

WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

HONORS COLLEGE NEWS

Raubinger 207

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CELEBRATING **50** YEARS
OF HONORS EXCELLENCE

HONORS COLLEGE

WILLIAM PATERSON
UNIVERSITY

on campus beginning at 2:00 p.m. During the event there will be information sessions featuring faculty and students who are involved in the current tracks, networking with fellow alums, faculty, and current students, a dinner with old friends and faculty members, and displays.

Honors alumni who did not receive an email message about this event should email honors@wpunj.edu for more information and the registration link. We're looking forward to seeing everyone!

Highlights from last semester



Senior, Patti Walsh, from the Humanities Track was one of over 90 students who presented during Honors Research Week.

In April, over 90 students presented their Honors research and creative projects during Honors Research Week 2026. Thank you so much to all of the faculty and staff members who contributed to the success of Honors Research Week and all of the presenters.

Following Honors Research Week, seniors were recognized at the annual Honors College Reception in the UC Ballrooms. Honors students, their families, President Helldobler and members of his cabinet, Provost Powers, Dean Barbara Andrew, and faculty members and staff participated in this event celebrating the students who completed an Honors Track during the 2025-2026 academic year. Students were given certificates that acknowledge their accomplishment and Honors lapel pins.



Presenters from the Social Sciences Track with Track Director, Dr. Danielle Wallace in the Library Auditorium.

Please join us!

Plans are underway for our 50th anniversary of Honors celebration on Friday, 9/18/26! This event, commemorating 50 years since the first Honors classes began at WP, will be held

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE HONORS COLLEGE DEAN



Dr. Barbara Andrew

This edition of the Honors College Newsletter highlights the remarkable achievements of our community, underscoring our commitment to fostering a diverse and dynamic environment for students who excel in scholarship,

leadership, and service.

Our distinguished seniors showcased their prowess through timely research addressing contemporary challenges and deep historical insights. Our talented artists and musicians have graced regional and national stages and garnered accolades. Honors students actively engaged in a range of career-readiness workshops and panels, led by our esteemed alumni and valued community partners. Additionally, our students spearheaded workshops on civil discourse and participated in numerous civic engagement initiatives.

As we prepare to commemorate 50 years of Honors at WP, we invite you to peruse this newsletter to gain a comprehensive understanding of our collective accomplishments.



Provost Joshua Powers addresses the large crowd at the Honors Reception on 4/27/26.

Honoring members of the WP Honors community

Alumni Spotlight

In this issue's Alumni Spotlight, we are pleased to highlight Caroline Sanchez, '13, who was awarded an Emmy Award for *Outstanding Sound Mixing for a Variety Series or Special* at the 77th Emmy Awards last September for her work on the "SNL:50 The Anniversary Special" that aired on NBC.

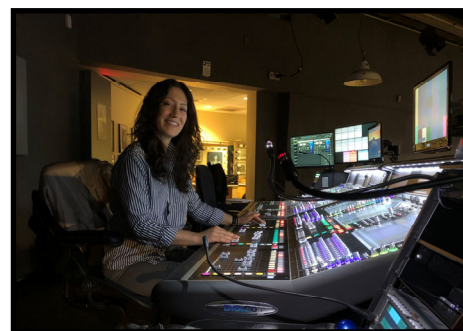
Caroline has worked as a freelance audio engineer since she graduated from William Paterson University in 2013. She started working for *Good Morning America* on ABC, and her list of impressive work has continued to grow since then. She credits the connections she made at WP as an undergraduate for helping her secure a job as soon as she graduated. Caroline emphasized the importance of internships as they "act as a door-opener in your field and provide opportunities for professional networking."

Caroline, a graduate of the Honors Performing and Literary Arts Track under the supervision of Dr. Philip Cioffari, shared that being a part of the Honors community at WP was a very motivating experience for her that she felt was "good for the brain." She also noted that being around equally driven, like-minded, and creative individuals fostered a setting that was conducive to achieving her goals.

