



## STUDENT PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

**Student: Callie Adams**

Faculty: Panteha Sanati

Division of Humanities and Fine Arts

Overconsumption in America: Fast Fashion

From three story retail stores, to a seemingly infinite number of products online stores offer, to the endless advertisements presented to consumers daily, it can become difficult to avoid a lifestyle of over consumption. American consumers are usually well aware that their products are not made in America, but all consumers will be shocked at the devastating effects the fashion industry has on societies, economies, and the environment. These devastating effects are not only found in developing countries where these products are being outsourced, but developed nations also. The fashion industry is the second most polluting industry in the world, just behind the oil industry. Americans consume the largest amount of textiles in the western world, while they are also responsible for the 3.8 billion pounds of textile waste which is sent to landfills annually. Over the last decade American textile consumption has nearly tripled, but each item is kept half as long. In order to feed the high demand of textiles the fashion industry faces, the industry outsources to developing nations in which laborers, primarily mostly women, do not receive a living wage, and are forced to work in sweatshop conditions. Developing nations are systematically set up to be laborers and have little to no opportunities to move up in their society, while developed country consumers are systematically set up to be dependent on materialistic ideals. Realizing the exploitation of laborers, and the harm to the environment, it is now consumers who must question exactly where their products are coming from, what is responsible consumption, and how industries are held responsible.

**Student: Damila Assuncao**

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Reusable Design: From Waste to New Value Products

Even though the U.S. has introduced many methods to reduce waste, the country has continued to produce colossal amounts of trash every year. Currently, waste has been a tremendous problem



to the world which impairs our environment's health. The system of excessive consumption and disposal result in the waste of precious resources. Most of the material is being discarded by homes, businesses, and institutions such as universities and libraries. These materials are barely used, much of the waste is still in good condition, and typically thrown out after a new product is purchased. The United States discards over 258 million tons of materials every year. According to numerous studies, Americans generate about seven pounds of waste per person every day, which is equivalent to the height of the Tower of Pisa (192 feet). Besides the many methods which are introduced to separate collection and disposal of waste, the landfills continue to be the favored disposal method in the U.S. and widely accepted due to their economic advantages. The government should enact policies and programs which incentivize people to consume less, reuse, and recycle. Instead of government offers, schools should promote students to develop creative methods to create art from waste and design beautiful objects. Also, the schools should give students a small prize for the best work or even an opportunity to present internationally. Once people become more aware of all the adverse effects of waste, throwaway culture can diminish, and the environment can be restored. Once the idea of creating art from trash is widely accepted, we can improve the sustainability of our planet.

**Student: Geaonny Calderon-Hampton**

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Maternal Mortality

This paper explores United States' horrific increase in maternal mortality rates. Between the years 2000 and 2016, about 50,000 American women experienced life-threatening injuries, and another 700 to 900 died as a result of birth complications. Immediate causes for high maternal mortality rates are high blood pressure, stroke, bleeding, heart attack, and kidney failure. Other factors that can affect maternal mortality rates are hospitals' cursory deliveries, patients' state of health, and the mothers' age. Women should consider these factors when giving birth in a hospital or at home. A hospital birth can be beneficial to the birthing process because of the necessary technology in case the mother or infant needs immediate care. Women who give birth in hospitals obtain access to pain relief medications, but these medications can also have negative effects on the newborn. The pain relief medication, Epidural, can cause the new mothers to have no control over the birthing process. Hospitals use unnecessary interventions such as, Pitocin that speeds up the



process. Medication like Pitocin and Epidural rush the procedure but can reduce the baby's oxygen levels, which can lead to emergency c-sections. Unlike hospital births, home births give women more control over the birthing process, but there is limited access to medical attention. A solution to lowering the maternal mortality rates will be to track blood pressure, weigh blood loss, blood transfusions availability, support vaginal births, and record complications and death rates.

