thesis/Capstone

All Honors Thesis/Capstone presenters are invited to apply for the prestigious Honors Council Award for Best Thesis/Capstone. This is a competitive and prestigious award that is granted to an honors student who completed their Honors School thesis or capstone during the previous calendar year and that the Honors Council deems to be the most outstanding based on originality of thesis, depth and range of research, clarity of argument, and quality of presentation.

BEST THESIS, WINNER

MADISON M. PELLERITO '25

CHEMISTRY/BIOCHEMISTRY TRACK

First Reader: Dr. Jonathan Quellet

Second Reader: Davis Jose

The Catalytic Chemistry of the I-R3 DNA ENsyme through Ion-Promoted Cleavage

BEST CAPSTONE, WINNER

MARÍA FERNANDA AGUILUZ '24

HEALTH PROMOTION (FITNESS & WELLNESS)

First Reader: Dr. Jeremy Lackman

Brain Train - A Mobile App for Assessing Performance Anxiety within Collegiate Athletes

BEST THESIS/CAPSTONE, HONORABLE MENTION

JULIA R. MACEY '25

PSYCHOLOGY & SOCIOLOGY

First Reader: Dr. Johanna Foster

Contemporary Social Movements and the Critique of Capitalism: A Comparative Analysis of Movement Framing and Outcomes

• DEAN ROSS PROUDLY PRESENTS •

THE HONORS SCHOOL GRADUATES

FROM SPRING 2025, WINTER 2025, AND SUMMER 2024



Ava Allen
Aaila Arif
Jillian Bodiford
Shelby Brodhead
Shannon Buchheister
Lyndsey Rose Buren
Deidre Campbell
Leila Carl
Reese Cioffi
Gina Nicole Delia
Natalie DellaRagione
Giovanni DeNatale
Grace Evans
Jenna Farkas
Kathleen Gennings
Alyssa Gordon
Natalie Hayden
Alexa Houseknecht
Colt Ingram
Justin Irvin

Remington Johnson
Taylor Johnson-Bradley
Alexander L. Kalina
Zoe Lohne
Emily Loscialpo
Julia R. Macey
Jacqueline Mazza
Bianca Morrongiello
Madison Patterson
Madison M. Pellerito
Lincoln Pereira
Angelo Augusto Prado
Gianna Rao
Meghan Reilly
Emma Grace Rizzuto
Briana Juliet Rutter
Catherine Senatore
Samantha Tolentino
Brooke Van de Sande
Lola Weis



Ava Allen



MAJOR: BS CHEMISTRY

HOMETOWN: Hopewell Junction, NY

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Women's soccer team member
- Peer tutor
- Chemistry lab assistant
- Outstanding achievement in general chemistry
- Outstanding achievement in analytical chemistry
- Chi Alpha Sigma Honor Society

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

To challenge myself academically and to have the opportunity to complete an undergraduate thesis.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

Completing and presenting my Honors School thesis!

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

Attending medical school at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine

THESIS: Sports Psychology Resources: Experiences and Perceptions of Injured Student-Athletes at Monmouth University

One in five student-athletes experience some type of mental health challenge throughout their careers, and data shows that injuries often increase or result in the onset of mental health symptoms. Sports psychology can be an effective method for promoting a positive injury rehabilitation process and can be utilized by Division I programs to help athletes work through and cope with mental issues and feel more confident returning to play. By coupling physical recovery sessions with sports psychology appointments during the injury recovery process, athletes may be more receptive to seeking other forms of help, feel more supported, have an overall better recovery experience, and feel more comfortable returning to play than athletes who only utilize physical rehabilitation sessions. A survey was used to measure experiences and perceptions of injured student-athletes at Monmouth University in regard to sports psychology resources. Findings indicated that Monmouth University student-athletes, overall, had positive injury recovery experiences; however, no statistically significant relationship could be found between recovery experience ratings and the resources utilized. Results suggest that while athletes had generally positive recoveries, there is still progress to be made—particularly in increasing awareness about the role of sports psychologists and reducing mental health stigma within the athletic community at Monmouth.

Aaila Arif



MAJOR: BS COMPUTER SCIENCE

MINOR: MATHEMATICS

HOMETOWN: Toms River, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Award of Academic Excellence for Computer Science 2025
- Dean's List (all semesters)
- Member of Upsilon Pi Epsilon Honors Society
- Member of IEEE

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School because I was deeply interested in research and wanted the opportunity to explore the intersection of medicine and software engineering. I've always believed that technology can drive meaningful change in healthcare, which inspired my research using reinforcement learning to optimize operations on a virtual hospital floor. Being in the Honors School allowed me to pursue projects like this that are both intellectually challenging and socially impactful.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My fondest memory of the Honors School is presentation day—getting to showcase my own project while also seeing the incredible work of my peers. It was a powerful moment because it marked the culmination of years of effort, growth, and dedication. Being part of a community where everyone was pushing the boundaries of their fields and sharing their passions made the experience truly meaningful.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I will be attending graduate school to get my Master's in Computer Science at Monmouth University as a part of the 5 Year Program.

THESIS: Applying Reinforcement Learning for Efficient Hospital Delivery Paths

This capstone investigates the optimization of resource delivery operations within simulated hospital environments through the application of reinforcement learning (RL) and Q-learning algorithms. By iteratively adjusting parameters, and introducing hallways and obstacles, the research effectively constructs a complex hospital environment tailored for agent navigation. The project aims to address the challenge of inefficient resource delivery in hospital settings, which can impact patient care and operational effectiveness. Methodologically, Python and OpenAI's Gym Library are utilized to create a dynamic virtual hospital floor, facilitating agent training and navigation. Reinforcement Learning (RL) teaches autonomous agents to interact with their environment by learning from experience, enabling them to make decisions through iterative processes of exploration and trial-and-error to maximize cumulative rewards. Q-learning, a specific RL technique, estimates the long-term value of actions in given states. A major finding is the successful adaptation of RL frameworks to accommodate diverse hospital layouts in the program, thereby facilitating efficient task execution. The conclusion underscores the significance of this work in advancing healthcare robotics, emphasizing the potential of RL methodologies to revolutionize hospital logistics and improve patient care outcomes.

Jillian Bodiford



MAJOR: BA ENGLISH & EDUCATION WITH
ENDORSEMENT IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN ENGLISH

THESIS: Theatre Saved My Life: The Benefits of Theatre Activities and its Crucialness in Public

The focus of this thesis examines the vital role of musical theatre programs in schools, nurturing creativity, teamwork, and essential life skills, offering a unique space for personal and academic growth. The sad reality is that theatre programs are struggling to survive, facing budget cuts that threaten their existence. Through a blend of literature review and data analysis, this research underscores the social, emotional, and academic benefits of theatre participation, highlighting its positive effects on communication, problem-solving, leadership skills, and more. The thesis also explores alternative ways to integrate theatre into the traditional curriculum, proposing solutions to address funding challenges. A sample unit plan included in the appendix illustrates how theatre can be adapted within classrooms, advocating for policies to support and protect these programs. This thesis strongly emphasizes the importance of preserving musical theatre in schools as a core component of a well-rounded education for future generations.

Shelby Brodhead



MAJOR: BS MARINE AND ENVIRONMENTAL BIOLOGY
AND POLICY

THESIS: Pollinator-Prey Conflict with Carnivorous Plants in the New Jersey Pine Barrens

The New Jersey Pine Barrens is an ecosystem unlike any other found in the world. It can support highly specialized species such as pitcher plants, which are carnivorous, meaning they have modified leaf structures, trapping arthropods to supplement nutrients in poor conditions. Recent work has examined the carnivory of pitcher plants but has not thoroughly investigated their pollination, leaving the remaining question: how do pitcher plants avoid trapping the insects they need for pollination? Research was conducted in June and July of 2024, investigating thirteen sites containing purple pitcher plants (*Sarracenia purpurea*). Arthropod visitation to the flowers was analyzed through visual observation and GoPro footage sampling, while pitcher visitation was conducted through pitcher fluid analysis. The data analysis indicated that ants (*Formicidae*), wolf spiders (*Lycosidae*), pitcher-plant mosquitos (*Wyeomyia smithii*), and pitcherplant midges (*Metriocnemus knabi*) were found inside the pitchers while winged insects such as damselflies (*Zygoptera*), mosquitoes (*Culicidae*) and dragonflies (*Odonata*) along with jumping spiders (*Salticidae*) were found almost exclusively on the flowers. Pollinators are attracted to the nectar and pollen in the flowers, or the arthropods that feed on both, while prey are attracted to the nectar on the pitcher's edge and the moist environment.

