

..... 15th

SYMPOSIUM

HONORS PROGRAM



FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2026

1-5 p.m. | Heritage Hall 123



Thank You

The Owens Community College Foundation and Honors Program wish to acknowledge Owens faculty and staff for their generous contributions to the Honors Program, including Professor Cory Hoover.

Please also join us in recognizing Art and Connie Smith for having established an endowed scholarship for students in the Honors Program. Their generosity has provided financial assistance to 31 Honors students since 2010.

The Owens Foundation is able to offer additional scholarships with preference going to Honors students through the Regina and Harry Silletti Scholarship Fund. The support from this family has significantly lessened the financial obligation of Honors students since 2013.

Thank you to all the donors who support the Honors Program and Honors Students at Owens Community College! ■

ABOUT THE HONORS PROGRAM

The Owens Community College Honors Program encourages students to initiate, create, and think critically in a wide variety of challenging courses across departments and programs in the College. Honors courses and individualized studies are designed to foster intellectual inquiry and growth by providing a dynamic environment that inspires rewarding intellectual pursuits. The program also facilitates student access to the College's educational resources and provides an opportunity for outstanding students and faculty to engage in exciting learning experiences.

ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

Since 2010, Honors Scholars have been invited to present their completed projects to the College community and guests. The Symposium is the pinnacle of academic work for scholars. Their formal presentations showcase the student learning outcomes in the areas of critical thinking, effective communication, ethical reasoning, diversity, civic engagement, and leadership.

Agenda

WELCOME

Dr. Genesis Downey
Honors Program Director

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Justin Abner
Marketing Strategist, Yarder Manufacturing

MEDALLION RECIPIENTS

Melana Cook
Grant Carr
Wes Nelson
Michael Blevins
Alex Burkhardt

GERALD BAZER AWARD

Matthew Garber

CLOSING

Dr. Downey

PRESENTATIONS*

Session 1: 1:45-2:30 p.m.

Break

Session 2: 2:45-3:45 p.m.

Break

Session 3: 4:00-4:30 p.m.

*See following pages for presentation titles and descriptions.

Keynote Speaker

JUSTIN ABNER

Marketing Strategist, Yarder Manufacturing

Justin is a past Honors Club Vice President as well as Service and Leadership scholar. He graduated with an environmental science concentration degree from Owens in the Spring 2024 and is an Honors program medallion recipient as well. He continues to influence the Toledo community through both his career and volunteer activities. Justin's work in manufacturing has allowed him to contribute to the development of Metroparks Toledo infrastructure, while his volunteer engagements help keep those parks clean, healthy, and safe. As a volunteer writer for the National Museum of the Great Lakes, he aims to encourage more responsible stewardship of the Lake Erie watershed. Currently, he is carrying out the digital migration and maintenance of the Yarder Manufacturing website while assisting with the physical move of the century-old business. ■



Presentations

SESSION 1: 1:45-2:30 P.M. | HERITAGE HALL ROOM 123

COMMUNITY BUILDING THROUGH SERVICE

Session Chair: Dr. Mohammed Elnahal, Humanities

GRANT CARR, BROADCAST MEDIA TECHNOLOGY

"The Very Hungry Caterpillar | The Week of the Young Child"

Faculty Mentor: Robert Ticherich, Broadcast Media Technology

This project is an animated adaptation of The Very Hungry Caterpillar in collaboration with early childhood education students, who provide narration for the story. The project also includes an interactive, child focused program featuring activities such as "Healthy or Not?" and "I Spy," designed to engage audiences while reinforcing concepts related to food and the stages of the caterpillar's development.

MEGHAN HUBBARD, CRIMINAL JUSTICE TRANSFER

"A False Promise of Safety? Community Policing and Domestic Violence Response"

Faculty Mentor: Michael Linthicum, Criminal Justice Sciences

This project examines whether community policing effectively addresses domestic violence or falls short of protecting victims. By analyzing policies such as mandatory arrest laws and police advocate partnerships, it highlights the gap between theory and real-world outcomes. The research argues for more trauma-informed, victim-centered approaches to improve safety and trust.

MICHAEL BLEVINS, HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

"Adopting Electronic Health Records and Ensuring Data Security Compliance with HIPAA"

Faculty Mentor: Teresa A. McGaharan, Health Information Technology

This project focuses on the challenges of safeguarding protected health information (PHI) as healthcare organizations continue adopting electronic health record systems. It explores the growing risks of cyber threats, data breaches, and unauthorized access, and emphasizes the importance of maintaining compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) through effective data security practices.