**Student: Kevin DeNicola**

Faculty: Kathleen Pahl

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Self-inflicted Damnation: Depictions of Free Will in Renaissance Tragedies

The concepts of free will and man's struggle with hubris are clearly expressed in Renaissance literature. This paper highlights the themes of freedom and consequences in the Renaissance works *Paradise Lost*, *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, and *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*. John Milton's *Paradise Lost* uses Satan's rebellion against heaven and the fall of man to emphasize how a love of freedom for its own sake can corrupt. In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, lack of willpower of the titular character results in grave consequences for himself and those around him. In Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, Faustus embodies both an excess of ambition and little motivation for meaningful action. The worship of his own potential and inability to admit that he has sinned results in his doom. Conclusively, this paper will reflect on the influence of the Renaissance on modern works by examining the same theme in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, a play from the perspective of minor characters in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In all these works, the free choice between a righteous life and a self-centered one is presented. It is the pride and willful ignorance of the main characters that lead to their damnation.

**Student: Kevin DeNicola**

Faculty: Panteha Sanati

Division of Humanities and Fine Arts

The Ethics of Openness in Computer Information Security

Transparency in computer information security is essential for both practical and ethical reasons. However, there is some disagreement on the amount of transparency that should be present. This paper details two questions regarding transparency in computer security: how open should software vendors be with their users about security flaws and breaches, and when (if ever) it is



appropriate for an exploit to not be reported when discovered. The first issue is concerned with the responsibility of those producing software to their users, be they paying customers or otherwise. In contrast, the second issue regards itself with the responsibilities of cybersecurity experts to report their findings to software vendors, and if it is ever appropriate for a person or organization (such as a government) to sell the exploit or keep it for future use. By researching the opinions of industry experts and studying recent security breaches, this paper will address the advantages and disadvantages of transparent practices and open communication of security flaws and breaches between the parties involved. This includes the effects of releasing a program's source code on security, whether or not a security flaw should be announced by a vendor when it is discovered, if the sale of exploit to third parties is ever ethical, and if withholding exploits from vendors for the sake of national security is ethical.

**Hannah Gernhardt**

Faculty: Panteha Sanati

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Aquaculture: When Does it Help and When Does it Hurt?

The oceans are the world's biggest and most crucial resource with an estimated value of at least \$24 trillion. The oceans are also the most at risk parts of our world with 61% of the world fish stocks fully fished and 29% already overfished. As the ocean has been less able to provide the food we desire, many ways of providing the same food source have been created such as aquaculture or fish farming. By raising the seafood ourselves, we almost eliminate the need to take critical species from the natural environment and can take as much as we need without depleting the natural stock. However, not all aquaculture practices are beneficial to our environment or society. Many industries still exploit the environment or human labor when farming their fish in order to make a bigger profit. These practices still damage the environment and need to be fixed and brought to the public eye in order to mitigate future damage to the environment.



**Student: Yvonne Gorski**

Faculty: Panteha Sanati

Division of Humanities and Fine Art

Heteronormativity: An Invisible Toxin in Society

Considering that 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots that sparked the gay rights movement and that those in the LGBTQ community still face inequalities and injustices today, this paper explores the presence of heteronormativity and its harmful effects. Through an examination of uncommonly known history and database articles, this paper analyzes the past and current oppression of the LGBTQ community. Heteronormativity is the socially ingrained idea that defines heterosexuality as the default sexual orientation and cisgender as the default gender identity. This ingrained idea is so prevalent in society that most are blind to its existence. The idea of cisgender and heterosexuality being the “norm” has existed throughout history thus resulting in the oppression of those in the LGBTQ community. In today’s society, the opposition believes that since same-sex marriage is legal, equal rights have been adequately met, but the LGBTQ community still lacks necessary protections under federal law. The existence of No Promo Homo laws and the availability of conversion therapy for minors proves that there is still a strong presence of homophobia in the United States. Heteronormativity also continues to dominate society’s media. From advertisements to scripted television shows, heterosexual couples continue to be the predominate representation. Within mainstream media, LGBTQ representations have increased in recent years, but children’s shows still have inadequate portrayals. This paper discusses the importance of LGBTQ characters in children’s shows to combat the presence of heteronormativity in society.