Shannon Buchheister



MAJOR: BS HEALTH STUDIES/HEALTH SCIENCE CLUSTER

HOMETOWN: Dumont, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society
- Costa Rica Study Abroad
- Dean's List
- Magna Cum Laude

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School to connect with other academically driven students and have the opportunity to do a research thesis as an undergraduate student to prepare me for graduate school.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My fondest memory of the Honors School is the sunrise trip on the first day of freshman year.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

After graduation, I will be continuing graduate school at Monmouth University in the Doctor of Occupational Therapy Program.

THESIS: Implementation of ACL Injury Prevention Programs in Collegiate Athletic Programs Across the state of New Jersey

With drastic increases in female participation in organized sports in recent decades, injury rates for these athletes have increased dramatically as well. The anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) is a ligament in the knee that is a fundamental aspect in providing stability. Female collegiate athletes, especially in the sports of soccer, basketball, and lacrosse, have been found to tear their ACLs at a surprising rate in comparison to their male counterparts, falling between two to eight times more likely depending on the sport. To help control this increasing issue, Injury Prevention Programs (IPPs) have been developed to aid in correcting unbalanced lower extremity movements which prevent actions that frequently cause ACL injuries. IPPs have proven to be highly successful for those who utilize them by preventing ACL injuries by roughly 50%.

However, the popularity of ACL Injury Prevention Programs in collegiate athletic programs is widely unknown. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how many collegiate programs implement these IPPs for their athletes, especially those at a heightened risk. A survey was sent to athletic trainers and strength and conditioning coaches at Division I, II, and III athletic programs across the state of New Jersey to see if they utilize any IPPs. Unfortunately, responses were only received from 9 of the 49 individuals it was sent to. From the results received, 5 programs had IPPs implemented while 4 did not.

Lyndsey Rose Buren



MAJORS: BS MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENCE & CHEMISTRY

HOMETOWN: Clark, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Honors School Peer Mentor & Orientation Leader (2021–2025)
- President & Secretary, Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society – MU Chapter
- Research presenter at National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) conferences
- Certified Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS)
- Summer Scholars Fellow & chemistry researcher
- Cast/crew member, Monmouth Uni. Theatre Arts productions
- Student Engagement Impact Award recipient

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School to be part of a supportive and engaged academic community. It gave me the opportunity to complete an undergraduate thesis, deepen my academic interests, and make lifelong friends along the way.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My fondest memory of the Honors School is presenting my research at my first NCHC conference in Dallas, Texas. I had an absolutely wonderful time on that trip, made memories with my friends, and it was an experience I'll always cherish.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I will be attending Lehigh University to pursue a PhD in Chemistry.

THESIS: Measurement and Determination of the Protein Composition of Beyond Raw Hydrolyzed Whey Protein Powder

This study tests the veracity of Beyond Raw's claim that their protein powder is a vegetarian protein alternative that provides athletes the freedom to remain vegetarian while able to consume protein. We tested the authenticity of Beyond Raw's claim that their protein powder indeed contains the seven major proteins that compose whey protein (WP). The cheesemaking process separates WP into a liquid that is an excellent source of high-quality protein. WPs are composed of beta-lactoglobulin (BLG), alpha-lactalbumin (ALA), bovine serum albumin (BSA), lactoperoxidase (LP), immunoglobulins, glycomacropeptide, and lactoferrin (LF), which can boost the immune system and minimize inflammation. WP extract is a great protein source for resistance-trained athletes due to its good supply of essential amino acids. We performed several biochemical analyses to identify different WPs present in Beyond Raw. Ion Exchange Chromatography (IEC) separated different proteins based on their charges, whereas the individual components were identified by SDS-PAGE and Western blot. The most abundant WPs present in Beyond Raw are ALA, BLG, and BSA. The study did not show any conclusive evidence for LP and LF, which is due to inconclusive results from the IEC. The study's overall findings do not confirm Beyond Raw's nutritional claim.

Deidre Campbell



MAJOR: BS CHEMISTRY - CONCENTRATION IN BIOCHEMISTRY

HOMETOWN: Oakland, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Attended multiple research conferences with my lab
- Completed my honors thesis
- Awarded the Physical Chemistry Department award
- Doing research over the summer of 2023 through the Provost Summer Scholars program
- Over the summer of 2024 I was able to do research at Rutgers University - Newark because of my experiences at Monmouth

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School to meet others at Monmouth and always knew I would have a support system through the Honors School. I also wanted to be involved in research at Monmouth and working on my thesis was the perfect way to bring together all the research I did over my years at Monmouth.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My fondest memory of the Honors School was presenting my thesis. I enjoyed watching everyone present throughout the day as all the projects were so different. It was so nice to see other projects outside of the School of Science and the passion everyone has for their research.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I am looking for a job in the chemistry industry.

THESIS: Isolation of an Aptamer Selective to Glucose

The research for a glucose aptamer would be the first step to finding a cure for diabetes. This project uses Systematic Evolution of Ligands by Exponential Enrichment, or SELEX, to select RNA that specifically binds glucose. The process is a cycle beginning with a PCR from a pool with millions of different DNA sequences, transcription to RNA, negative selection, positive selection, and reverse transcription back to DNA. The conclusion of the reverse transcription is the beginning of the next generation, where each generation becomes more selective to glucose. Eventually the RNA would be sequenced and converted to a riboswitch. The riboswitch would bind specifically to glucose and transmit a signal to the expression platform to start the reaction to make insulin. This would allow the body to make insulin outside of the pancreas; therefore, eliminating the need for insulin injections. The project is analyzed by cleavage percentages of each selection for every generation. Once a high ratio of positive over negative cleavage percentages is obtained, we will begin the process to clone DNA and individually test sequences to find an aptamer that cleaves only in the presence of glucose.

Leila Carl



MAJOR: BS BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION -
CONCENTRATION MARKETING & MANAGEMENT

HOMETOWN: Staten Island, NY

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Received the Leon Hess Business School Academic Achievement Award in Marketing & Management
- President of Beta Gamma Sigma Honors Society and was recently awarded the Beta Gamma Sigma Excellence in Marketing and Management
- Social Media Manager of the American Marketing Association
- Dean's list

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School to challenge myself and make the most of everything Monmouth University has to offer. I also wanted to build meaningful connections and friendships while being part of an academic community.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

Despite attending several great Honors School events, my fondest memory was building a special bond with my first reader, Dr. Ashley Bosonac, while working on my capstone project. She helped relieve so much of the stress that came with the process and was truly the best support I could have asked for.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

Right now, I'm interning at a boutique in Asbury Park called Endless Waves, where I work as a social media manager. I may continue working there after graduation while focusing on applying to corporate jobs throughout the summer.

THESIS: The Downfall of Blockbuster Video Inc.: A Case Study in Strategic Management Failure to Adapt to Disruptive Innovation

The collapse of Blockbuster Video Inc. was nothing short of shocking, as the company fell from industry giant to bankruptcy in a remarkably short period of time. This case study analyzed Blockbuster's decline, focusing on its failure to adapt to technological advancements and shifting consumer behaviors. Accompanied by a teaching note, the study aimed to provide educators with tools to integrate the case into their curriculum and facilitate student discussions through targeted questions.

Using a qualitative approach, the research examined Blockbuster's business strategies, competitive landscape, and critical missteps, comparing them to successful competitors like Netflix. A SWOT analysis offered a detailed look at the company's internal and external challenges, highlighting missed opportunities and unleveraged strengths. Secondary data revealed Blockbuster's resistance to innovation and neglect of the streaming market as central factors in its downfall.

The findings emphasized that Blockbuster's lack of adaptability and customer focus led to its demise. This case study and teaching note provided valuable insights into navigating disruptive innovation and maintaining a competitive edge. The materials encouraged students to think critically about business strategy, leadership, and adaptability in rapidly evolving industries, preparing them for future leadership roles.

Reese Cioffi



MAJOR: BSN PRE-LICENSURE

HOMETOWN: East Brunswick, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Appraisals from clinical sites
- Completing the Honors School while studying Nursing

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I wanted to test myself and see what I am capable of if I really tried to push myself.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

Getting to meet all of the other honors students.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I intend to start working in a nurse residency program in a hospital, preferably at Princeton Medical Center with Penn Medicine.