OWENS HONORS CLUB

"Community Building and the Honors Club"

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Genesis Downey, Honors Club Advisor

The Owens Honors Club will discuss their experiences working as "the face" of the Honors Program this year. They will focus on their community outreach initiatives as well as their campus engagement, and the big takeaways they gained from the Mid East Honors Association (MEHA) Conference held at the University of Indiana South Bend in April. Their purpose is to share why and how service to the college and to the larger community is a crucial element in the way the club operates.

Presentations

SESSION 2: 2:45-3:45 P.M. | HERITAGE HALL ROOM 123

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT VIOLENCE, SAFETY, AND SUFFERING

Session Chair: Morgan Balcerek, Biology

ESTHER GUALTIERI, FINE ARTS CONCENTRATION

"The Social Construction of Threat: Labeling, Moral Panic, and the Venezuelan Immigrant in the Urban Context of the United States"

Faculty Mentor: Anna Queen, Social and Behavioral Sciences

This project examines how Venezuelan immigrants in the United States are socially constructed as a threat through processes of labeling, moral panic, and discourse. It focuses on how language, media framing, and political narratives shape public perception and justify forms of social control in urban contexts. By integrating demographic context and case studies, the analysis highlights how these narratives influence inclusion, exclusion, and the reconfiguration of urban space.

TRISTAN OGBURN, BIOLOGY

"Why Do We Suffer?"

Faculty Mentor: Steve Culbertson, Humanities

One of the central questions that has arisen alongside the development of human civilizations is "why do we suffer?" The project looked at different historical and religious texts to analyze the perspective of different peoples, philosophers, and religious leaders and how they answered that question. There are similarities between philosophies, but each text had its own unique answer.

CAYLA HOFFMAN, NURSING

"Workplace Violence in the Emergency Room"

Faculty Mentor: Joe Duda, Humanities

Violence in the emergency room is growing year by year, and causing nurses and other staff to become fearful, anxious, injured, and burnt out. This can lead to poor patient care, nursing shortages, and strikes. There are a few ways to help control this problem including safety policies, de-escalation skills building, and restraints/sedation.

MICHAEL BLEVINS, HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

"The Impact of Coding Specificity on MS-DRG Assignment and Reimbursement: A Simulated Case Study Analysis Using AHA Coding Handbook Cases"

Faculty Mentor: Teresa A. McGaharan, Health Information Technology

This project examines the role of precise diagnosis and procedure coding in supporting accurate hospital reimbursement under the Medicare Severity Diagnosis-Related Group (MS-DRG) system. It emphasizes how coding specificity influences MS-DRG assignment and financial outcomes, while also highlighting the risks associated with coding inaccuracies, including revenue loss and compliance concerns.

Presentations

SESSION 3: 4:00-4:30 P.M. | HERITAGE HALL ROOM 132

CAPSTONES: ON RESEARCH AND APPLICATION

Session Chair: Dr. Genesis Downey, Humanities

BONNIE LONG, SOCIOLOGY TRANSFER

"Enough, Just as You Are: A Queer & Neurodivergent Belonging"

Faculty Mentor: Jen Hazel, Humanities

This Capstone combines Queer Theory, neurodivergence studies, qualitative interviews, and multimedia storytelling to show how rigid norms shape belonging for queer and neurodivergent students. The project argues that belonging should adjust to people not the other way around and culminates in an accessibility centered advocacy website designed as a living archive. It transforms academic research into practical tools, stories, and resources that model inclusive, affirming campus culture. This presentation will discuss Phase 1: Research. Q&A will follow.

MELANA COOK, CHEMISTRY CONCENTRATION

"Effects of Plastic Pollution on Communities in the Global South"

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Genesis Downey, Humanities

This Capstone is a documentary-styled video that examines the effects of overconsumption, plastic pollution, and waste trade on the environmental and physical health of global south. Additionally, the video covers international efforts to reduce impact and what steps can be taken by the individual to contribute to such efforts.

OWENS COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS

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HONORS FACULTY AND STAFF

Dr. Genesis Downey

Honors Program Director/Honors Professor

Morgan Balcerek

Honors Mentor, School of S.T.E.M.

Jami Williamson

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Dr. Mohammed Elnahal

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Internship Manager, School of Liberal Arts/Honors Program

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Honors Professor, School of Liberal Arts

Joe Duda

Honors Professor, School of Liberal Arts

Andrew Erickson

Honors Professor, School of Liberal Arts

Notes

Congratulations

SCHOLARS



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