**Student: Cindy N. Mack**

Faculty: Panteha Sanati

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Transgender College Students Impacted by Mental Illness

Everyday more and more Transgender/LGBTQIA+ college students experience personal conflict and psychological emotional trauma through societal stigmas and a contentious campus climate that has a direct impact on the mental health of college students and unique stressors. Campus climate research combined with Chi Square analysis of over 581,603 students, combined with Chi Square analysis on three variables of distress, self-injurious behaviors, suicidal ideation and



suicide attempt, and two independent variables on victimization- unwanted sexual contact. Results showed that 34.3% and 42.6% respectively of transgender students suffered higher rates of depressive symptoms and attempted suicide in comparison to non-heterosexual cis gender students. Recently, the Trump administration vowed to overturn the law and define gender to be specific to birth sex and not gender identity. Gender definition was not made clear enough by the Obama administration. Birth sex was not specified by Obama to include gender identity and should be overturned. Gender identity among transgender students affects the social norm and the misattribution of gender role acceptance. The multivariate analysis data conducted in this study reflects the minimal deterrence effects in the acceptance of our underrepresented transgender community within our campuses, aided in their regressive progress. We need balance, we need change. Discrimination, transphobia, victimization, persecution and prejudices in our colleges, sits on a very thin line of disconnect, depression and mental health illness.

**Student: Victoria Mansfield**

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The Ethics of Using Puberty Blockers and Cross-Sex Hormones as Treatment for Minors with Gender Dysphoria

Using a collection of research articles and contemporary news stories, this paper serves to add to the discussion regarding the medical transition of minors with gender dysphoria in the United States. In recent years, the number of minors presenting to gender clinics has increased dramatically, as has the number of trans-identifying youth. Currently, the leading approach in the United States by medical professionals treating minors with gender dysphoria is the gender affirmative model. This model consists of social transition during childhood, puberty blockers at the onset of puberty, cross-sex hormones at the age of 16, and gender confirmation surgeries. This model has the potential to overlook other causes of gender dysphoria and in turn may be harmful to those who are not transgender. The long-term consequences of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones are largely unknown, and from what is known, the consequences are serious. Children who are put on puberty blockers at the onset of puberty and continue their transition with cross-sex hormones will effectively be made infertile. Psychologically, minors do not have the capacity to fully grasp the weight of these types of decisions. Furthermore, social transition during childhood may contribute to a self-fulfilling prophecy wherein a child locks-in on a trans-identity. Research



suggests that if not socially transitioned, the vast majority of children with gender dysphoria end up resolving their gender dysphoria once they've felt the effects of puberty during adolescence. For these reasons, the gender affirmative model, which consists of social transition, puberty blockers, and cross-sex hormones, is an irresponsible and unethical practice. Due to the psychological underdevelopment and vulnerabilities that accompany being a minor, medical transition should be made illegal until at least the age of 18.

### **Shannon Weir**

Faculty: Panteha Sanati

Division of Humanities and Fine Arts

#### Social Media and the Affect it has on Society

Social media has been seen to have both positive and negative effects. An entire subculture of artists and creative individuals have been given a platform to easily share and communicate ideas. These ideas have started revolutions that could ultimately change the course of history forever. However, social media has also been misused. Through apps (a software program made for mobile devices), such as Instagram and Snapchat, people (especially teenagers) have become more and more insecure due to the image of perfection being flaunted in almost every corner of the internet. Because of this, mental illness has skyrocketed. Social media platforms were originally created so that people can easily stay connected with friends and family but has evolved into something much greater. No matter what angle one views the impact of social media from there is no denying that daily life has been forever changed because of a few clicks.

### **Student: Alexander Whitehead**

Faculty: Panteha Sanati

Division of Humanities and Fine Arts

#### The Ethics of Modern U.S. Militarized Interventions

When, if ever, does it become necessary for the U.S. military to become involved in other nations' affairs? An undisputed power in the world, the United States has a military which stands as the clear and dominant force of the world, with soldiers deployed in 150 countries, and currently fighting two wars of its own. The United States continuously has sent troops into other countries to interfere in their policy. In the past twenty years, the United States' military has become increasingly more involved in affairs of other nations. The United States has sent its military to



every corner of the world intervening in wars, genocides, famines, annexations, and revolutions. Information provided by the United Nations as well as the Central Intelligence Agency reveals clear similarities in foreign affairs that the U.S. has become involved in. This paper will focus on two events from the past five administrations of Presidents. It will examine the U.S. invasion of Panama and the Gulf War under George H.W. Bush, the Battle of Mogadishu and Rwandan genocide under Bill Clinton, Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Sudan civil war under George W. Bush, The Crimean Crisis and Sudan civil war under Barack Obama, and U.S. aid to the Amazon and the U.S. relations with the Kurds under Donald Trump. These administrations have handled the use of the military in different foreign events not including any war or conflict that was a response to a U.S. event.