THESIS: Pediatric Mental Health Screenings

Mental healthcare has been receiving more attention over the past few years and is becoming more a part of the mainstream of healthcare, however many problems persist. With advancements in treatment options, timely diagnosis and early detection are crucial, especially in the pediatric population. There is evidence in the literature demonstrating the positive correlation between early detection and health outcomes. Early detection and timely intervention are crucial in management of mental health issues in children and adolescents. Unfortunately, there are still barriers preventing efficient access to early interventions in this population. The following paper has explored this issue through research on current publications and studies exploring mental health concerns in the adolescent populations. This research was conducted through a qualitative search to conduct a literature review on currently available articles regarding adolescent mental health. What this research has found is the prevalence of mental health conditions in adolescents, barriers to reaching care for adolescents, and solutions to these barriers and early interventions.

Gina Nicole Delia



MAJOR: BS HEALTH STUDIES/HEALTH SCIENCE CLUSTER

MINOR: COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS

HOMETOWN: Kendall Park, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Presenting my research at multiple conferences across New Jersey, including the New Jersey Speech and Hearing Association convention in 2024 at Atlantic City

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I had joined the Honors School because I love to challenge myself to try new things and wanted to become a part of a community of individuals who hold the same core values as me, and are always eager to learn and excel.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My fondest memory of the Honors School was being able to present my research, and being able to see myself overcome the challenges encountered throughout the process of formulating, researching and presenting a thesis, at the undergraduate level.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I will be attending Seton Hall in the fall of 2025, to pursue my master's in speech language pathology.

THESIS: Clinicians' Thoughts and Experiences Using Video Games in Therapy

As 21st century media has been increasing in abundance in users, video games have been an upcoming and prominent resource for some speech-language pathologists to incorporate in their speech-language therapy. Through examining previously published works of literature and collecting real life data from speech-language pathologists, this presentation will analyze the usage and effectiveness of video games in speech-language therapy. It is hypothesized that when speech-language pathologists incorporate video games into their therapy sessions for some children, those children might become more engaged during that play, promoting a greater therapeutic outcome.

This presentation will discuss the various viewpoints from speech-language pathologists who include or do not include video games in their therapeutic work with their clients. The major conclusion expected to find through real-life data is to show how video games can be an important therapeutic tool in speech-language therapy for some clients, examining the impacts it can have on different speech-language disorders given the preexisting interventions.

Natalie DellaRagione



MAJOR: BA ENGLISH & SECONDARY EDUCATION

HOMETOWN: Tinton Falls, NJ

**NOTABLE ACTIVITIES &
ACHIEVEMENTS:**

- Vice President of the International Literacy Association

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School because it seemed very rewarding to be able to complete a full thesis, and I was correct!

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

Presenting my thesis and being able to show off all the hard work that I have been putting into it for the past 4 years!

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I plan to work as an English teacher hopefully at the middle school or high school level.

THESIS: To what extent does gun violence in public schools at the national level affect teachers at the local level where gun violence has not occurred?

This study intends to research the impact of potential for gun-related violence in schools, specifically in Red Bank Regional High School. The main purpose of this qualitative study is to educate school faculty on the increasing issue of gun violence in schools and to understand how new protocols regarding gun violence are impacting them socially and emotionally. Interviews were conducted with teachers and administrators at Red Bank Regional High School with questions related to gun violence, safety protocols, and the impacts on their mental health. It was found that gun violence directly affects the lives of teachers. The participants shared they feel that lockdown drills have lost their initial effect, now only instilling fear in students for what could potentially happen. Schools need to address this issue to ensure that students and faculty are well-prepared in the time of an emergency without fearing heavily for their lives. With this, comes understanding of the issue at hand. In the field of education, it is important to understand the severity of this increasing issue, as preparedness comes with prior knowledge.

Giovanni DeNatale



MAJOR: BA POLITICAL SCIENCE

MINOR: ECONOMICS & PUBLIC POLICY

HOMETOWN: Metuchen, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- President of Catholic Campus Ministry
- President of Model United Nations - Multiple individual speaking awards, including Best Delegate at Zurich 2025 Model United Nations Conference and Outstanding Delegation at National Model United Nations 2024
- Won Outstanding Student Award for the Class of 2025
- Highest GPA in the Political Science Department - 4.0 GPA
- Member of Pi Sigma Alpha - Political Science Honors Society
- Resident Assistant for three years, Head RA for two years

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School because I wanted an extra challenge when I was coming to Monmouth. Joining the Honors School was an opportunity that I simply could not pass up; and I was also interested in the community. Being able to dorm in a suite with other honors students was really enticing to me and one of the best decisions that I made as it gave me some of my best friends at Monmouth. The prospect of writing and presenting a thesis was also very exciting as well when I first looked into joining the honors school.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My fondest memory is that first sunrise walk. I still remember how nervous I was since it was the first full day at school, on top of that, I was also extremely sleep-deprived and I had never woken up before 5 AM before. I also had never seen the sun rise either, so there were so many variables to account for, but walking to the beach when it was still dark outside, seeing the stars and the moon, and then the sun an hour later was one of the coolest experiences that I ever had.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I will be pursuing a master's degree at the University of Cambridge where I will be enrolled in their Development Studies program at the College of St. Edmund's.

THESIS: Bronze Gold: The Political Economy of Copper

Political economy has been observed through various theoretical lenses, beginning with Adam Smith's foundational ideas and extending through the contributions of men such as David Ricardo, Karl Marx, and John Maynard Keynes. This paper focuses on the perspectives of three modern political economists—Thorstein Veblen, Douglass North, and Ha-Joon Chang—comparing their views on economic growth and its barriers. First, there is a sector-wide analysis completed of copper that underscores the importance of the mineral as well as the major players involved in the trade industry. Afterwards, an examination of Argentina's copper industry through a comparative case study answers whether Argentina's copper industry has been driven by external geopolitical forces or domestic institutional upgrading. The analysis ultimately uncovers which institutional economic model best explain the Argentine story. The case study shows that the growth of the copper industry can be attributed to the rise of copper's importance on the global stage.

Grace Evans



MAJOR: HEALTH STUDIES/HEALTH SCIENCE CLUSTER

THESIS: Promotion of Successful Aging in the United States

As the population of older adults in the United States of America and around the world grows to an unprecedented size, it is more important than ever to focus on the treatment and care shown to seniors in order to improve mental and physical health outcomes later in life. This area of study is more qualitative than it is quantitative in nature, allowing room for biases and opinions, but is a very important and neglected conversation for society as a whole to take part in. When looking at this issue, it is important to acknowledge that understanding its entire scope involves understanding the life experiences of individuals. This project focuses on the positive and negative impacts of the following themes: misconceptions of older adulthood, social isolation, healthcare staffing, care and practices in healthcare, aging in place, and global perspectives and practices. Research found room for improvement in the above areas and was completed through a review of previous literature. Findings manifested in educational materials which can be used for students entering healthcare fields, those who are responsible for caring for older adults in their life, as well as the general population in order to promote inclusivity and understanding on a broader scale.

Jenna Farkas



MAJOR: BS BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION -
CONCENTRATION IN OPERATIONS, SUPPLY CHAIN & DATA
MANAGEMENT

HOMETOWN: Jefferson, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Society member
- Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society member
- Academic Achievement Award in Operations, Supply Chain, and Data Management
- Beta Gamma Sigma Excellence in Operations, Supply Chain, and Data Management
- Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society Distinguished Endowed Scholarship Recipient

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School because I wanted to be surrounded by people who are as dedicated to success as I am!

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My fondest memory of the Honors School is presenting my honors thesis. I am very proud of the topic and work that I did.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I am in the Monmouth MBA program.

THESIS: What Can Tesla Learn from NUMMI?

The New United Motor Manufacturing Inc. (NUMMI) revolutionized the way that Americans worked in car manufacturing plants. NUMMI brought new ideas and the “Toyota Way” of management to the United States in 1984 when the joint Toyota-GM plant opened in Fremont, California. NUMMI hired disgruntled laid off GM workers for the factory and made an environment that fostered independence and efficiency by using team structures, “Stop the Line” assembly style, the same pay rate for all hourly workers, and safer working environments. Today the factory that housed NUMMI is now owned by Tesla, where there are racial, environmental, and safety issues. This project will educate the public through a website on the racial, environmental, safety, and sexual harassment issues of the Tesla plant in Fremont, California and give Tesla suggestions from NUMMI on how to fix their issues. So far, there is very little research comparing the management styles of NUMMI and Tesla and what Tesla could learn from NUMMI management. This Capstone is one of the first to talk about Tesla and NUMMI together.