Caroline encourages students to find a career that continues to inspire and excite them. She reflected on her experience working on the set of SNL 50, describing being in awe of seeing Paul McCartney in person. Finding work that continues to thrill you, she says is, "in many ways the true measure of personal success." Congratulations, Caroline on winning an Emmy! We are so proud of you at the Honors College at William Paterson University.

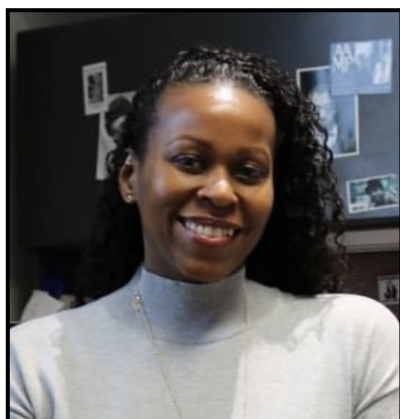


*Emmy Award winner,
Caroline Sanchez, '13*



*Caroline Sanchez working on the set
of "SNL:50 The Anniversary Special"*

Faculty Spotlight



*Dr. Danielle Wallace, Director of the
Social Sciences Honors Track and an
Associate Professor in the Community
and Social Justice Studies Department*

In this issue's Faculty Spotlight, we are pleased to highlight Dr. Danielle Wallace, Director of the Social Sciences Honors Track and an Associate Professor in the Community and Social Justice Studies department here at WP. She earned her bachelor's degree in Black Studies at SUNY New Paltz, where she received encouragement from her advisor to pursue a Ph.D. and become a professor. Dr. Wallace noted that she was intrigued by the idea of "getting to stay in college forever" by aspiring to a career in higher education because she had a passion for learning herself. She went on to earn an MA and a PhD from Temple University in African American Studies. Her personal research interests began with topics such as marriage, family, and gender, and have since evolved to Black Student leadership and activism on college campuses. Her research has been influenced by her professional experience working with student leaders in a variety of ways, including as the advisor for the Black Student Union here at William Paterson University.

Dr. Wallace has been the Director of the Social Sciences Honors Track for three years. She speaks highly of the opportunity to foster meaningful relationships and community with students in the track as they progress through their research, noting that "Designing a thesis is a unique and rewarding process and it is wonderful to see how students develop confidence throughout and then present their work." Dr. Wallace urges all Honors students to enjoy this process and to not let it overwhelm them, as this is a distinct opportunity that not every student has.

Congratulations to Dr. Wallace who was recognized during the University's Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony on May 28 as one of the recipients of the 2026 Faculty Excellence Award, where she was honored for her consistent and transformative excellence in teaching, mentorship, curricular leadership.

Student Spotlights

Senior Honors music student presents thesis at regional and national conferences

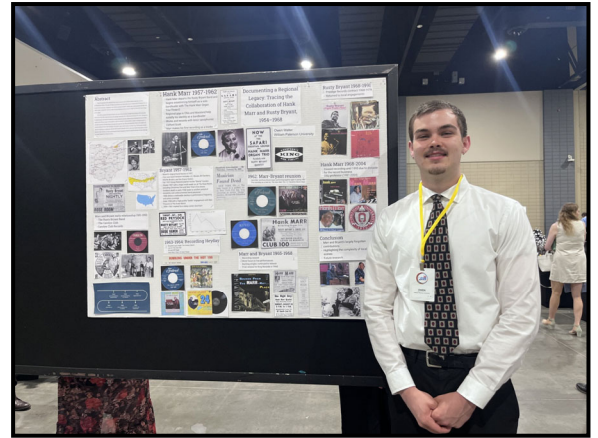
Owen Walter, senior Jazz Studies major and member of the Music Honors Track, presented his thesis, *Documenting a Regional Legacy: Tracing the Collaboration of Hank Marr and Dusty Bryant, 1954-1968*, this spring at the Northeast Regional Honors Council Conference (NRHC) in Connecticut, and at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) in Virginia.