# The Honor Garden Scholarship

The Honor Garden Scholarship was established in 2013 to recognize outstanding academic achievement in the Commonwealth Honors Program at Massasoit. Each semester several students are awarded a \$500 scholarship based on their grades and their application essay. In the years since 2013, more than thirty students have won the scholarship.

The Honor Garden Scholarship has been made possible through the establishment of a garden situated at the Canton campus. Special thanks are due to Leah Zielinski and Nick Palantzas for their vision and their commitment to this unique project. Countless donors have supported the scholarship fund through purchasing “Pathway Stepping Stones” which have been placed in the garden. Other donors have purchased Park Benches for the garden. The garden has been named “**The George Georgacopoulos Honor Garden**” to commemorate the extraordinary generosity of the Georgacopoulos family.





# Winning Essays

## Second Chances

Maya Burgess

The Commonwealth Honors Program offered at Massasoit has been one of the most fulfilling experiences I have had in my adult life. It all started with a life changing event, followed by a humbling academic moment, that transitioned into an opportunity for me to achieve my lifelong ambition to graduate from college. To begin the story, I must provide a few details about my background. I am a non-traditional student; sadly I cannot hide that fact. I graduated from high school in 1987 and completed a few college courses over the last thirty years. As life often takes various twists and turns, mine was no different. Therefore, I was unable to complete my college degree. I chose a different path and started working full time when I was twenty. I was fortunate to be successful in my career, but there was always a part of me that felt incomplete because I did not have a degree. I worked my way up from receptionist, to junior trainee, to supervisor, to senior manager, to Chief Compliance Officer of a global investment company with offices all over the world. Through hard work and determination, I was given the chance to live and work in Scotland for fifteen years. In 2016 my company relocated me and my two daughters from Scotland to Boston. After



### Maya Burgess

#### Honor Garden Scholarship Recipient

Maya Burgess is a Liberal Arts Transfer major. She moved to the Boston area in Summer 2016 when her job relocated her and her two daughters from Edinburgh, Scotland. Maya is a nontraditional student who decided to return to school to get her bachelor's degree in Political Science. She began at Massasoit by taking one class. Due to her success she decided to enroll in her first honors class in her second semester. She intends to transfer to a four year university where she will study politics and plans to go on to law school to fulfill her live long dream of becoming a lawyer. Maya is very involved in campus life at Massasoit. She is a peer tutor in the ARC and enjoys supporting her fellow students with writing and humanities. Maya is the President of the Canton Honors Speakers Bureau. She is also a member of Phi Theta Kappa.

Maya applies the same work ethic to her studies as she did to her career. Maya will graduate from Massasoit in the Spring 2020 and will be sad to leave the school that has been so supportive and fundamentally changed her life forever.



eighteen months the company merged with another which unfortunately made my role redundant. It was an unexpected life changing event, that had the potential to devastate my life and the lives of my two daughters. But throughout my life when I am met with a challenge or obstacle, I always try to turn it into something positive. This change provided me with the perfect opportunity to return to school and finally complete my degree. I found the nearest community college and enrolled in one class that fall. I chose an English Composition I class because I felt it was an academic weakness, so I wanted to tackle my worst fear first. What I never expected was that my decision to attend Massasoit and take that first class would change my life forever.

My humbling academic moment came when my English Composition I professor recommended me for the English Composition II Honors course offered the following semester. I always felt English was my weakest subject, so I undoubtedly felt ill-equipped to handle an Honors English class. I was completely taken aback by her recommendation and questioned my own ability to succeed. She reassured me her recommendation was warranted; therefore, I felt it was my responsibility to pursue the program because of her strong belief in me. I enrolled in Professor LaFontaine's English Composition II Honors class in the spring not fully knowing what to expect. I remember feeling overwhelmed and feared it could end

in failure. I am pleased to say it did not and the results were quite the opposite. Because my professors believed in me when I struggled to believe in myself it meant I was able to become a Commonwealth Honors student. My experience at Massasoit and the support I continue to receive gives me the confidence to trust in my academic abilities. This experience has also provided me with leadership and mentoring opportunities I never expected.