Kathleen Gennings



MAJOR: BS HEALTH STUDIES/EXERCISE SCIENCE CLUSTER

MINOR: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

HOMETOWN: Long Island, NY

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Completed my Honors School thesis
- Vice President of Operations for Alpha Omicron Pi
- Campus tour guide
- Served as a senior senator in the Student Government Association
- Founding executive board member for the International Literacy Association

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School to challenge myself academically and grow alongside a community of motivated, curious, and passionate students. I was drawn to the opportunity to conduct original research, engage in meaningful discussions, and receive personalized mentorship that would help me make the most of my undergraduate experience and prepare for graduate school.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My favorite memory was the sunrise my very first week being at Monmouth!

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

Attending Graduate School for Speech Language Pathology at Molloy University

THESIS: The Effects of Exercise and Physical Activity on Pediatric Cancer Patients

This study investigates the role of exercise and physical activity in improving the health and quality of life of pediatric cancer patients and survivors. The purpose of the project was to evaluate the therapeutic potential of structured exercise in mitigating treatment-related complications such as fatigue, cardiovascular decline, and muscle deterioration. Given the long-term physical and psychological effects of pediatric cancer treatment, this topic addresses a critical gap in survivorship care. Through a comprehensive literature review of peer-reviewed sources, the study identified significant benefits of aerobic and resistance training—including enhanced muscle strength, reduced fatigue, and improved emotional well-being. Anti-inflammatory mechanisms triggered by exercise, such as myokine release, were also found to support metabolic and cardiovascular health. In response to barriers like inaccessible academic resources and limited public understanding, this project developed a user-friendly pamphlet and interactive website. These tools translate complex findings into engaging, evidence-based recommendations for patients, caregivers, and clinicians. The study concludes that structured exercise is a safe, effective, and accessible intervention that should be integrated into pediatric cancer recovery and long-term care.

Alyssa Gordon



MAJOR: BSN PRE-LICENSURE

HOMETOWN: Freehold, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Member of Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society
- Member of Lambda Delta Chapter of Sigma International Nursing Honor Society.
- Presented at Monmouth University Scholarship Week in Spring 2024
- Valedictorian of my BSN class

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I decided to join the Honors School because I wanted to challenge myself and conduct research, in order to attain a higher level of education in my field.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My fondest memory of the Honors School is completing my thesis and presenting it.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

My plan after graduation is to work as a full-time nurse at CentraState Healthcare System on the Progressive Care Unit. I will also be attending graduate school at Monmouth University for the Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP)

THESIS: Influences of Social Media Use on Adolescent and Youth Mental Health

With the progression of society, technology has immensely influenced individuals' daily practices. Adolescents and the youth have particularly become accustomed to communicating on social media. Although social media facilitates connectivity between individuals, it can negatively alter individuals' mental status. Without an awareness of the potential impacts of social media use, these individuals are vulnerable to mental health conditions, especially due to their stage of life. Both the prevalent use of social media and the appearance of mental illnesses have become public concerns. The social comparison theory further establishes this notion. One's mental status can significantly influence their quality of life. Thus, it is necessary to investigate this phenomenon, in order to minimize the risk factors that can result in the development of mental illness. This paper utilized studies from scholarly database sources to collect information on factors that determine social media use impacts on youth mental health, as well as interventions to approach this matter. Some of the results suggested social media as merely being a threat to youth mental health, whereas other studies depicted potential positive outcomes of social media use. Although there is uncertainty regarding this matter, the literature proposed several interventions that can possibly optimize social media use.

Natalie Hayden



MAJOR: BS MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENCE

MINOR: ART

HOMETOWN: Lindenhurst, NY

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- President of the Pre-Med Club
- Honors School Peer Mentor for three years
- Residential Assistant

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School to make friends and have lifelong connections

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

Attending all of the Sunrise Walks and swimming in the ocean during a few of them!

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

Continuing my education while working in the Medical Field.

THESIS: Examining the Relationship between Asthma Medication Adherence, GPA, and Health-related Quality of Life in College Asthmatics

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021) half of patients in the United States stopped taking their asthma medications within one year of being prescribed. This failure to adhere to a treatment regimen causes poor health outcomes. Medication adherence is particularly an issue for asthmatics due to the nature of daily dosing for long-term maintenance medication. There is limited research on the issue, specifically for college students. Additionally, medication non-adherence has been linked to poor grade point performance in college students with other chronic illnesses such as Diabetes Mellitus (Taylor, et. al, 2003). Thus, this quantitative study aims to determine how grade point average (GPA) is correlated to asthma control and HRQoL in college asthmatics. Data were collected through an online survey. To be included in the analysis, participants (n=59) had to indicate they had asthma and were enrolled in a college or university. Participants had a mean GPA of 3.46, 43.9% reported well-controlled asthma, and less than 29% reported an excellent HRQoL. Findings suggest that GPA and adherence have a positive association ($r = 0.388$, $p < .001$). The other variables, including HRQoL, did not have significant relationships. The correlation between GPA and asthma medication adherence could provide clinical significance regarding factors influencing adherence for asthmatics, and other chronic illness communities. To avoid the worsening disease and increased health care costs, colleges could target asthmatics with lower academic achievement for adherence interventions.

Alexa Houseknecht



MAJOR: BS BIOLOGY - CONCENTRATION IN MOLECULAR CELL PHYSIOLOGY

MINOR: CHEMISTRY

HOMETOWN: Glenmoore, PA

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Member of Chi Alpha Sigma Athletic Honors Society
- Member of Beta Beta Beta Biology Honors Society
- Dean's List Award winner for every semester
- Won the Annual Student Research Conference at Monmouth University in Spring of 2024 for the Department of Chemistry and Physics with partner Max Rosen
- Won second at the William Patterson 2024 Research Conference with Max Rosen, and swam all four years at MU

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I wanted to dive deeper into my classes by taking them as honors and invest myself into research that was brought to completion through the thesis project. The Honors School supports its members and ensures the required courses are accessible to its students.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

I most enjoyed getting to know some of my closest friends through the Honors School but my fondest memory was finally presenting my 2.5 years of research to my family on the thesis presentation day this past April.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I will be attending Liberty University College of Osteopathic Medicine in July 2025.

THESIS: Investigating local conformational changes from ligands on G-Quadruplex complexes using fluorescent base analogues

DNA sequences rich in guanines readily form G-Quadruplex structures (GQs), which are non-canonical DNA structures located at telomeric and various promoter regions. GQs play a crucial role in physiological functions, including the limitation of telomerase activity observed in 85-90% of human tumors. Telomerase activity is influenced by ligands that interact with GQs, altering their stability and conformations which affects telomerase activity and cancer progression.

Local conformational changes of the telomeric GQ with ligands were monitored by incorporating 6-methylisoxanthopterin (6MI), a fluorescent base analogue of guanine. Site-specific incorporation of 6MI in place of guanines made it possible to create a fluorescent G-tetrad layer in the GQ. Using UV-Vis, CD, and fluorescence spectroscopy, changes in the GQ structures at a global and local level were monitored. Past studies showed that TmPyP4, a telomerase-inhibiting ligand, can interact with GQ. We tracked the local and global conformational changes of GQs at individual G-tetrads upon binding TmPyP4. Our results showed that the effect of TmPyP4 on the stability of GQ depends on the probe position and these probes can be used as "intrinsic sensors" to monitor GQ structural changes. These studies will help to design targeted therapeutic drugs against cancer and other telomeric-related diseases.

Colt Ingram



MAJOR: BS BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION-
CONCENTRATION IN ECONOMICS

MINOR: PHYSICS

HOMETOWN: Aiken, SC

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Captain of golf team
- Boys club volleyball team
- Treasurer for Tau Delta Phi fraternity
- Summa Cum Laude graduate
- Beta Gamma Sigma International Business Honor Society member
- Chi Alpha Sigma Athletics Honors Society member

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

To pursue a higher level of education.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

Working on my book with Professor Belinski.

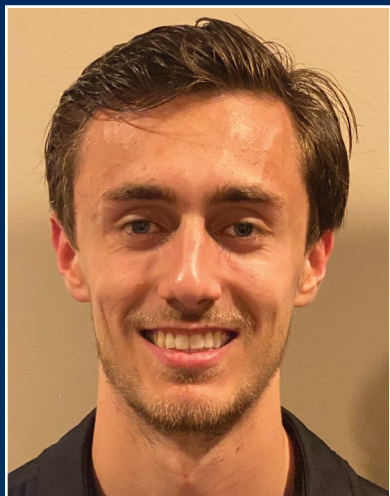
WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

Going back to my hometown to work on developing a hotel there. Potentially pursuing graduate school at a later date.