His topic focused on the professional relationship of Hank Marr and Dusty Bryant, two of his favorite underrepresented musicians. Owen's research included searching newspaper articles from the 50's and 60's to uncover "the untold story" of this niche topic regarding a jazz scene that no longer exists.

Owen was excited about participating in the conferences, noting that the experience gave him the opportunity to "have long-form conversations about research with people who are interested in similar topics, while also networking with people from all across the United States, and having fun."

Owen graduated from WP this spring, and hopes to publish his thesis and present his research to jazz students at Ohio State University in Columbus, where his research is based. In the future, he plans to pursue a master's degree in Music (Jazz Studies), with the goal of teaching jazz or saxophone at a university. He also plans to continue touring with his band, **B L Ü E C R Ü E**.

Owen, a native of Minnesota, served as an Honors Peer Leader for three years. He encourages students to take advantage of every opportunity that Honors offers. "Honors events and activities help you get involved on campus, can be great résumé builders, and provides a chance to meet students with similar interests, all while having a lot of fun," said Owen, who met his bandmates through Honors.



Owen Walter with his research poster at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) in Richmond, VA in April.



Honors student, Renee Wells
(Photo courtesy of William Paterson Marketing & Public Relations).

Honors student athlete finds success in the classroom

During her college career Honors student, Renee Wells, was a member of the WP Women's Basketball team that made it all the way to the DIII NCAA Tournament during the spring 2026 semester. Renee says that the secret to balancing the demands of basketball and honors-level academics is time management and prioritizing her responsibilities.

Renee also emphasizes the importance of team culture, "Being surrounded by teammates who value academics creates accountability and support, which motivates me to stay focused. Our coach, Coach Monahan, also puts a big emphasis on team GPA and holding ourselves to a high academic standard, which really pushes us to succeed in the classroom."

Renee is a great example of what it means to be a student-athlete at William Paterson University, "I take pride in representing my team and the Honors College, and I want to make the most of every opportunity I've been given."

A graduate of the Humanities Honors Track, she presented her thesis project, *Beyond the Scoreboard: Analyzing Mental Health in NCAA Student-Athletes* at Honors Research Week 2026. Her thesis supervisor was Dr. Molly O'Donnell.

Honors College Short Term Study Abroad

Honors students travel to Italy during spring break '26

Over spring break, 26 students from the William Paterson University Honors College traveled to Italy on a short-term study abroad trip. The students, led by Honors Faculty Fellow, Dr. Elizabeth Harkins, and Dr. Wendy Wright, Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science, Legal, and Urban Studies, explored Rome, Florence, and Pisa to learn more about Italian culture, history, and art.

Over the course of their seven day journey, students visited a number of historical sites and museums including the Colosseum, the Roman Forum, St. Peter's Basilica, the Vatican Museums, the Academia Gallery, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and more. The class had two group dinners, one in Rome and one in Florence, where they were able to eat, converse, and share cultural experiences.

Students also had ample time to discover the parts of these Italian cities that were not included in the groups' official itinerary which provided everyone with the opportunity to learn how to be a socially conscious traveler, another goal of the course.

Participants in the trip formed meaningful relationships with their peers and professors that will inform the rest of their college career and beyond. In addition, they were also able to create long-lasting memories and learn more about themselves as individuals.

Honors short term study abroad and other travel experiences allow students the space to step out of their comfort zone and gain a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.



"Italy was amazing. The food, experiences, and memories made with friends will never be forgotten. Thank you to the Honors College for facilitating this cool trip!"

- Isabella Gonzalez, junior,
Finance and Management



"My study abroad experience was enriching and fulfilling, giving me a broader perspective. We got to experience an entirely different culture, and it made me realize how much we assume that life in the USA is 'normal.' My favorite memory from the trip was 'family dinner' with my classmates, where we talked about life while eating amazing food."