The English Composition II Honors class I completed in the spring offered me much more than what I thought I could achieve academically. The course was challenging and forced me to stretch my abilities as a writer. Professor LaFontaine was extremely supportive and he encouraged me to join the weekly study group that met in the ARC on Fridays. Having direct access to my professor provided me with additional confidence in my ability as an Honors student. A core group of students from the class came together every week where we supported and encouraged each other as we made our way through the challenging material. The peer reviews and group discussions made us all better writers and students by working together. The study group also provided an opportunity to form long-lasting friendships. My involvement with the Honors study group provided additional opportunities for me to enrich my experience on campus by taking on leadership and mentoring roles. I was asked by Professor LaFontaine to join the Honors



Speakers Bureau. As members of the Honors Speakers Bureau, fellow students and I were invited to make presentations to prospective honor students currently enrolled in English Composition I classes. In the classes we shared our personal experiences about the study group and promoted the benefits of becoming a Commonwealth Honors student. Finally, through my involvement with the Honors Program, a fellow student and I were asked to present at the Spring 2019 Honors Celebration. This gave me another opportunity to share my experiences with students and faculty.

If anyone asked me two years ago, where do you see yourself in five years, my answer would have been very different. I would never have expected I would be attending Massasoit Community College working towards an Honors degree in Liberal Arts, employed as a peer tutor in the Canton ARC, President of the newly formed Canton Honors Speakers Bureau Club, and a member of Phi Theta Kappa.

Each of these personal accomplishments were made possible by the opportunities offered to me through the school, my professors, and the Commonwealth Honors Program. I am planning to transfer to a four-year college in the fall where I will pursue my bachelor's degree in political science. After I complete my degree, I hope to attend law school where I plan to study Constitutional law. I have always believed in second chances and through my attendance at Massasoit, along with being a member of

the Commonwealth Honors Program, I now have the confidence to complete my degree. By putting my academic insecurities behind me I will continue to expand my knowledge while accomplishing greater success in the next chapter of my life.



## Growth and Gratitude

Yvonne Gorski

The Commonwealth Honors Program has been beneficial to my educational career. The stories discussed in Composition II Honors challenged my analytical skills. These analytical skills pushed me to see beyond the surface of a story and seek deeper meaning. Due to the critical thinking skills I have obtained, I am naturally more curious and strive to become more aware of the issues the world is facing. I am thankful for Professor Keith's teaching style. Professor Keith stressed the importance of reading the short stories outside of the classroom in order to focus our class time on discussion. The Ethics Seminar has provided me with the opportunity to learn about an array of subjects and introduced me to knowledge I otherwise would never have known. I am grateful for Professor Sanati's structure of the seminar. The seminar allowed me the freedom to research and discuss an ethical dilemma of a topic of my choosing. The class has also provided me the opportunity to manage the project on my own. The analytical skills obtained and the opportunity to manage my own project has improved studying and time management in other courses. These factors have also increased my confidence and ambition.

Due to the program, I know I am capable of achieving much more in my academic and future business career. I plan to earn



**Yvonne Gorski**

### Honor Garden Scholarship Recipient

Yvonne Gorski graduated from Marshfield High School in 2015. In the years between high school and college, she utilized her gap years to travel and work. At the age of twenty-two, in the Fall of 2018, she decided to begin her college career at Massasoit Community College. During her first semester at Massasoit, Yvonne discovered her love for writing and would plan to become a part of the Commonwealth Honors Program. Currently, Yvonne is a full-time student, working full-time, and a writing tutor in Brockton's Academic Resource Center.