THESIS: Creating Viking Age Historical Fiction

This project is a creative capstone that uses historical and scholarly research to support the development of a historical fiction novel set during the Viking Age. The project explores how best-selling historical fiction can educate readers while remaining engaging and emotionally resonant. A wide range of primary and secondary sources are used to inform the setting, social structure, mythology, and cultural practices of the Viking world. These include archaeological data, legal texts, epic poetry, and accounts from travelers of the age. In addition to historical research, the project draws from writing guides and literary theory to inform narrative structure, character development, and world-building techniques. Inspiration is drawn from existing works that successfully merge fiction with educational depth, such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Percy Jackson*, which demonstrate how entertainment-driven stories can teach readers about past societies and belief systems. The final product aims to be both accurate and imaginative, balancing historical integrity with creative storytelling. Through this approach, the project seeks to demonstrate the value of fiction as a method of historical interpretation and public education, while offering a compelling narrative that brings Viking history to life.

Justin Irvin



MAJOR: BS BIOLOGY - CONCENTRATION IN MOLECULAR CELL PHYSIOLOGY

MAJOR: CHEMISTRY

HOMETOWN: Oakhurst, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Founder and president of spikeball club
- President of club basketball and surgical club
- Dean's list every semester
- Biology Academic Achievement Award by receiving a perfect 4.0 GPA
- Alpha Epsilon Delta Honors Society
- Medical assistant, shadowed 8 physicians
- Volunteered at Habitat for Humanity

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

To expand my educational horizon, and to make connections with like-minded individuals.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

The 5am morning walk my freshman year. It was a great introduction to Monmouth, beautiful site at the beach, and made some good friends.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

Scribing in the hospital or becoming a state trooper during my gap year, then attending medical school.

THESIS: Cytotoxicity of Rhenium (I) Tricarbonyl Complexes.

As 21st century media has been increasing in abundance in users, video games have been an upcoming and prominent resource for some speech-language pathologists to incorporate in their speech-language therapy. Through examining previously published works of literature and collecting real life data from speech-language pathologists, this presentation will analyze the usage and effectiveness of video games in speech-language therapy. It is hypothesized that when speech-language pathologists incorporate video games into their therapy sessions for some children, those children might become more engaged during that play, promoting a greater therapeutic outcome.

This presentation will discuss the various viewpoints from speech-language pathologists who include or do not include video games in their therapeutic work with their clients. The major conclusion expected to find through real-life data is to show how video games can be an important therapeutic tool in speech-language therapy for some clients, examining the impacts it can have on different speech-language disorders given the preexisting interventions.

Remington Johnson



MAJOR: BS BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION –
CONCENTRATION IN FINANCE AND REAL ESTATE

THESIS: A Composite Risk Framework for Sovereign Debt Distress in the World's Largest Economies

This research examines which economic, financial, and institutional variables are most statistically correlated with sovereign debt crises, focusing on how these relationships vary across the 30 largest global economies. As sovereign debt levels rise and financial conditions tighten, identifying early warning indicators of debt distress has become increasingly important for policymakers and investors. Using a panel dataset from 1980 to 2023, the study analyzes variables such as foreign exchange rate volatility, long-term bond yields, and capital market performance. Institutional risk is incorporated using the IMF-World Bank Debt Sustainability Framework (DSF). The methodology centers on constructing a sovereign risk score through a weighted equation that combines these indicators into a single, interpretable metric. The score is validated against historical sovereign debt events to identify consistent risk patterns across countries and over time. Findings reveal important differences between emerging and developed economies, particularly regarding currency mismatches and reliance on external borrowing. This study provides a practical and transparent framework for quantifying sovereign debt risk. The resulting risk score offers a simplified tool to support early warning assessments and enhance comparative debt sustainability analysis for use in research, investment decision-making, and policy evaluation.

Taylor Johnson-Bradley



MAJOR: BA SOCIOLOGY

MINOR: SOCIAL JUSTICE

HOMETOWN: Bordentown, NY

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- President of the Sociology club
- Recipient of Outstanding Club & Organization Service
- Recipient of Outstanding Academic Achievement in Sociology

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

To challenge myself and be the best I could be academically.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

Thesis presentation day.

THESIS: The Playbook of Perception: Race, Colorism, and Discourse of NFL Quarterbacks on Social Media

This study examines how race and skin tone shape fan perceptions of NFL quarterbacks on social media. Specifically, it asks: How do perceptions of fans of NFL quarterbacks differ by race and skin tone on social media and why? While previous research has analyzed racial bias in sports media, this project specifically focuses on user-generated content, and analyzing over 600 Youtube comments to discover patterns in how Black, White, and Mixed/Light-skinned quarterbacks are discussed. The study is grounded in Critical Race Theory and the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, and attention to how racial narratives and colorism continue in digital fan spaces. Findings show that Black and Mixed-race quarterbacks were more likely to receive critical or dismissive comments, especially around ability and athleticism, while White quarterbacks were more frequently praised. Neutral comments were consistent across groups, and expected differences in football IQ and leadership did not appear. The study reveals how fans can reproduce racial narratives in subtle ways online.

Alexander L. Kalina



MAJOR: BS BIOLOGY - CONCENTRATION IN MOLECULAR CELL PHYSIOLOGY

MINOR: STATISTICS

HOMETOWN: Toms River, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- 1st place at Monmouth University's HawkTank
- 1st place at UPitch competition
- 2nd place at Novo Nordisk's Innovation in Action Case Competition, completion of the NSF I-Corps Propelus program (completing 22 customer interviews for customer discovery)
- Presented research findings in Dallas and Chicago for Honors Conference and five other research conferences throughout New Jersey
- Received the Biology Research Award + Student Work Recognition Award

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School to be part of a tight-knit community at Monmouth. Through the school I have made countless friends and memories that I will carry beyond my time at Monmouth. Additionally, I joined the Honors School to elevate the academic rigor and learn more about biology.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

Going to the Cowboys Red River Dance Hall in Dallas Texas. It was right after we presented our research at the Honors Conference. We had a lot of fun and it's a memory I definitely won't forget.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I'll be working at Johnson & Johnson as a global trial associate. It's a 1-year leadership development program after which I will go into a managerial focused position. The role is focused around clinical trials.

THESIS: Investigating the Influence of Physician Engagement on Patient Recruitment in Clinical Trials

Clinical trials are a fundamental stepping-stone in biomedical research and innovation, serving as the cornerstone where breakthrough medications are assessed and brought to patients. They are essential in improving patient outcomes and addressing incurable diseases. However, burdens on clinical trials, most notably patient recruitment, prevent trials from reaching their maximal potential in terms of speed and efficiency. Approximately 80% of all clinical trials are delayed due to constraints on patient recruitment; and the consequences of such delays are deferred treatment approvals, burdens on patients and families, and pharmaceutical sponsors facing substantial losses potentially totaling millions in infrastructure and lost revenue.

This research identifies physician engagement within clinical research as the pain-point holding patients from enrolling in clinical trials. This paper investigates physician engagement's role in patient recruitment by reviewing 25-peer reviewed articles, government reports, and industry publications; and 20+ interviews from industry professionals (pharmaceutical companies and contract research organizations). The analysis finds key constraints such burden of time, paperwork, lack of experience, and lack of education. The study also highlights key solutions such as health care provider training programs and support services.

Zoe Kristina Lohne



MAJOR: BS HOMELAND SECURITY

THESIS: Parental Knowledge of Location-Sharing on Social Media Apps

This research study examines parental understanding of location-sharing on social media and its implications for youth safety and privacy. The purpose of this study is to address the growing concern of parents being unaware of the risks posed by location-sharing, more specifically those on social media applications like Snapchat and Instagram. This leaves youth vulnerable to digital and cyber threats. Preliminary findings through an extensive literature review show there is a significant knowledge gap among parents, specifically with parents being unaware of how location-sharing features work and the extent to which their children use those features. This study concludes that targeted education through an educational presentation and a take-home pamphlet are needed to help parents and guardians better understand and manage locationsharing risks.