- Eli Leder, sophomore,
Jazz Performance



"This was truly a transformative and a once in a lifetime experience. Opportunities like these teach you so much about who you are as an individual and can really shape your view of the world."

- Rory Stansfield, junior,
Speech Language Pathology

Honors students attend regional conference

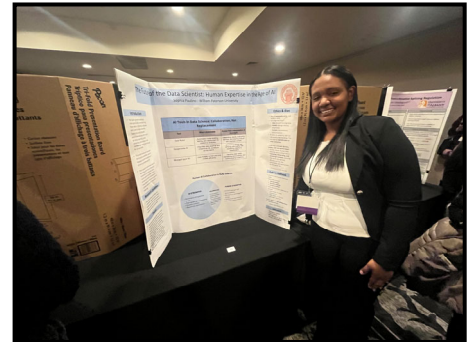
Honors students participate in the Northeast Regional Honors Conference

Five William Paterson University Honors students, along with Jan Pinkston, Associate Director of Honors, attended the 2026 Northeast Regional Honors Council (NRHC) conference in New Haven, Connecticut held March 26-29. This annual conference is an opportunity for students to connect with and showcase their research to scholars and administrators from a wide range of colleges and universities across the region.

The four students presenting their research included: senior **Azer Jalahej** from the Humanities Track who presented "Worth the Watch? Exploring Whether Watching the News is Still Valuable" under the supervision of Dr. Molly O'Donnell; senior **Thays Paiva-Dealmeida** from the Global Public Health Track who presented "Comparative Analysis of National Dietary Guidance for Infants and Children Across a Sample of Middle- and High-Income Countries" under the direction of Dr. Marianne Sullivan; first year student, **Sophia Paulino**, who presented "The Future of the Data Scientist: Human Expertise in the Age of AI" under the supervision of Dr. Jacob Felson; and senior **Owen Walter** from the Music Track who presented "Documenting a Regional Legacy: Tracing the Collaboration of Hank Marr and Rusty Bryant, 1954–1968" under the direction of Dr. Christopher Herbert.

During the conference, junior **Rory Stansfield**, a student in the Cognitive Science Track, was recognized for her leadership as a Student Representative on the NRHC Executive Board, where she helped plan and facilitate student programming throughout the academic year. In addition, senior **Angela Marcucilli**, a student in the Nursing Track, received an Honorable Mention for the NRHC Honors Student of the Year Award, recognizing her excellence in both scholarship and service to the William Paterson University Honors College.

We are incredibly proud of these students for their dedication and accomplishments, and we are thrilled to support opportunities that allow them to share their talents beyond the campus community.



Sophia Paulino



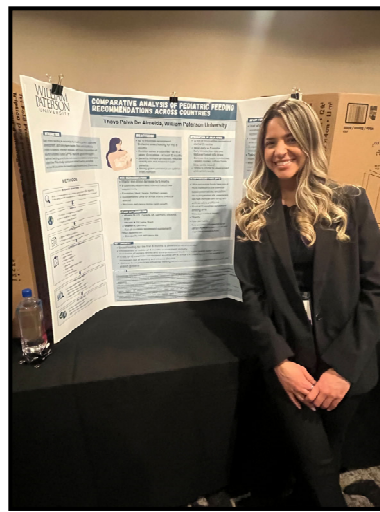
Azer Jalahej



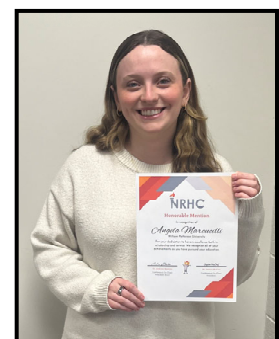
Rory Stansfield



Owen Walter



Thays Paiva-Dealmeida



Angela Marcucilli

Civic Engagement Events

**'Bridging the Gap' event brings students together**

Over 80 students attended "Bridging the Gap," an Honors interactive civic engagement event held on May 1st. The students participated in hands-on activities focused on building mutual respect among differences, which allowed them to join a conversation about pluralism, where different identities and viewpoints come together.