At Massasoit, Yvonne is working towards earning a Business Administration Transfer associate's degree. Upon her transfer to Bridgewater State University, Yvonne plans to earn a bachelor's degree in Management with a concentration in General Management. Her academic career goals also include minors in GLBT Studies and Sustainability Innovation and Outreach. Ultimately, Yvonne strives to become a member of a corporation's social responsibility team to advocate for the LGBTQ community and create a more green, sustainable future.



a bachelor's degree in Management with a concentration in General Management. Within a business career, one must think critically and take into consideration the ethics of each decision. The knowledge I have acquired from Composition II Honors and the Ethics Seminar will strengthen my abilities as a businesswoman. The knowledge I have been exposed to within the Honors Program has compelled me to minor in GLBT Studies and Sustainability Innovation and Outreach once I transfer to Bridgewater State University. I'm very fond of how the Commonwealth Honors conference at the end of the semester provides a platform for which I can share my work. The fundamental idea of sharing my work and research provides a sense that my voice is important and that I have the power to create change.

The minors I plan to earn stem from the ideas I have been exposed to within the Ethics Seminar. By learning about climate change and its effects on our environment, I have decided to study Sustainability. With this minor, I plan to incorporate sustainable practices into my business career. I strive to be a part of a management team that is in charge of a company's social responsibility. Being a part of this team would allow me the opportunity to introduce innovative sustainable ideas that would greatly decrease a company's carbon footprint. The subject that I chose to research in the Ethics Seminar urges me to minor in GLBT

Studies. After learning about the inequalities that the LGBTQ community still face, I feel compelled to learn more and eliminate the injustices. In a management position, I will assure that there are strict safeguards in place to protect employees based on protected characteristics, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Also, within a social responsibility management team, I would have the ability to become an activist for my community and push for the ratification of legislation, such as the needed Equality Act. The Honors program has instilled me with the confidence and ability to create change in our world. I am grateful for my time within the program and am proud to be a Commonwealth Honors student.





## Essay

Alison Haidul

My invitation to and joining of the Commonwealth Honors Program have been two of the best things to happen to me in my academic career. Starting my higher education at Mount Holyoke College, I found myself pleasantly challenged by the rigorous courses offered to me. However, due to rising tuition at that private institution, I found my best option to be to move to a community college, and from there move onto a four year university. I was hesitant to attend Massasoit Community College, fearing that my classes would not be as much of a challenge as they had been at Mount Holyoke. When I started at Massasoit in the fall semester of 2018, however, I was surprised by the quality of the courses. I found them to be stimulating, and thought-provoking. In spite of how much I enjoyed them, however, I still found myself wishing for a bit more of a challenge.

My wish was soon granted. During winter break, I received my invitation to join the American Literature II Honors course offered in Spring 2019. I was eager to join, and very pleased that the college had recognized both my efforts and my academic performance. I thoroughly enjoyed my first semester as a member of the Commonwealth Honors Program, finding the course to be challenging, and in fact, even more so than my classes at



**Alison Haidul**

### Honor Garden Scholarship Recipient

Alison Haidul is a second-year student at Massasoit Community College. This is her second semester as a member of the Commonwealth Honors Program. Alison has always had a passion for learning and researching, with a focus on historical topics in particular. Upon graduation from Massasoit, she will attend a four-year university to earn a bachelor's degree in history. From there, she plans to enter graduate school, and complete a PhD in the subject of history. Her career goal is to continue her study of the past, and someday become a scholar and professor at a university in this field.



Mount Holyoke. The experience of being surrounded by peers who pushed me to think deeply about the topics we had discussed in class was the extra intensity that I had been seeking. My fellow classmates were just as invested in their academics as I, and I appreciated the level at which we were probing and studying. My honors project opened my eyes to my passion for research, and while I had merely considered but not yet fully explored career paths that involved research and presentation prior to this course, I knew by the end of the semester that I had found my path. The course strengthened my desire to go on to graduate school, and ultimately post-graduate studies. The course allowed me to discover what I want to do.

This past year, I have become more confident in my academic work, and therefore, have become more sure of myself and my plans for my future. The encouragement and support I have received from my professors in my honors courses have allowed me to recognize that I am capable of achieving my academic and career goals. I take my education very seriously and regard my academic performance highly, as my goal is to one day obtain a job in academia. I plan to earn a PhD in History, and hope to become a scholar and professor at a university. I feel that the Commonwealth Honors Program has assisted me greatly in preparing for such a goal. Delving deeply into a certain topic of interest for my honors courses has allowed me to dip my toes

into the world of research, and presenting my findings to my peers as part of the honors project gives me a feel for educating others on my work. I have discovered that I tremendously enjoy teaching others, and am excited about my plans for the future.