Emily Loscialpo



MAJOR: BA SPANISH - CONCENTRATION IN COMMUNICATION/MSP

HOMETOWN: Glastonbury, CT

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Vice President of Catholic Campus Ministry
- Host of Nuestros Sonidos Latinos radio show on WMCX

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I wanted an opportunity to dive deeper into topics within my field of study and complete a capstone project I was very proud of.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

The opportunity to organize a performance of my capstone musical composition, and get such support from faculty for my project.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I will be working as a Communications Coordinator at the Lobular Breast Cancer Alliance.

THESIS: Misa Spanglish: Music & Worship Beyond Borders

Misa Spanglish utilizes sources in the fields of translation, bilingualism, Catholic legacy, and cultural worship trends to compose a musical setting of the Catholic Mass text that blends the Spanish and English translations of the texts. This work unites cultures and linguistic traditions in terms of its text, its musical style, and its theoretical impact on the communities it can be performed in. By first understanding prior cultural works and the text in each language, I was able to combine these sources and utilize knowledge of music theory to compose a bilingual setting of the Mass text to be performed by a small musical ensemble. Many parishes in the United States with Hispanic populations divide their Mass times into Spanish and English, causing a separation among not only parishioners of different cultural backgrounds, but among families of multigenerational immigrants as well, given differences in Spanish and English fluency between generations. By utilizing this Spanglish composition, communities can come together without borders, and unite under the common desire to worship.

Julia R. Macey



MAJORS: BA PSYCHOLOGY & BA SOCIOLOGY

HOMETOWN: Dallas, PA

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Secretary (2022-2023), VP (2023-2024) and President (2024-2025) of 5678 Dance Club
- Resident Assistant in Elmwood Hall and Beechwood Hall
- Peer-Assisted Learning Leader for PY-311: Behavioral Statistics & Lab
- Completion of a Psychology research thesis in addition to Honors thesis (titled "'To Know and Be Known' - Feeling Known as a Bisexual")
- Presentations at MU Student Scholarship Week (2024), the Psychology Department's Biannual Undergraduate Research Conference (2023, 2024), Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association (2024, 2025), Annual Contemporary Relationships Conference in Cincinnati (2024)

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School to be challenged as a student at Monmouth, and to receive the educational opportunities I knew I needed to prepare me for my next steps in my career.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My fondest memory of being a part of the Honors School was the day I presented my thesis. I was extremely proud to reach the final step in the thesis process and share my research findings at the conference. I had so many friends, loved ones, and teachers/mentors from Monmouth come to support me. It meant so much to me to have them there to see me present the culmination of my hard work. I will always remember my Honors thesis day!

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

Starting in the fall, I am attending the Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) program at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM), where I will study to become a clinical psychologist. I hope to specialize in neuropsychology.

THESIS: The Critique of Capitalism Through Social Movements: A Critical Theory Comparative Analysis

The current project used a comparative case study design to analyze three social movements - Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and Starbucks Workers United - for a critique of capitalism. This work aimed to help understand how a critique of capitalism impacts different movements' framing, tactics, and outcomes. For each case, movement organizations' website contents were chosen as the data sources to be analyzed. A content analysis method was utilized, with grounded theory technique guiding the approach to create codes based on what the data revealed. Major findings showed that the movements had varying degrees of anti-capitalist framing, organization, and involvement with their target entities, which had unique impacts on their outcomes. For more explicitly anti-capitalist movement framing, more formal organizational tactics and demands with more involvement with the movement's target entity seemed to produce better outcomes for the movement. Similarly, for more implicitly anti-capitalist movement framing, structured tactics and demands utilizing outside influence to affect the movement's target entity produced favorable outcomes. The study results suggest that social movements with anti-capitalist ideologies benefit from structure, formality, and collaboration with their target entity. Overall, this research adds to the limited sociological research comparing social movements with respect to capitalist ideologies.

Jacqueline Mazza



MAJOR: BSW

HOMETOWN: Seaside Heights, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Marine Corps Scholarship Recipient
- Featured in the "Portraits of the Jersey Shore" for immigration advocacy and social work
- I am a proud First to Fly Hawk!

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I wanted to challenge my own willpower to see myself through an academic challenge.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

The amount of support that I have received while in the Honors School is by far my fondest memory. Finally presenting my thesis after countless hours of academic stress was the most fulfilling moment in my education thus far.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I will be attending Monmouth School of Social Work to get my Masters degree in Global and Community Practice! I intend to further my work in immigration policy and advocacy.

THESIS: Jealousy in the Feed: Love & Comparison in an Online World

The objective of this study is to deepen existing understandings regarding social media influence on romantic relationships and identify where the line is drawn between what is considered acceptable versus inappropriate when it comes to romantic partners liking or interacting with posts, ranging from tame to racy or suggestive. Grounded in an extensive literature review, the research builds upon pre-existing findings related to the evolving nature of modern dating and the psychological effects that digital platforms have on self-esteem and relationship satisfaction. Data was collected through an IRB-approved Qualtrics survey administered to participants aged 18-35. The survey incorporated likert-scale questions and AI-generated images of realistic human beings to simulate typical social media scenarios between romantic partners. Quantitative analysis using both descriptive statistics and correlation tests revealed significant correlations between increased social media exposure and decreased self-worth in romantic relationships, most particularly when viewing content involving what the user deems to be attractive third parties with over half of participants had experienced jealousy due to a partner's social media activity. These findings emphasize the need to continue to gain understanding of the growing role that social media plays in shaping emotional regulation and boundaries within romantic relationships.

Bianca Morrongiello



MAJOR: BS HEALTH STUDIES/HEALTH SCIENCE CLUSTER

HOMETOWN: Freehold, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Vice President of Academic Affairs of Delta Phi Epsilon
- Rho Lambda Honor Society
- Gamma Sigma Alpha National Honor Society

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School because I wanted to challenge myself academically and be part of a community of motivated, like-minded peers. I'm passionate about learning and saw the Honors School as an opportunity to go deeper into subjects I care about through smaller classes, engaging discussions, and meaningful research.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

One of my fondest memories of the Honors School was the incredible opportunity to present my honors thesis. After months of rigorous research, writing, and revision, it was incredibly rewarding to see all my hard work come to life in front of peers, faculty, and mentors. I had poured so much time, energy, and passion into this project, and presenting it felt like a culmination of not just academic effort, but personal growth as well. Standing up there and sharing my findings with an engaged audience reminded me why I joined the Honors School in the first place—to challenge myself, to dive deeply into topics that matter to me, and to grow as both a scholar and a communicator.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I will be attending Physician Assistant school here at Monmouth University for the next three years. Before attending graduate school in the fall, I will continue working as a medical assistant in a Dermatology office, Dermatology and Laser Center in Eatontown.

THESIS: Ethical Reasoning in Plastic Surgery

Plastic surgery has become a popular specialty within the medical community and has been growing as a social trend due to the presence of social media and reality TV. As a result, the quality of care of physicians is important to examine because patients can lose sight of appropriate vs. inappropriate procedures due to confounding outside influences. Various advertisements and/or marketing techniques that may result in undue influence towards procedures that may not be ethically sound is an ongoing problem. In addition, it is important to examine not only the consent process with plastics patients, but also the medical training necessary to enter this field with appropriate moral and ethical principles. The Belmont report is imperative to not only understand and implement, but there is also a need to ensure these ethical principles are taught at all levels of medical school, as well as enforced once medical professionals begin practicing.

Madison Patterson



MAJOR: BS BIOLOGY

HOMETOWN: Brick, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Completed an undergraduate research thesis and presented at multiple conferences including MU Student Scholarship Week
- Former eboard member for the MU Outdoors Club

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I feel that the Honors School is a great way to further engage in my academic (and scientific) career. The Honors School provides great opportunities to engage in research and present at conferences.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

Being able to take part in research for my thesis.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I'm currently working as a field technician for the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey.

THESIS: Evaluating Predation Risk of Eastern Box Turtles (*Terrapene carolina carolina*) in a Suburban Island in Monmouth County, New Jersey

Globally, reptile populations are on a staggering decline, and turtles are especially at risk, with one of the leading causes being habitat loss. Eastern Box Turtles (EBT) are terrestrial turtles that are vulnerable across their range, and a species of special concern in New Jersey. One factor affecting box turtle populations aside from habitat loss are predators impacting nest success by consuming box turtle eggs and hatchlings. It is known that there may be an increased abundance of opportunistic, generalist mammalian predators in urban environments. However, there is little research on how an influx of urban-adapted mesopredators may affect nesting success of box turtles found in habitats facing urban encroachment. In this study, I deployed motion and heat activated camera traps to understand the mammalian mesopredator community in a local conservation area with a known EBT population surrounded by human development. I then created artificial EBT nests adjacent to camera traps to observe the predation rate of box turtle eggs in this park, and which predator species were found to depredate them. I found a 91% depredation rate of artificial nests. This information can be used to inform management decisions to protect an already sensitive population of a vulnerable species.