This unique student-led event was funded through a grant from Interfaith America that was awarded to Honors Fellow, Dr. Elizabeth Harkins. As part of the grant, Dr. Harkins met with the following group of students each week during the spring semester to train them on how to organize and run this high impact five hour event: Koushani Gupta, Angela Marcucilli, Janine Nangini, Preston Nieuwenhuis, Jacob Ramirez, and Kasai Sanchez.

The student leaders and participants learned a great deal about how different identities and viewpoints can come together to strengthen a community.

Slices of Service

The Honors College recently partnered with the *Paterson Cares* organization on *Slices of Service*, an Honors civic engagement initiative that involves students making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and writing notes of encouragement for unhoused individuals in Paterson. Two sessions were held during the spring semester.

After the students prepared the care packages, representatives from Paterson Cares distributed the items to people in need in the city of Paterson. Events like these exemplify how a seemingly small act of service can have an immediate positive effect on the life of someone in need.

**Card Making Event**

The Honors Club hosted "Crafting Compassion: A Card-Making Event," where about 40 students made cards for patients receiving treatment at St. Joseph's Medical Center in Wayne. During this event, Honors nursing senior and Club President, Angela Marcucilli, discussed how receiving homemade cards boosts patient morale and has a positive effect on healthcare outcomes.

**Saturday Service**

Students met at Father English Community Center in Paterson each week during the spring semester to volunteer at the food pantry.



Meher Ali

Honors Higher Education Leadership Fellow leads workshop

In mid-March, the Honors College hosted a hands-on workshop, "Thesis Afterlife Lab," designed to teach students how to translate their research beyond the classroom. Meher Ali, the Honors College Higher Education Leadership Fellow and Princeton PhD candidate who recently successfully defended her dissertation, ran the workshop and taught students ways to translate and repurpose their thesis experience for the professional world. This included drafting a LinkedIn-ready summary to use, and brainstorming compelling ways to include stories from their thesis experience in interviews, networking conversations, and elevator pitches.

Discovering opportunities in performing arts

Over 70 Honors students logged in to attend an "Endless Possibilities in the World of Performing Arts" event hosted by the Honors College in March. The participants had the opportunity to explore the range of professional paths available to them in the field of performing arts. Several panelists discussed their experience as professionals in the field and gave advice to students interested in pursuing related careers and other career paths.

Panelists included **Alexander Diaz**, Performing Artist, Advocate, and CEO & Executive Director of Bergen PAC, **Jane Labanz**, Broadway and Screen Actress, Singer, Dancer, and Multi-Faceted Business Professional, and **Aaron Van Duyne, III**, CPA, Principal, Van Duyne CPA & Advisors; Music Management Professor at WPU, and Chair of WPUNJ Foundation.

Special thanks to **Ms. Ashley Pettet**, a 2007 Honors Performing and Literary Arts Track alum and Honors Advisory Council member, who organized and hosted this thought-provoking discussion for students.



Honors goes to Broadway

Honors sponsored a bus trip to see "Death of a Salesman" on Broadway and explore parts of NYC. The trip was led by Honors Dean Barbara Andrew, Dr. Amy Learmonth, Director of the Cognitive Science Honors Track, and Dr. Martha Witt, Director of the Performing & Literary Arts Honors Track.



Students attend hands-on workshop

The Honors College hosted a hands-on LinkedIn Workshop led by Honors Fellow, Dr. Elizabeth Harkins, and Honors Peer Leader, Sarah Weissberg. Students were taught the basics of building a LinkedIn profile that will stand apart from others and learned how to find key people to network with in their field of interest.