I am and always will be immensely grateful to Massasoit Community College and the Commonwealth Honors Program for allowing me this academic experience. I cannot say that I would have been so certain about my decisions for my future had it not been for this educational opportunity. I feel that I have been directed to the path I wish to follow in my life. While I have always been eager to learn, I find that I now have a more inquisitive perspective toward my education. The encouragement to do my very best, and the enthusiasm of my professors and my fellow Honors scholars have enriched my journey toward achieving my goal.





## Essay

Alexander Whitehead

The Commonwealth Honors program is the program I owe my education to. When I was in high school, I was a horrible student. I never listened to my classes, I did not do my homework, I barely went to my classes. I, like most seventeen-year-old boys, already knew everything. I did not care if I did well in school. All I ever wanted was to join the Navy, which I did the day I turned eighteen. I signed a contract for ten years and was more than happy to do so. After about two years in the Navy I saw a man being mugged and attacked by three armed men in San Diego. I stepped in to stop the assault, which I did, while getting myself two shattered ribs in the process. This ended my very unspectacular military career. After this I had no idea what to do with my life.

I spent a great deal of time serving tables and traveling around the U.S. until my girlfriend pushed me into trying college. I had always enjoyed reading and history a great deal, so she thought it would be something I would take to. Last year I enrolled in Massasoit. I was very hesitant of being back in a classroom. On my first day here, I spent the first hour in Dr. MacWade's history class, and I loved it. I found I was very good in school, now I am a straight A student. The problem was I just did not feel challenged enough, as there were very few of my classes that first semester



**Alexander Whitehead**

### Honor Garden Scholarship Recipient

Alex Whitehead graduated from King Philip High School in 2015. He was never a great student and rarely applied himself to his studies. After high school Alex joined the Navy, but due to an injury, he was not able to finish his service. After he was discharged Alex became worked as a manager at Olive Garden. After realizing that he did not want a career in the service industry, Alex left his management position and went on a cross country road trip with his girlfriend. It was on the trip that Alex was convinced to try and enroll on college. In fall of 2018 Alex enrolled at Massasoit and took to it greatly. Unlike in high school Alex greatly enjoyed going to classes, and the challenges that the college setting provided. Alex began the honors program last spring with Professor Keith, taking her Honors Comp. II. He wrote his project on Ernest Hemmingway's writing and how it related to Hemmingway's life. This semester Alex is taking Professor Sanati's Honors Seminar, and is writing his paper on the use of the military in foreign affairs. Alex is going to be moving to Bridgewater next fall where he plans to get a degree in education and become a history teacher to follow his passion for the subject.



that I found interesting or which pushed me out of my comfort zone. That is when I met Professor Keith. She was my speech teacher that first semester. I told her I had heard about the Honors program from my girlfriend, Maria De La Fuente, who was going through it at the time. Professor Keith strongly encouraged me to join her class.

Last spring, I took her Honors Comp II and found the perfect class for me. This class challenged the way I wrote and how I look at literature in ways that really made me think. In the class I learned a great deal about how to write in the third person and how to write a strong research paper. While I probably annoyed her slightly coming to her office most mornings before class she helped me go through my essay page by page and put together a paper I was very proud of. I was able to write a ten-page paper on Hemmingway and how his writing was a personal cry for help, something I do not believe I would have ever been able to do without Professor Keith. That same year I watched my girlfriend complete the Honors ethics course and take an Honors American Literature in Canton. I went to the Honors seminar in Canton both semesters and was very interested and excited for the honors ethics class. I started taking the course this semester with Professor Sanati. While the course is a great deal of work I have greatly enjoyed it. I just completed the first PowerPoint I have made in ten years and Professor Sanati helped me

greatly with it. I have also started a paper I am genuinely interested in and looking forward to. Professor Sanati has been a great help in narrowing my focus and creating my paper.

I am greatly thankful that Maria pushed me into trying out Massasoit. I cannot thank Professor Keith and Professor Sanati enough. They have helped transform me from someone who never cared about school to someone who is focused and puts forth my greatest effort in all aspects. Without this program I do not believe that I would have ever been able to be the student I am today.



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