Madison M. Pellerito



MAJOR: BS CHEMISTRY/BIOCHEMISTRY TRACK

HOMETOWN: Point Pleasant Beach, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Presenting my biochemistry research at Monmouth and several regional conferences
- Presenting my Honors School thesis
- Peer mentoring for the School of Science
- Lab assistant and stockroom assistant for the Chemistry Department of the School of Science

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School to challenge my academics, be given the opportunity to write a thesis in my undergraduate, and for the additional benefits of the Honors housing in my first year.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My fondest memory of the Honors School was the sunrise walk we did during the orientation week of my first year at Monmouth. I went on that walk with two of my roommates from Beechwood, who I had just met and who were also Honors School Students. This event started our friendship and they have become two of my closest friends.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

Attending graduate school at Lehigh University to pursue my PhD in chemistry.

THESIS: The Catalytic Chemistry of the I-R3 DNA Enzyme through Ion-Promoted Cleavage

Synthetic DNA enzymes cleave the phosphodiester bonds found in DNA acting as a sort of DNA scissor. In the I-R3 DNA enzyme, the catalytic core forms an asymmetrical loop when annealed to its DNA substrate. When this structure is in the presence of Zn^{2+} under neutral pH, the substrate strand will be cleaved, resulting in two products.

This project is designed to study the cleavage behaviors of the I-R3 DNA enzyme through substituting different metal ions for zinc based on their similarities to the atomic radii size of zinc, providing information on the DNA-cleaving DNA enzymes (DCDEs) catalytic function and potential biological applications in targeting single-stranded viral DNAs. The current hypothesis is that metal ions of similar atomic radii size to zinc may promote the cleavage activity of the DCDEs.

Through urea-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis, the cleavage activity of the DCDE was optimized at 75.2% using 100 mM NaCl with 10 mM ZnCl_2 . Using these conditions in fluorescence spectroscopy, the average melting point of the DCDE complex was $84 \pm 3^\circ\text{C}$. More testing is required to confirm these results, along with ensuring the parameters of the fluorescence kinetic assay are optimal before testing the substituted metal ions in future research.

Lincoln Pereira



MAJOR: BA HISTORY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

HOMETOWN: Springfield, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Attended March Madness Spring 2023 with the Pep Band
- Received the Excellence in Secondary Education Award and the Susan Douglass Future Educator Award from the School of Education and Phi Alpha Theta, National History Honors Society, respectively

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I wanted to keep myself educationally challenged when attending college, and I wanted the opportunity to complete a capstone project of my choice.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

I loved the sunrise walks at the beginning of each school year!

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I plan to work as a high school history teacher and eventually finish my Master's in History from Monmouth!

THESIS: "Justice Through Science": Teaching Antifascism and Queer Acceptance Through Weimar

This project was created to provide a framework for teachers looking to include queer historical figures in their lessons, using Magnus Hirschfeld and his Institute of Sexual Science as an example/starting point. This project aims to expand the breadth of Holocaust history to include Hirschfeld, a prominent Weimar figure whose research was among the first institutions targeted by Nazi censorship during the onset of the Third Reich. It also seeks to expand on student understanding of the telltale signs of fascism, focusing on anti-intellectualism and the scapegoating of minorities primarily. The research was completed during Fall 2023 and Spring of 2024 to construct my history senior seminar paper on Hirschfeld's work. The research paper was then synthesized into an Inquiry Design Model (IDM) and three sample lesson plans that teachers may use, in part or in full, in European history and genocide studies courses. All of the work has been compiled onto a website for public use. I hope to present my work at future education conferences for the expansion of queer theory in high school and higher educational spaces.

Angelo Augusto Prado



MAJOR: BS BIOLOGY - CONCENTRATION IN
MOLECULAR CELL PHYSIOLOGY

MINORS: SPANISH & ECONOMICS

HOMETOWN: Tinton Falls, NJ

**NOTABLE ACTIVITIES &
ACHIEVEMENTS:**

- Vice President of Cru
- Conducted research since freshman year with Dr. Mack and Dr. Lobo

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined because I like to challenge myself and want to be the best student I can be.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

The sunrise walks.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

Medical school.

THESIS: Good Choices Capstone Project

In recent years, the United States has seen a significant rise in its international student population, highlighting the importance of providing essential resources to support their academic success. This capstone project, titled Good Choices, explores the benefits of mentorship for international students in both academic and socioemotional contexts, through the lens of growth and fixed mindset theories.

The primary goal of the study was to help international students better understand and navigate the U.S. educational system by implementing a website designed to promote growth mindsets, discourage fixed mindsets, and reduce acculturative stress. The created website serves as a platform to offer targeted resources and support. Additionally, the research examined whether mentorship-based programs are effective in alleviating the acculturative stress often experienced when adapting to a new cultural environment.

Previous studies have highlighted the role of mentorship in assisting international students with cultural adjustment, identifying effective mentorship strategies and their positive impact on mental health. Research has also shown that fostering a growth mindset can significantly improve students' academic performance and overall well-being.

Gianna Rao



MAJOR: BS SOFTWARE ENGINEERING

HOMETOWN: Staten Island, NY

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Honors Capstone and involvement in ParkShark project as my senior practicum

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I wanted to push myself to achieve my goals and complete an honors capstone.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

Presenting my honors capstone is my fondest memory.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

Looking to work in a tech company.

THESIS: Setify: An online catalog of concert setlists, including opening and headlining acts, and related information about the songs

This study looked at the benefits of an online catalog of music artists' concert setlists, opening or headlining acts, and related information about the songs in concerts. Prior to this project, there was no online system that allowed concert setlists to be categorized into playlists that include the opening acts' and headliners' setlists and a way to listen to the songs and view the lyrics. This project was needed to allow fans to feel connected to artists' tours, even if they are not able to attend the concert, and to help fans discover new artists through the inclusion of the opening acts' setlists. The methodology was to create an online repository and catalog service that includes all of these features. Important factors in creating this online repository and catalog service were personalization in creating and viewing the playlists, best practices of software design, providing a way to listen to the songs, and providing a way to view the lyrics of the songs. Using tools such as Xcode, Swift language, MongoDB database, Node.js Express, and Postman for testing, an iOS application called Setify was created.

Meghan Reilly



MAJOR: BA ENGLISH

MINOR: JOURNALISM

HOMETOWN: West Orange, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Public Relations Director of Sigma Tau Delta
- Writing Assistant
- Staff Writer for *The Outlook*
- Hawk Talk presenter Spring 2024
- Undergraduate Library Research Thesis Winner

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School to be surrounded by like-minded individuals and be in an on-campus community.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My fondest memory is getting the chance to be peer mentors with my friends, Dee and Cat. I was able to meet both of them during our Honors Orientation and it was amazing to work together and give new students a similar experience.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

Attending graduate school at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (Masters in English, Rhetoric and Composition).

THESIS: Writing Oneself into Existence: Binary Dilemmas and Hybridity in Judith Ortiz Cofer's *Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood*

This paper provides a content-based literary analysis of Judith Ortiz Cofer's coming-of-age book *Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood*. The book recounts her adolescence in Paterson, New Jersey, and Hormigueros, Puerto Rico. The book engages readers in meaningful ambiguities of postcolonial concepts of subaltern, metropole, and hybrid borderland. These ambiguities are expressed partly through language conventions of literary genres, storytelling media, and written languages. For example, the book uses typographical and rhetorical strategies to normalize Spanish-only words for English-only readers. Such ambiguities are also expressed through the intersection of gender, class, and ethnicity. Through such language conventions and intersectionality, the book expresses binary either/or alternatives, subaltern resistance or subaltern conformity, but deconstructs these binaries through both/and borderland hybridizations that mutually integrate both alternatives into coherent wholes. The thesis presents a methodology for reading the entire book but applies that methodology to the literary scope of "Casa," the book's first frame narrative.