Preparing for presentations

Prior to Honors Research Week 2026, the Honors College hosted "Telling a Good Story and Asking Good Questions," led by Dr. Amy Learmonth, Director of the Cognitive Science Honors Track. This meeting helped prepare senior Honors students to present their projects, as well as encouraged other Honors students to participate actively and ask good questions during Honors Research Week presentations and in similar settings.

Honors Alum: full circle moment



Dr. Samantha Koprowski, '20

Samantha Koprowski, a WP Honors College alum, recently earned her PhD in Political Science from Rutgers University and has been hired as a tenure-track professor in American Politics at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro. A 2020 graduate of William Paterson, Samantha double majored in Political Science and Philosophy, and completed the Social Sciences Honors Track under the direction of Dr. Neil Kressel.

She values her experience in the WP Honors College, and says that completing her Honors thesis was the “single most important thing she did as an undergrad.” Samantha also expressed gratitude to the many mentors she had at William Paterson, both within and outside of Honors. She stated that they taught her who she values as a mentor and how to be one, in addition to helping her build her self-confidence. She is looking forward to paying it forward and mentoring students in her new role as a college professor.

Throughout college, Samantha continued to reevaluate her goals as she gained new experiences and completed various internships. She recognized that her favorite classes were related to research and her thesis, and after working on a paper with one of her professors, she decided to apply to PhD programs.

Samantha encourages current students to keep an open mind because you never know how your interests can change. To do this, she suggests “seeking opportunities outside of the classroom and participating in experiential learning,” which are often offered by the Honors College.

Congratulations, Dr. Koprowski, on earning your PhD and starting your new career!



Dr. K. Molly O'Donnell

Honors Track Director receives notable distinction for designing Honors course

Congratulations to Dr. Krista Molly O'Donnell, Director of the Honors Humanities Track, who was recently notified that a proposal she submitted for her Honors course, *HLBST 3500 Liberal Studies & Community Engagement*, was approved for the

achieving growth in the your students' personal leadership development for the purpose of civic engagement, a hallmark of the Nobel Peace Laureates and curriculum of high academic standards.”

Dr. O'Donnell will be formally recognized for her work at a future NCHC national convention.

The Partners in Peace (PiP) program exists as a collaboration between NCHC and the NPC in Oslo. Operating within the International Education Committee of NCHC, PiP enables students, faculty and institutions to study and implement practices utilized by Nobel Peace Laureates in their attempts to achieve harmony and collaboration between individuals.

Partners in Peace partnership between the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) and the Nobel Peace Center (NPC) in Oslo, Norway. The course will be offered at WP during the fall 2026 semester.

The committee stated that her proposal “demonstrates concerted thought, creativity, and embraces the ideas of

Honors College Track Directors

Dr. Barbara Andrew
Independent

Dr. Bruce Diamond
Clinical Psychology
and Neuropsychology

Dr. Lisa Foley
Nursing

Dr. David Gilley
(Interim) Biology

Dr. Christopher Herbert
Music

Dr. Amy Learmonth
Cognitive Science

Dr. John Malindretos
Business

Dr. K. Molly O'Donnell
Humanities

Dr. Marianne Sullivan
Global Public Health

Dr. Danielle Wallace
Social Sciences

Dr. Martha Witt
Performing and Literary Arts

William Paterson University Honors College

Barbara Andrew
Dean

Elizabeth Harkins
Honors College Fellow

Kourtney Scipio
Graduate Assistant

Helenah Comia
Office Assistant

Jan Pinkston
Associate Director

Rory Stansfield
Office Assistant

**Angie Marcucilli, Preston Nieuwenhuis, Thays Paiva-Dealmeida,
Rory Stansfield, Owen Walter, and Sarah Weissberg**
Spring 2026 Honors Peer Leaders

WP Honors College Newsletter Editors:
Barbara Andrew, Jan Pinkston, Rory Stansfield