Emma Grace Rizzuto



MAJOR: BA PSYCHOLOGY

MINORS: SPANISH & COMMUNICATIONS SCIENCES
AND DISORDERS

HOMETOWN: Holmdel, NJ

**NOTABLE ACTIVITIES &
ACHIEVEMENTS:**

- Completion of two theses (Honors and Psychology Major)
- Active member of the Meaningful Digital Experiences Research Lab
- Presenter at annual NJSHA Conventions and Scholarship Week
- Executive board member of NSSLHA, Alpha Xi Delta, and Psi Chi

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School to enhance my undergraduate experience and pursue my passions outside of traditional coursework.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My fondest memory of the Honors School is presenting my thesis at the Research Conference in Spring 2024. It was so rewarding to finally see all of my hard work pay off.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I will be attending Monmouth University's graduate program in Speech-Language Pathology.

THESIS: Using Video Games in Stuttering Therapy: Perceptions of Practicing Speech-Language Pathologists

Stuttering is a communication difficulty characterized by disfluencies in the process of speech production. Although it is a physical communication issue, individuals who stutter also experience a multitude of social and emotional effects, including anxiety and feelings of isolation. Video games are a form of interactive digital media that have become increasingly popular in today's age. Furthermore, games for health are specifically designed for use in educational and therapeutic settings. When clients see themselves in a video game character, it provides a sense of comfort and inspiration. While playing, individuals may be able to relate to the characters and apply their own experiences to those within the game. Through this study, we provided practicing speech-language pathologists with the opportunity to play a video game specifically designed for use with clients in speech therapy: Jump Rogi, developed by Dr. Raj. Participants were then surveyed about the game's effectiveness for their clients who stutter. Armed with the knowledge of how Jump Rogi, and games for health in general, can be incorporated into a therapeutic setting, these clinicians can now connect with a broader range of individuals and better serve the emotional needs of their clients who stutter.

Briana Juliet Rutter



MAJOR: BS BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION -
CONCENTRATION IN FINANCE

MINOR: COMMUNICATION

HOMETOWN: Sayreville, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Alpha Xi Delta Sorority- Finance and Operations Vice President (2023)
- Rho Lambda Panhellenic Leadership & Honors Society

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I wanted to have a more challenging curriculum, and to engage in a research project.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My presentation to the Honors School.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

Looking for full-time work in the beauty/cosmetics industry.

THESIS: Transportation Challenges for Low-Income Individuals in the New York City Metro Area

This research investigates the impact of transportation costs, reliability, and accessibility for low-income individuals in the New York City Metro Area. It examines how socioeconomic, geographic, and financial factors affect transportation options and affordability in this area by looking at the data and publications, and by reviewing the literature on the topic. The importance of the work is that it is strongly connected to economic opportunity, fairness in society, and overall well being of low-income individuals. The results indicate that lower-income individuals are less likely to own vehicles, go in and out of car ownership more frequently, more likely to use public transportation than other income level earners, and had less transportation options and mobility. The suggested recommendations for policymakers in the New York City Metro Area include expanding eligibility for fare programs, improving bus and subway accessibility, and improving digital transit accessibility.

Catherine Senatore



MAJOR: BS BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION -
CONCENTRATION IN MARKETING

MINOR: SPORTS COMMUNICATION

HOMETOWN: Brewster, NY

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Completing my thesis
- Holding an on-campus job for four years
- Gaining unimaginable real world experience

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

To continue to surround myself with other passionate students and form a support system at a new place.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

That feeling of relief after I presented my thesis and knew that I did it and had fun while doing it.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

Right now I am unsure. I have applied to graduate school here at Monmouth and I might be staying down in the area to work. Everything is still very up in the air.

THESIS: Social Media Marketing an Analysis of The New York Yankees

Most people are unaware of how much time and effort is put into marketing and production within the sports industry especially in the growing world of social media. The purpose of my project is to educate people on the importance of social media marketing, and the impact it has on the team, The New York Yankees. By comparing five Instagram posts from the 2023 Yankees losing season to five posts promoting the upcoming 2024 Yankees season I am able to show how impactful social media marketing is. Explaining the reason behind the posts shared, players highlighted, and how fan comments impact marketing will help people gain knowledge on the topic. Findings determine which tactics are beneficial and can generate the best fan reactions. Presenting the different media examples through a flier allows for a better understanding of why the marketing tactics are effective.

Samantha Tolentino



MAJOR: BS HEALTH STUDIES/HEALTH SCIENCE CLUSTER

MINOR: COMMUNICATION SCIENCES & DISORDERS

HOMETOWN: Woodbridge, NJ

NOTABLE ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Member of Monmouth University chapter at NSSLHA
- Dean's List
- Honors School

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School to ensure I can reach my highest potential in college because of its many resources and support from their staff. I am grateful to have been a part of it and believe their opportunities helped me become the student I am today.

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

My fondest memory of the Honors School was attending one of their first events in my freshman year. It was held on the Guggenheim Library lawn with free food and games. I got to spend time with my friends and meet new colleagues from the Honors School. It was a great way to feel welcome at Monmouth University.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

After graduation, I will be attending graduate school in Monmouth University's Speech-Language Pathology program to become a children's speech therapist.

THESIS: The Effect of Screen Time on Speech and Language Development in Toddlers

Screen time has increased over the most recent years, and there is concern about how much is too much, especially for toddlers. Screen time is defined as any exposure to electronic media including television, videos, video games, and personal devices. A notable population focused on in current research is children under three years old. The increase of screen time, especially during the COVID-19 lockdown, has raised concern about the harmful effects of screen use on early development. This literature review analyzes articles that examine the relationship between screen time and speech and language development in toddlers. An informational pamphlet and interactive website on how parents/caregivers can prevent the negative effects of screen time for their children were created based on this information. The effect of screen time can be positive or negative. It depends on the quality of the screen content, such as the video characteristics and educational quality. It also depends on the involvement of their caregivers who play a significant part, such as in managing the child's screen time, managing their own screen time, and prioritizing parent-child interactions. Lastly, the effects of screen exposure depend on the amount of screen time consumed and the use of screen-free time.

Brooke Van de Sande



MAJOR: BS MARINE AND ENVIRONMENTAL BIOLOGY
AND POLICY

THESIS: Identifying Relationships Between Visual Sightings and eDNA Detections of Humpback Whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) Along the Coast of New Jersey

Over the past decade, there has been an increase in marine mammal visual sightings along the coast of New Jersey. Specifically, juvenile humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) are frequently observed during the summer months, coinciding with their feeding season. The lack of sufficient research in this region, paired with increases in local mortality events, amplifies the need for effective management of cetaceans through continuous monitoring of habitat use and migration patterns. Environmental DNA (eDNA) analysis is an emerging tool that has successfully detected whales and other marine mammals over large spatial and temporal scales. We compared detections of humpback whales by eDNA metabarcoding to confirmed visual sightings. Environmental data such as whale behavior, water temperature, and prey presence were recorded for each sample. The proportions of eDNA detections displayed a non-significant difference between sighting and non-sighting samples for both humpback whales and bottlenose dolphins. Although a statistical difference was not found within the study, the future development of non-extractive techniques for monitoring whales may improve monitoring capacity and reduce observation biases when paired with visual surveys. The information gained from this study will add to local ongoing monitoring research that aims for better protection and conservation of these local marine mammals.

Lola Weis



MAJOR: BS BIOLOGY - CONCENTRATION IN
MOLECULAR CELL PHYSIOLOGY

MINOR: STATISTICS

HOMETOWN: Toms River, NJ

**NOTABLE ACTIVITIES &
ACHIEVEMENTS:**

- Women's rowing

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE HONORS SCHOOL?

I joined the Honors School to challenge myself academically!

FONDEST HONORS SCHOOL MEMORY:

I loved the sunrise walk my freshman year!

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I will be going to work at Walt Disney World doing the Disney College Program!

THESIS: The Evolution of Statistics and Technology in Biological Research

As biological research has become more reliant on data, the role that statistics and advanced technology play has increased significantly from the past, changing the way that research is done and interpreted. Focusing on the integration of these tools in biological research, this project examines the influence of these tools over time. Using a literature-based methodology, this study analyzes both past and present research findings, focusing on trends in data collection, the use of programming tools, and the implementation of artificial intelligence in research. The data shows a shift from only manually calculated experiments to more current large-scale studies that use advanced computational methods for large amounts of data. The increase in the use of technology has allowed for questions to be answered that were not possible in the past. This has also introduced ethical challenges related to data privacy and usage. Overall, this project highlights the importance of collaboration between math, computer science, and biological sciences in data interpretation and notes the importance of responsible integration of technology in advancing biological research.

The Dean would like to give a special thank you
to the Honors Council for their dedication and
service to the Honors School.



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